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HANDLE WITH CARE: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CARING
IN ACADEMIC ADVISING

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IN ACADEMIC ADVISING

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated, with love,

in celebration of my mother, Sue Holmes, who taught me to care, and

in memory of my father, Coley E. Holmes, Jr., whose steadfast belief in the power and

importance of education inspired me to embark on this journey.

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HANDLE WITH CARE: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CARING
IN ACADEMIC ADVISING

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This qualitative study explores the nature of caring and its significance in college and university academic advising. Although care has often been mentioned in academic advising literature as a key component in the process, no effort has been made to define what is meant by "caring" or to describe what caring looks like or what it entails. The focus of this inquiry was to examine caring as expressed in the practices of professional advisors in their relationships with the undergraduate students they advise. Guided by Nel Noddings's (1984) exploration of the ethic of care and its implications in the caring encounter, the work of ten professional academic advisors was examined to provide a rich description of the characteristics of caring advising.

Constructivist-based research methodology utilized for this study included purposeful sampling, videotaped participant observation, and advisor and student interviews. Multiple data sources and collection methods established trustworthiness and ensured the rigor of the study. Constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)

was used to identify patterns, code data, and categorize findings. Respondents' voices are expressed through rich, descriptive vignettes to reveal the qualities and characteristics that define the important role caring plays in academic advising.

The findings indicated that caring is enacted in the meaningful relationships professional advisors build and sustain with students. Findings also revealed that caring advisors practice maternalism and mentorship in their work with students and also balance power in these significant relationships. Caring advising is characterized by an advisor's preparation for the encounter, and his or her commitment to trust, sincerity, accuracy, and knowledge. Caring cannot be achieved by formula and is, at times, inconsistently present in advising practice. The conclusions indicate that the caring relationship between an advisor and his or her students greatly enhances students' educational experiences.

This study will make a significant contribution to the academic advising profession as well as scholarship in the field. By studying experienced caring advisors, the existing theory of the ethic of care is enhanced to offer a better understanding of the impact caring has in advising practices.

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Chapter One: Introduction

When I first arrived on this campus I felt completely overwhelmed and alone. I knew that it was a sink or swim situation and that in order to succeed, I would have to do it on my own. I thought, "Nobody here will care if I make it or not." I was so wrong. Almost immediately, my academic advisor took me under her wing and showed me that she cared about me and my success at this university. Every time we meet she confirms that she really cares about me.

<div align="right">

Advisor evaluation
McCombs School of Business

</div>

In recent years, research in college student retention has indicated that academic advising plays a significant role in student success and satisfaction. Kramer (2001) notes, "No single activity can do more to set the academic tone of the collegiate experience and to establish a comprehensive approach to student academic success than [advising]" (p. 6). After 10 years of research at more than 90 institutions, Light (2001) concluded that "good" academic advising" may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience" (p. 81). In a study of over 40 institutions by the ACT College Outcomes Measures Program, substantive academic advising was positively linked to student learning and persistence to graduation (Forrest, 1982). Indeed, Light (2001) inferred, academic advisors can affect students in a "profound and continuing way" (p. 84).

In answering the question, "What is 'good' advising?" studies have listed the importance of establishing a caring advisor-advisee relationship among the most significant characteristics of effective academic advising (Ender, Winston, & Miller, 1982; Ford & Ford, 1989; Frost, 1994; Habley, 2000a; Winston, Miller, Ender, & Grites,

1984; Winston & Sandor, 1984). With regard to student retention, Beal and Noel (1980)

assert that a caring attitude of faculty and staff is the "most potent retention force on

campus" (p. 66). The meaningful experience in a caring advisor-advisee relationship is

supported by significant research over the past 20 years, particularly that of Pascarella

and Terenzini (1991), Tinto (1987) and Astin (1993). Frost (1991) asserts, "Good

advisors are interested in establishing caring relationships with students. They see

students as growing, maturing individuals and are accessible to them" (p. 64). Kramer

(2001) believes:

> In the best cases of success, students are involved with advisors who
> care about them; that is, the advisor shows interest in issues that matter
> to the advisee. Furthermore, qualitative, caring advising is not one-sided.
> The research shows that when coupled with students who adjust
> expectations…take initiative, share the advising responsibility, and come prepared
> to meetings, important outcomes are more likely to occur, including a) some
> satisfaction with college, b) academic achievement, c) persistence to graduation,
> and d) personal and academic success (p. 6).

Interestingly, although scholars in the field of academic advising have repeatedly

mentioned care as a significant factor in the advising relationship, few have specifically

focused on its importance or applied research methodology to demonstrate the critical

role care plays in the academic advising relationship. Clearly, the nature of the caring

relationship between an academic advisor and his or her student is the heart of

developmental advising.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the role caring plays in academic advising. The primary research question examined is: *In what ways is caring enacted and demonstrated in academic advising?* The following questions guided the inquiry:
1) How is care defined within the context of academic advising?
2) What are the characteristics of caring advising? 3) How do students recognize care in an advisor and why is this significant from their perspective? 4) How do Nel Noddings's (1984) notions of engrossment, motivational displacement, and reciprocity apply to the academic advising encounter?

Voice of the Researcher

As a professional academic advisor, the topic explored in this study holds great personal significance. Having worked in the advising profession for 16 years, I realized that in pursuing this scholarly endeavor, I would occasionally need to step away, if momentarily, from my objective researcher role and think about my own experiences in the advising profession. Merriam (2002) reminds us that the researcher, as primary instrument in the data collection and analysis of qualitative research, experiences positionality vis-à-vis the participants in the study that has both insider and outsider dimensions. As an insider, my perspective influences my understanding of the topic of this study. With this in mind, I use my voice in the study when first person narrative is appropriate.

Forgiving myself for the subjectivity of my thoughts, I considered what my role as an advisor means to me. It is, at times, difficult for me to separate my own feelings

about this topic from my objective research. I love this profession. "Academic advisor" is a moniker I wear proudly; it is, in fact, one of the defining characteristics that combine to make "me:" American, Texan, graduate student, son, brother, friend, dog lover, Episcopalian, academic advisor. Being an advisor is an integral part of who I am.

And being an advisor means more to me than running degree audits and scheduling classes. I'm an advisor who doesn't mind if a student calls me at home with a question, who remembers his students' birthdays and sends electronic greeting cards and personal email messages of congratulations. I'm an advisor who receives letters from students when they land their first jobs or graduate from law school. I'm an advisor who loves his work and loves his students. I asked myself as I embarked on this scholarly journey "Does that make me a 'caring' advisor? Do similar qualities and experiences make my subjects, who work in the same professional context as I, caring advisors? What do the data tell me about the participants in my study and the experiences we encounter with students that signify caring?" In the pages that follow, these questions will be explored in order to better understand the significance of caring in the advising relationship.

Significance of the Study

In understanding the relationship between caring and academic advising, it is important, first, to explore the nature of advising as a profession. Subsequently, the concept of caring must be defined. A brief overview of the historical contexts of advising and caring will guide in our understanding. Within the context of the study, the term

academic advising will be used to indicate guidance offered to undergraduate students by academic advisors.

The practice of academic advising has a rich history that can be traced to the Colonial colleges. Virginia Gordon (1992), assistant dean emeritus at The Ohio State University and the first director of the National Clearinghouse on Academic Advising maintains, "The history of higher education in the United States and academic advising are inextricably entwined" (p. 1). Academic advising has evolved over time from a mostly prescriptive scheduling activity practiced almost exclusively by faculty, to a holistic, developmentally influenced activity performed by faculty as well as professional advisors.

The seeds of academic advising as it is practiced today were beginning to take root in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Burns Crookston (1972) and Terry O'Banion (1972) first linked advising to student development theories and the "student personnel point of view," providing a framework for a developmental view of academic advising. Crookston maintains:

> Developmental counseling or advising is concerned not only with a specific personal or vocational decision but also with facilitating the student's rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavioral awareness, and problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills (p. 12).

With the introduction of the concept of developmental advising, Crookston (1972) and O'Banion (1972) are credited with providing the impetus for sweeping changes that occurred in the field of academic advising. According to Gordon (1988), Crookston's approach evolved out of the turmoil of the 1960s when students were insisting on more attention to their academic concerns, among other things. Crookston (1972) adopted two

basic assumptions from student development theory as a framework for his argument for a developmental view of academic advising. First, "the perspective of work and professional training should be placed within the development of a life plan instead of [the] tendency to prepare one's self for a profession and then build one's life around it" and, second, the student should "share equal responsibility with the teacher for the quality of the learning context, process, and product" (p. 12).

Crookston defined two forms of advising. First, the traditional *prescriptive* relationship is one that is based on authority. In this context, Crookston argues, the advisor presumably "teaches" and the student "learns." In this authoritative relationship, advisors answer specific questions, such as course choice, but rarely address the more comprehensive academic or developmental concerns.

In contrast, the *developmental* advising relationship is characterized by a relationship between the advisor and advisee in which the acting parties engage in a shared exploration of developmental tasks, determining and achieving both long-term and immediate developmental and academic goals. To Crookston, the nature and quality of the advisor/advisee relationship is most critical. He contends, "the goal [of the relationship] is toward openness, acceptance, trust, sharing of data, and collaborative problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation" (p. 17), providing a foundation for understanding the advising relationship within a context that extends beyond simple advice giving and course scheduling.

O'Banion (1972), in concert with the pivotal study by Crookston, offered a practice in its infancy with the foundation needed to build a profession. He proposed a

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five-step process for developmental advising, including exploration of life goals, exploration of career goals, program choice, course choice, and course selection. He suggested that a team approach, shared by faculty advisors and professional advisors, could be an efficient manner for the delivery of advising services, with each member participating in the process according to his or her competencies and interests.

The developmental advising approach advances far beyond the traditional advising agenda as advising practices are considered a critical service in assisting students with their educational planning and are enhanced to include educational, personal, and vocational goal setting, as well as the traditional scheduling of classes. Frost (1991) suggests that the Crookston— O'Banion era signaled a philosophical shift in the profession, as advising was recognized as "an activity at the heart of institutional action that meets students' broad educational needs…[encouraging] advisors to go beyond arranging schedules and [to] bring continuity to the experiences students encounter in the college environment" (p. 4-5).

When I think about my work as an advisor, and in my conversations with others in the profession, the framework I like to use to talk about the work we do offers a definition of developmental advising intended to guide the practitioner. My framework is based on the nature of shared responsibility in the advisor-advisee relationship and is rooted in my experience. In my opinion, developmental academic advising may be framed using a series of questions. These five questions need not be asked specifically; instead, they provide a blueprint for the dialogue that may occur in a developmental advising encounter. In this model, the encounter centers on "The Five Ws":

1). Who are you? The initial stage of the interaction establishes the student's name, classification, intended or selected major, and hobbies or academic and extracurricular interests; 2). Where have you been? The second area of interest outlines the student's "history," allowing the student to detail where he or she has previously lived and attended school, as well as past accomplishments and academic record; 3). Where are you going? Career interests, aspirations, and goals for the future are explored in the third stage. This shifts the focus from past experience to goal setting for the future; 4). What knowledge and skills must you acquire to achieve your goals? In the fourth stage, the student, with the guidance of an advisor, investigates major and course choices, appropriate extracurricular activities intended to enhance the educational experience, the possible need for additional education and/or training, as well as special needs such as remediation, tutoring, or special skills enhancement (i.e. time management, study skills); 5). What can I do to assist you? The final stage establishes the continuity of the advising relationship and allows for appropriate referral to ancillary services to assist the student with his or her specific, individual needs. The advisor and advisee explore the type of advising relationship they would like to maintain and establish a meeting schedule to assess the student's progress toward his or her academic and personal goals.

It is my opinion that the progression through these steps may not occur in one advising encounter. In fact, several advising sessions may be needed to explore the full range of topics inherent in developmental advising.

In my experience, many advising sessions, depending on the student's presenting problem or immediate concern, may be more prescriptive in nature. However, it is

important to note that the establishment of a caring relationship is critical to the process. Caring may be demonstrated in both prescriptive and developmental advising sessions, but is the essential element in the effectiveness of the developmental advising encounter. Without honest, sincere care on the part of the advisor, the legitimacy of the advising relationship and the effectiveness of the developmental advising encounter are questionable at best.

Ender, Winston, and Miller (1984) define developmental advising as " a systematic process based on a close student-advisor relationship intended to aid students in achieving educational, career, and personal goals through the utilization of the full range of instructional and community resources" (p. 19). Their concept included several assertions including the importance of a continuity of contacts between a student and his or her advisor, encounters characterized by "the establishment of a caring human relationship—one in which the advisor must take primary responsibility" (p. 20). Clearly, the importance and quality of a *caring relationship* had gained recognition. Once defined primarily as a scheduling activity, academic advising increasingly developed into an activity characterized by a relationship grounded in care.

As caring is so frequently cited as a component of "good advising" it is important to ask: How is the concept of care defined? What characterizes a caring advising relationship? Rogers (1961), writing from a psychotherapist's perspective, identified caring as "unconditional positive regard" (p. 10), one of three necessary conditions in a positive counselor-client relationship. Mayeroff (1971) suggests, "To care for another person, in the most significant sense, is to help him grow and actualize himself" (p. 1).

Reflecting on the work of Noddings (1984), Goldstein (1997) asserts, "Caring is not

something you are, but rather something you engage in, something you do" (p. 14).

According to Thayer-Bacon (1993):

> Caring about another (whether another person's ideas, other life forms, or even inanimate objects) requires respecting the other as a separate, autonomous being, worthy of caring. Caring [gives] value to another, by denoting that the other is worth attending to in a serious or close manner (p. 325).

Any discussion of the nature of caring would be incomplete without reference to

the work of Nel Noddings, author of the influential work, *Caring* (1984). Building on the

philosophical work of Martin Buber, in *Caring,* Noddings examines the ethic of care and

defines the concept: "To care is to act not by fixed rule but by affection and regard" (p.

24). Noddings focuses on the caring relation, the interaction between the person giving

care, the one-caring, and the recipient of that care, the cared-for, and contends that

asymmetry characterizes this caring relationship.

> A caring relation requires contributions from both parties in the relation. The one-caring, or carer, comes with a certain attitude, and the cared-for recognizes and responds to this attitude. The relation provides a foundation of trust for teaching and counseling alike (Witherell & Noddings, 1991, p.6)

Noddings proposes that each caring encounter between the one-caring and the

cared-for is enhanced through the process of *receptive engrossment*, as the one-caring

offers nonselective attention or total presence to the cared-for for the duration of the

encounter. In addition, as motive energy flows in the direction of the needs of the cared-

for, *motivational displacement* occurs. She explains:

> Caring involves stepping out of one's own personal frame of reference into the other's. When we care, we consider the other's point of view, his objective needs, and what he expects from us. Our attention, our mental engrossment is on the cared-for, not on ourselves (Noddings, 1984, p. 24).

Noddings's caring encounter is completed by an acknowledgment from the cared-for that the care has been received. This *reciprocity* is essential to the caring encounter; the recognition and spontaneous response of the cared-for is required to complete the cycle inherent in Noddings's caring encounter. She offers:

> This responsiveness need not take the form of gratitude or even of direct acknowledgment. Rather, the cared-for shows either in direct response to the one-caring or in spontaneous delight and happy growth before her eyes that the caring has been received (p. 181).

Noddings's theoretical perspective has been investigated in its application to a number of disciplines. Freedberg (1993) examined the application of Noddings's theory to the practical domain of social work. In particular, Freedberg explored the dynamic tension between the female social worker's commitment to care and the assertion of her professional role, proposing the transformation of the professional relationship from one of caring to one of commitment and empowerment, where scholarship and caring concern are independent. Goldstein (1997, 1998) examined the ethic of care and its application to the practices of early childhood education. Arguing that educators must develop an understanding of care that is rooted in scholarly research and theory, Goldstein provides a thorough overview of Noddings's notion of the caring encounter, applying these tenets to the classroom setting.

Applying Noddings's notion of caring to elementary education, Collinson, Killeavey, and Stephenson (1998) studied the work of 12 teachers identified as "exemplary" by their peers and principals, concluding that teaching was "a profession in which an ethic of care should be central" (p. 3). Marshall, Patterson, Rogers, and Steele (1996) applied Noddings's theory to the field of educational administration, proposing

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that an ethic of care can provide school administrators with an ethical framework to guide moral reasoning and administrative decision-making. Additionally, Noblit, Rogers, and McCadden (1995) support the use of Noddings's notion in school administration, stating, "We, of course, support the efforts to reorganize the structure of schooling to promote caring. Revolutions in the educational systems…are worthy objectives" (p. 680).

Though this theory has been examined in other areas, Noddings's ideas have not previously been applied to the academic advising relationship. Her characteristics of a caring encounter—receptive engrossment, motivational displacement, and receptivity— and her descriptions of the one-caring and the cared-for appropriately provide a framework from which an academic advisor may expand his or her understanding of the nature of the developmental advising relationship and enhance his or her skills to better serve the student population. The application of this theory guides the principal research question examined in this dissertation: *In what ways is caring enacted and demonstrated in academic advising?* This qualitative investigation explores the nature of care in the academic advising relationship and helps us to understand more fully the role caring plays in advising practices.

In this study, the work of professional academic advisors from the University of Texas at Austin who have been identified by their peers as advisors who place caring among their highest professional priorities will be examined. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature related to caring and academic advising. Chapter Three summarizes the research design utilized to study the caring advising of professional advisors on one campus. In Chapter Four the findings of the study are discussed and

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interpretation and analysis of the significant themes developed from the data are provided. Finally, the guiding research questions and the implications of the results of the study will be addressed in Chapter Five. In this final chapter recommendations for academic advising practice are provided along with suggestions for further research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In order to understand the ways in which caring plays a role in the work of undergraduate advisors, it is important to examine competing definitions of advising and caring. This chapter provides an overview of the literature related to both areas of interest and offers a background of knowledge from which this study evolves.

Studies of Caring in Advising

College and university academic advising is a profession in metamorphosis. As the needs of students change, the nature of the advising relationship also changes. Upcraft and Stephens (2000) contend:

> Clearly, in light of changing student demographics and characteristics, academic advising is now a multirole job of part course scheduler, part remedial expert, part personal counselor, part career counselor, part financial aid resource, and part just about everything else students need when they cross our doorsteps. So our roles are changing as our students change (p. 80).

Few scholars have investigated the nature of the caring relationship and its significance in academic advising. An exhaustive review of the literature in academic advising reveals that, frequently, caring is neither defined nor examined specifically, but is more often mentioned as an important characteristic inherent in the relational dyad or cited as an important element in an advising delivery model. For example, Frost (1994) establishes an advising model along a continuum. She lists care as a primary component in the progression: 1) Establish a caring working relationship, 2) Help students clarify goals, 3) Discuss the relevance of higher education and liberal studies, 4) Encourage thinking about life and career planning, 5) Relate interest and abilities to plans, 6) Assist in exploring and selecting majors, 7) Provide a rationale for requirements, 8) Help select

and schedule courses, 9) Monitor academic progress, and 10) Encourage students to explore options, become involved, and use campus resources (p. 57). The significance of the caring relation is mentioned first in the model as a fundamental component for the achievement of the established goals of the developmental advising relationship. It is important to note, however, that Frost's model encourages the establishment of a caring relation, but never mentions the importance of sustaining or extending care. This fact is a limitation of her work. Additionally, Frost does not root caring in any philosophical perspective.

Care emerges as a key component in advising as Ford and Ford (1989) present a summary of the literature in academic advising that supports their view that a caring attitude is essential to the success of the advising relationship. They list a number of advising and retention studies that mention care as a fundamental characteristic of developmental advising. The articles listed in Ford and Ford's summary mention caring as a crucial element in advising, though none are tied to a theoretical or philosophical perspective. Among the studies noted, the What Works in Student Retention (WWISR) study, conducted by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities in 1987, concludes "the factor perceived to be the most important contributor to student retention… is a caring attitude of faculty and staff." Additionally, Ford and Ford point to several published articles that provide recommendations for effective academic advising that give primacy to caring as an essential element in the process. For example, Crockett's (1988) twelve "Characteristics of the Effective Advisor" includes as the second attribute the advisor's commitment to "demonstrate a concern and a caring

attitude toward advisees." Similarly, the *Thirty Reminders for Effective Advising* published by the American College Testing Program (1979), includes as its first recommendation: "Care about advisees as people by showing empathy, understanding, and respect." The second reminder urges advisors to "Establish warm, genuine, and open relationships. " while the third reminder encourages, "Evidence interest, helpful intent, and involvement." Reminders four and five challenge advising professionals to "Be a good listener" and to "Establish rapport by remembering personal information about advisees." Finally, the last recommendation states, "Be yourself and allow advisees to be themselves." Of the 30 reminders for effective advising, a fourth of them are related to interpersonal relationship skills, critical in the establishment of a caring advising relationship.

While most studies have focused on the characteristics of the advisor, only a few have examined the wants and needs of the student advisee. Most of these studies have not surveyed preferences related to the relational aspects of the advisor/advisee dyad, but rather the nature—be it prescriptive or developmental—of the advising encounter. For example, Winston and Sandor (1984) explore the advising preferences of college students. Utilizing the prescriptive/developmental definitions of advising advanced by Crookston (1972), 306 students at a public research university were surveyed to ascertain student preferences for one or both types of advising. Winston and Sandor suggest that the findings confirm that students prefer an advising relationship that can be characterized as developmental. In contrast, Fielstein's (1989) quantitative study samples 90 undergraduate students from a land-grant institution to determine their personal

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preferences between developmental advising practices and the more traditional prescriptive relationship. A review of the ratings of particular advising activities, both prescriptive and developmental in nature, indicates that the students surveyed prefer a combination of these two advising roles. Fielstein's study further suggests that the degree of personal involvement desired depends upon the issues presented. Additionally, she suggests that the advisor should be aware of the diversity of student needs and attentive to the "unique combination of both the developmental and prescriptive advising needs of [each] individual student" (p. 37).

Regarding the advising relationship, Frost (1991) asserts that empirical research indicates that "the preferences of students and advisors are addressed when each participates in fulfilling the requirements of an advising relationship…[centering] around the needs of students, not the needs of colleges…[suggesting] that advising is more meaningful when viewed as a teaching process, not as a product" (p. 15).

Research also suggests that college freshmen rate as developmental those advisors who show interest in student academic and extracurricular progress and experiences, and explore with students the factors contributing to student success (Frost, 1991). Additionally, research indicates that the developmental nature of the advising relationship between an advisor and freshmen appears to be enhanced by regularly scheduled contact, which also heightens the students' satisfaction with advising (Chambliss & Fago, 1987; Frost, 1991).

Recently, Grites and Gordon (2000) summarized the overarching goal of developmental advising and its significant role in student success. They contend:

All academic advisors must continue to demonstrate their availability to students who seek their advice; their knowledge of the institution with its curriculum, resources, and opportunities; their compassion for student learning through the advising process; and their eagerness to improve upon their own (advising) knowledge and skills. When this happens, we will be blessed with caring and effective advisors, regardless of their academic training and experiences or their conceptual frameworks, whose students will truly be engaged in learning at the core of their higher education experience (p. 14).

Again, although care is mentioned as a key component in advising in each of these studies, virtually no effort has been made to define what is meant by "caring" or to describe what caring looks like or what it entails. Nor has caring theory been applied in any way within the context of the developmental advising encounter. This dissertation will make a significant contribution in this area.

Studies in Caring

According to Gordon, Benner, and Noddings (1996), "Because the content of caregiving—while valued privately and romanticized publicly—remains invisible in our society, an appreciation of these practices, skills, and knowledge is essential" (p. viii). Tarlow (1996) argues that the majority of the research on caring has centered around a single substantive area such as child care or nursing and that "little research looks at the relationship of caring" (p. 56). Scholars such as Gordon, Benner, and Noddings (1996) and Goldstein (1997) have noted that caring has often been described as too warm and fuzzy, too amorphous, too vague to focus on. Caring, they suggest, is not a concept easily embraced or acknowledged by the research community as one that holds merit for scholarly inquiry. Benner and Gordon (1996) lament, "To say [that] someone is a 'caring person' seems to cloak them with a blanket of light…because of the positive meaning of the word, it has become a cultural cliché and a vehicle for media manipulation" (p. 40).

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However, despite the speculation of the positivist research community, for the past several years a growing number of scholars in the caring professions such as nursing, education, social work, and counseling, as well as those in sociology, history, religion, and feminism have developed a rich body of inquiry in the world of caring (Gordon, Benner, & Noddings, 1996).

Noddings (1992) defines an ethic of care as "a needs- and response-based ethic" (p. 21). Care, in an ethical context, was initially examined in the research of Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984). Gilligan (1982) links responsibility with the concept of care and argues that responsibility and care originate from the developmental experiences of women, which are typically grounded in the meaningful connections with others.

Tarlow's (1996) research aims to generate a "full, grounded, and theoretically useful concept of caring" (p. 56). Interviewing participants in three sub-samples—families, schools, and voluntary agencies—in order to identify concepts that interview subjects identified as central to caring relationships, Tarlow summarizes eight caring concepts that emerge from the research interviews. She concludes that the following eight concepts are integral components of caring relations: Time (availability and the amount of time invested in the caring relation); "Be there" (the caring person is present and prepared to help the person cared-for; the care-giver is approachable, accessible, and welcoming); "Talking" (depicted as a means of building and maintaining relationships through honest, open, frequent, and spontaneous communication); Sensitivity; Acting in the Best Interest of the Other ("empowering" to foster the cared-for's independence in the future); Caring is a Feeling (caring about others means having positive feelings of

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concern or affection for the cared-for); Caring is Doing (caring is a process; it involves 'doing for others'); and Reciprocity (similar to Noddings's definition, reciprocal relations assumed a mutual sense of obligation and responsibility) (p. 76).

Gilligan (1982), Noddings (1984), and Beck (1992) stress the need for those in relational-based work settings to acknowledge and appreciate the practice of the ethic of care. In practicing the ethic of care, the authors contend, professionals in the human services respond to the needs of others.

In this dissertation, care, specifically Noddings's notion of the caring encounter, was examined within the context of the academic advisor—student advisee relationship. Within all the relatively new scholarly interest and research in caring, Noddings's work seems to translate ideally to the advising relationship, befitting further investigation and clarification in this literature review.

According to Noddings (1984), in a caring relation the one-caring meets the cared-for with receptive engrossment and undergoes a motivational displacement toward the projects of the cared-for. This relational dyad is inherent in the advising relationship between an advisor and his or her assigned student. The caring advising encounter may be brief or occasional and the relationship may strengthen over time with increased contact between the two. Even in a single advising session the characteristics of Noddings's caring encounter may be present. This form of caring, according to Noddings, "does not [imply] romantic love or the sort of pervasive and compulsive 'thinking of the other' that characterizes infatuation. It means, rather, that the one-caring

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receives the other, for the interval of caring, completely and nonselectively" (Noddings, 1984, p. 176).

Engrossment

According to Noddings, engrossment may last only a few minutes and it may or may not be repeated in future encounters, but this rich form of attention is essential in any caring encounter. She asserts, "To say that the soul empties itself of all its own contents in order to receive the other describes well what I mean by engrossment" (1992, p. 16). Engrossment involves an effort to hear and feel fully what the cared-for is trying to convey. "Feeling with" according to Noddings involves reception, not projection. Instead of "putting oneself in the other's shoes" and asking, "How would I feel in this situation?" in Noddings's definition, the one-caring must resist the temptation to analyze the feelings as objective data and plan a course of action, to "fix the problem" so to speak. Rather, the one-caring receives the other and strives to see and feel with her or him. In the context of the academic advising relationship, which is often characterized as an encounter with the principal goal of "helping students plan their courses of study" the tendency to focus on finding solutions to presenting problems or academic issues is great. When the solution becomes the focus of the encounter, receptivity and engrossment are compromised. Noddings (1984) argues:

> Warm acceptance and trust [are] important in all caring relations…it is clear that caring is completed in all relationships through the apprehension of caring by the cared-for. When this attitude is missed, the one who is the object of the caretaking feels like an object. He is being treated, handled by formula. When it is present and recognized, the natural effectance motivation is enhanced (p. 65).

She emphasizes that sometimes the "outcome" is not the most important goal of the encounter, but rather "being with someone can be just as important, or more important than doing something to or for that person. Learning how to be with people, to respect where they are at [sic] and stop doing for them, is [an] integral part of the education in caring practice" (p. 47).

Motivational Displacement

In motivational displacement, when the motive energy of the one-caring flows in the direction of the cared-for's needs and projects, the one caring feels with the other and acts in his or her behalf. According to Noddings, this is the "fundamental aspect of caring from the inside" (p. 28). In caring there exists a displacement of interest from the reality of the one-caring to the reality of the other. Noddings explains:

> When we see the other's reality as a possibility for us, we must act to eliminate the intolerable, to reduce the pain, to fill the need, to actualize the dream. When I am in this sort of relationship with another, when the other's reality becomes a real possibility for me, I care" (p. 14).

Mayeroff (1971) offers a similar explanation: "To care for the other, I must see the other as it is and not as I would like it to be or feel it must be" (p. 25). He continues:

> To care for another person, I must be able to understand him and his world as if I were inside it. I must be able to see, with his eyes what his world is like to him and how he sees himself. Instead of merely looking at him in a detached way from the outside. As if he were a specimen, I must be able to be *with* him in his world, "going" into his world in order to sense from the "inside" what life is like for him, what he is striving to be, and what he requires to grow (p. 53-54).

Again, because of the tendency for academic advisors and others in the helping professions to want to find quick solutions to "fix" problems, motivational displacement may be a difficult concept to grasp. Noddings indicates that caring may, at times,

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"gradually or abruptly be transformed into abstract problem solving. There is, then, a shift of focus from the cared-for to the 'problem'" (p. 25). Though perhaps difficult to understand or challenging to achieve, motivational displacement is essential in Noddings's vision of the caring encounter and when it is evidenced in a caring advising relationship it strengthens the bond between student and advisor and provides a critical element in the richness of the encounter.

Reciprocity

      This final stage in the cyclical pattern of caring completes Noddings's notion of the caring encounter. Reciprocity is essential to the process; this acknowledgement conveys to the one-caring that the caring has been received by the cared-for. In a caring relation between a teacher and a student, the student who is cared-for responds by engaging fully in an educational pursuit, such as a lesson or a project. As the student grows, the teacher witnesses the student's enthusiastic engagement and knows that the teaching has had a desirable effect (Witherell & Noddings, 1991). In a caring advising encounter, receptivity may be conveyed to the caring advisor in a student's warm response, "Thank you for helping me," or through the growth he or she experiences as witnessed by the advisor. Noddings (1984) notes that the cared-for may "turn freely to his own projects, pursue them vigorously, and share his accounts of them spontaneously" (p. 75). Among her most salient explanations of reciprocity, the following seems particularly relevant to the caring advising relation:

The caring relation requires…a form of responsiveness or reciprocity on the part of the cared-for. It is important to re-emphasize that this reciprocity is not contractual; that is, it is not characterized by mutuality. The cared-for contributes to the caring relation [by] receiving the efforts of the one-caring, and this receiving may be accomplished by a disclosure of his own subjective experience in direct response to the one-caring or by a happy and vigorous pursuit of his own projects (p. 150-151).

Noddings (1991) emphasizes the need for educators to value and enact caring. An ethic of care is based on connection, recognition of needs, and responses to those needs in a situational context. In arguing for the transformation of schools to caring environments, she contends that the application of the ethic of care should be the primary guide for decision-making.

Noddings (1996) also discusses the issues of time and mutuality as they relate to the development of caring relationships. These issues are particularly relevant to the academic advising relationship, as caring encounters in advising may occur once in a brief episode or the caring relation may develop over an extended period of time. She indicates that some relationships are unequal in nature: teacher-student, nurse-patient, social worker-client, and, indeed, academic advisor-student advisee. While these relationships exemplify situations in which the first member of the dyad has "almost exclusive responsibility as carer "(p. 160), the second member of the dyad contributes reciprocally and the relation can be characterized as one that is caring. Noddings stresses the importance of remembering that the basic caring relation is an encounter. Her description of the caring encounter does not demand that one caring and cared-for are permanent labels for individuals. Mature relationships, she argues, are characteristically mutual, allowing opportunities for both participants in the encounter to change places;

"both members are carers and cared-fors as opportunities arise" (Noddings, 1992, p. 17).

She emphasizes:

> I do not need to establish a deep, lasting, time-consuming personal relationship with every student. What I must do is be totally and nonselectively present to the student—to each student—as he addresses me. The time interval may be brief but the encounter is total (Noddings, 1996, p. 180).

In advising, as in teaching or any profession in which opportunities are present for the development of lasting relationships with some and brief caring encounters with others, some student-advisor relationships will continue for several years, while others will last only briefly. It is important to realize that both types of relationships can be rewarding for the student and the advisor if they are characterized by a commitment to care.

Goldstein (1998) builds on Noddings's model in her work, *More Than Gentle Smiles and Warm Hugs: Applying the Ethic of Care to Early Childhood Education*. Goldstein links Noddings's model to the education of young children, using narratives describing life in a caring classroom to illustrate how the ethic of care can be used to enhance understanding of what it means to be caring teachers. Goldstein offers evidence of receptivity, engrossment, motivational displacement, and reciprocity in her study of the teaching in Martha George's classroom.

Goldstein's method provides a foundation for this inquiry, as here Noddings's work was used as a framework for understanding the caring practice of academic advisors. Looking for the features at the core of Noddings's understanding of caring: receptive engrossment, motivational displacement, and reciprocity, in the work of advisors offeed a starting place for this research. Realizing that this framework was only

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a place to begin and because this was a qualitative study, the author approached this

research with the assumption that other important themes and ideas would emerge during

data gathering and analysis. In Chapter Four, these themes and characteristics related to

caring advising will be explored fully.

Chapter Three – Research Methodology

Research in the field of academic advising has been limited. According to Habley (2000b), "Much of the effort in advising [research] has been focused on theories and concepts, show-and-tell statistics that describe numbers and percentages" (p. 6). Indeed, most advising research is quantitative in nature. Certainly, qualitative research has a place in the scholarly study of academic advising. In arguing for a comprehensive research agenda for the advising profession, McGillin (2000) notes, "Few studies of advising have investigated the advisor's contribution to the relationship" (p. 366). Additionally, McGillin contends

> We must better conceptualize the multidimensional nature of advising encounters and ensure advising's place as a critical component of faculty teaching activities and as the professional responsibility of full-time advisors…We must study what advisors do. Observational and reflective studies of advising encounters may provide understanding of effective practices and the meanings generated by both advisor and advisee (p. 374).

This chapter describes the research methodology and the overall design of the study, including participant selection, data collection and analysis. In addition, the perspective, positionality, and background of the researcher are explored.

The Interpretivist/Constructivist Paradigm

According to Patton (1990), qualitative methods allow the researcher to study a selected issue in depth and detail. Patton explains that qualitative methods are "particularly oriented toward exploration, discovery, and inductive logic" (p. 44). A qualitative approach is inductive in that the researcher attempts to make sense of the situation under investigation without imposing preexisting expectations on the

phenomenon being studied. Theories about what is occurring in a given setting are grounded in direct experience with the phenomenon rather than imposed on the setting through deductive constructions or hypotheses (Patton, 1990).

Glesne (1999) contends that qualitative methods are generally supported by the "interpretivist (also referred to as constructivist) paradigm, which portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing" (p. 5). She continues:

> The ontological belief for interpretivists, therefore, is that social realities are constructed by the participants in those social settings. To understand the nature of constructed realities, qualitative researchers seek out the variety of perspectives; they do not try to reduce the multiple interpretations to a norm (p. 5).

Constructivist inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) utilizes multiple sources of data collection, typically interviewing, observation, and document analysis. According to Manning (1999), data analysis in constructivist inquiry is "conducted through an inductive process of culling patterns and themes from the data rather than fitting the data, through deductive reasoning, into categories determined in advance" (p. 12). Manning argues that the differences between constructivist inquiry and traditional quantitative research lie at the level of beliefs or assumptions; the emergent paradigm underscores this method. The assumptions of the emergent paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) include the following: (1) The respondent and the researcher have a collaborative, close relationship; (2) the results of the research are not generalizable to all contexts. Insight, meaning, and understanding, rather than broad application, are the goals of the research; (3) there are multiple truths that are socially constructed and depend on the points of view of those involved in the research (Manning, 1999).

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In this qualitative study, the exemplary practices of professional academic

advisors at The University of Texas at Austin were examined in order to advance the

understanding of the phenomenon of caring and its role in the academic advising

relationship and to contribute to the growing body of knowledge in this area.

Sampling

Qualitative inquiry typically focuses on relatively small samples selected

purposefully (Patton, 1990). In purposeful sampling, information-rich cases, those from

which one can learn a great deal about the central issues of the research, are selected for

in-depth study. Merriam (1988) explains, "Purposeful sampling is based on the

assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and

therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 61).   In this

study, a purposeful sampling selection process was used to identify academic advisors

who exemplify caring in their advising practices. The researcher surveyed members of

the advisory council of the Academic Counselors Association (ACA) at The University

of Texas at Austin, first, asking them to brainstorm and define the characteristics of

"caring advising." After recording the responses and posting them on the wall, the

advisory council members were asked to write down the names of two or three advising

colleagues they regarded as caring advisors. The names were written on individual index

cards and given to the researcher privately; the council members did not share the names

they had written with others in the group. Building on the sampling technique utilized by

Ladson-Billings (1994) in *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African-American

children*, the researcher believed that the 12 members of the ACA advisory council, all

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veteran professional advisors familiar with the advising practices of their colleagues (many of whom were supervised by or collaborated with advisory council members) would provide a thorough list of names for review. From this list of 36 names it was noted that 10 names appeared multiple times. These10 academic advisors, identified as caring professionals by their colleagues, were then solicited for inclusion in the study. (The letter of request for participation is presented in Appendix A). Unlike Thayer-Bacon and Bacon (1996), whose sampling procedures in their study of caring in the college and university classroom seemed to rely strictly on their *own* perception and identification of caring colleagues, caring advisors were identified for this investigation with the assistance of a group of experts. Rather than starting with Noddings's (1984) definition of caring and forcing this definition on the group, the researcher wanted these experts to identify colleagues who embodied caring characteristics based on the group's shared operational definition. Building on their expertise, the advisory council participants formed a sample pool representative of those whom they see as caring in their work. As no one has ever articulated this shared, implicit definition, examining the individuals chosen by their peers and working backwards toward a definition of what it means to be a caring advisor accomplish this task.

The specific number of advisors to be studied was not predetermined. Rather, the researcher decided to observe and interview the 10 selected professionals until saturation in the data was reached.

Although Glesne and Peshkin (1992) warn against engaging in research undertaken within one's own institution, or with colleagues or friends, "backyard

research" was necessary in this study for several reasons. First, The University of Texas at Austin is among the most active institutions in the country in the field of academic advising. For the past 10 years, University of Texas officials have embraced academic advising as a primary tool to enhance student success, retention, and satisfaction. As a result, every college in the university has designated faculty and professional advisors to serve its undergraduate population in the pursuit of their degrees. The Academic Counselors Association (ACA) on the Austin campus had over 200 active members at the time of the study, all of whom were involved in the direct delivery of academic advising. In addition, many of these advisors were highly trained and actively involved in professional development through their membership in the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA). Many were considered leaders in the profession. For four years prior to the study, The University of Texas at Austin had sent the largest number of participants to NACADA's annual conference. Second, as a professional advisor and a member of The University of Texas advising community, the researcher had the unique opportunity to study the work of colleagues and highlight their achievements in providing an atmosphere that allows for caring relationships to develop between advisors and the students who seek their guidance. The researcher asked himself, "Why leave this campus to find research participants when so many information-rich exemplars exist at this institution?"

Glesne (1999) points to the fact that backyard research is attractive for a number of reasons including ready access to participants, time reduction in the various research steps, and the ease in establishing rapport. However, she cautions researchers to be fully

aware of the potential problems associated with involvement in and commitment to a familiar territory. In engaging in a study in his home institution with colleagues and, in some cases, even close friends, the researcher understood the risks inherent in introducing the monikers of "researcher," "observer," "participant," and "subject," and realized that he would need to proceed with care in establishing and maintaining these new roles.

<u>Data Collection</u>

Data collection began with the assistance of 10 willing participants. These advising colleagues collectively represented 125 years of experience in the advising profession. The sample spanned across disciplines on The University of Texas at Austin campus; the professional advisors who agreed to participate in the research provided advising services in business, education, architecture, psychology, computer sciences, journalism, and Spanish. In addition, eight of the selected advisors had been recognized for their exemplary work as recipients of the James Vick Texas Excellence Award for Academic Advising, a campus-based honor. Five of the participants had been selected for national recognition as winners of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) Outstanding Advisor Award. Without question, this sample certainly represented "the best of the best."

Data collection methods in constructivist research include observation, interviewing, and document analysis (Manning, 1990). In this dissertation, observation and interviewing were utilized as the predominant methods for collecting data.

Observation

According to Patton (1990), "to understand fully the complexities of many situations, direct participation in and observation of the phenomenon of interest may be the best research method" (p. 25). To construct a profile of the caring advisor, the 10 advisors selected were observed in their work with advisees. Each of the selected advisors was videotaped as they led advising sessions with student advisees. The observation period with each advisor lasted roughly three to four hours. Over a period of four months, a total of 52 students were observed and videotaped, averaging just over five students per advisor. The author observed and wrote field notes on all encounters, excluding drop-in visits. Videotaping the advising sessions allowed the researcher to observe the individual encounters numerous times and permitted a review of selected sessions to be reviewed later with the advisor participants. Videotaping enhances observation, as Grimshaw (in Bottorff, 1994) maintains, describing the primary advantages of videotaping as density and permanence. The density of data collected with videotape is greater than that of pure observation or audio recording, and the nature of the record is permanent; it is possible to return to the observation repeatedly. Glesne (1999) argues, "for microanalysis or focusing on one aspect of everyday interaction, videotaping is invaluable" (p. 57).

The researcher's role during the observation phase of the study was primarily what Glesne (1999) describes as *observer as participant*. She defines this role as one in which the researcher remains primarily an observer but has some interaction with study participants. During each session, each advisor and student advisee were permitted to communicate without interruption or intrusion from the researcher.

At the end of each advising session, the researcher debriefed with each advisor and student participant separately, allowing for questions or clarification on points discussed during the session. Debriefing was initiated after turning off the video camera, following the advice of Kvale (1996), who emphasizes, "Debriefing is likely to occur after the tape recorder has been turned off…The interviewee may bring up topics he or she did not feel safe raising with the tape recorder on" (p. 128).

Participant Interviews

Because it is impossible to observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions and because it is not possible to observe situations or behaviors that took place at a previous point in time, it is necessary to ask questions to clarify these points. Patton (1990) suggests, "The purpose of interviewing is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective" (p. 278).

In the weeks following the observation phase, the researcher met individually with each of the advisor participants. Each meeting was scheduled to last one hour, during which each participant watched one or two of his or her taped sessions, followed by a brief discussion specifically about the sessions and a general discussion about advising and his or her experiences in the profession. Before meeting with each of the advisors, the researcher watched the videotape of their recorded sessions in order to determine which sessions the advisor would be shown. The researcher selected encounters for each advisor that illustrated rich examples of caring behaviors exhibited by the particular advisor, as well as the impact these behaviors appeared to have on the student advisee.

Through the use of participant interviews, each advisor's understanding of the caring encounter was explored. Each advisor was interviewed after viewing his or her taped advising sessions selected for analysis. In this phase of the study, the interview guide technique described by Patton (1990) was utilized. Patton provides the following explanation for this approach:

> An interview guide is a list of questions or issues that are to be explored in the course of an interview. An interview guide is prepared in order to make sure that the same information is obtained from a number of people by covering the same material. The interview guide provides topics or subject areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject (p. 283).

Beginning with a standard list of questions but remaining free to build a conversation within a particular subject area, the researcher made certain that the desired topics were discussed in each interview, but also allowed the conversation to flow naturally. The advisor interview guide is presented in Appendix B.

Later the researcher also contacted and conducted an in-depth interview with four of the students who had been advised during the observation period. Again, using the interview guide approach, each student was questioned about his or her advising session and the relationships they had established with their respective advisors. The students selected for interviews were those who, in the opinion of the researcher, had demonstrated certain characteristics in the session that indicated that they had strong feelings about their advisor or advising in general. One student, for example, had expressed deep gratitude for her advisor's work at the end of the observation. Feeling certain this student could provide relevant data for this study, the researcher contacted her a few days later and asked her to participate in an individual interview.   All interviews

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were audio recorded and later transcribed for analysis. The student interview guide is presented in Appendix C.

It was important that all advisor and student participants were approached in a caring way, offering all the courtesy and protection possible. Before the interviews and observations, a summary statement was given to each advisor and student participant informing them of (1) the purpose of the study, (2) the identity of the researcher and why the study was being conducted, (3) the selection of the study site and participants, (4) the questions that would be asked, (5) the promise of confidentiality and anonymity to the participants, (6) the length of the observation and/or interview, (7) the intentional use of the results, (8) the storage and eventual discarding of video and audio tapes and written documents, and (9) the possible benefits and risks to the participant. In addition, informed consent forms were signed by student and advisor participants as required by the University's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, to assure that all participants understood the points covered in the summary statement. Student advisees under the age of 18 were not included as participants in the study. Informed consent documents are presented in Appendix D and Appendix E.

Data Recording

Field notes were written and reviewed after each interview and observation. According to Patton (1990), field notes "contain the descriptive information that [permit] the observer to return to that observation later during analysis and eventually permit the reader of the study findings to experience the activity observed through the research report" (p. 239). The field notes reflected what was observed, heard, experienced, and

thought as data obtained through the participant interviews and observations were collected and analyzed. These field notes became part of the raw data of the analysis process. Field notes and audio and videotaped interview data were transcribed for analysis and interpretation.

Analytic memos were used throughout the research process. These reflections, observations, and thoughts were written in a *reflexive journal.* Lincoln and Guba, (1985) define reflexive journals as "introspective journals that display the investigator's mind processes, philosophical position, and bases of decisions about the inquiry" (p. 109). Glesne (1999) recommends after each interview or participant observation a researcher take time for reflective and analytic noting. She suggests:

> This is the time to write down feelings, work out problems, jot down ideas and impressions, clarify earlier interpretations, speculate about what is going on, and make flexible short- and long-term plans for the days to come (p. 53).

The analytic memos recorded in the reflexive journal provided an opportunity to reflect and question aspects of the study. Considering a hectic work schedule and daily commute to and from campus, the researcher found it helpful to keep a taped reflexive journal, recording thoughts and reactions as they surfaced, and later transcribing these thoughts in the written journal for ongoing interpretation, questioning, and development of possible themes across data sources.

The Role and Perspective of the Researcher

As a career academic advisor, I have a vested professional interest in the outcome of this study. Caring is the hallmark of my practice in advising and I have personally witnessed the benefits and rewards of establishing caring relationships with student

advisees. With this personal investment in the phenomenon, I realized the potential for researcher bias in conducting this study. By continuously exploring my own subjectivity, writing memos before and after my interviews and observations, I worked to address researcher bias, reflecting on my pre-conceived opinions and subjectivity. Through the use of multiple data collection procedures, I addressed what Merriam (1998) defines as a central element of qualitative research—"the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (p. 7). Because the researcher is the instrument in qualitative inquiry, validity, according to Patton (1990) "hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing fieldwork" (p. 14).

Additionally, my position as researcher, or "reflexivity" which Merriam (2002) defines as "the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, the 'human as instrument' (p. 26), and my position as in insider in the topic area explored influenced my decision to use first person narrative in places I deemed appropriate in the text. Particularly, my voice will be heard extensively in Chapters Four and Five.

Trustworthiness

According to Upcraft and Schuh (1996), qualitative researchers often use the standard of trustworthiness, developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to establish the rigor of their assessment. The criteria for assessing qualitative approaches as trustworthy include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility of data and interpretations are established by triangulation (using multiple methods of data collection and multiple data sources), peer debriefing (using a peer researcher to ferret out researcher bias and to help the researcher focus on personal

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perspectives), and respondent debriefing or member checking (reviewing data, interpretations and conclusions with participants) (Whitt, 1991).

To establish trustworthiness and ensure the rigor of the study, multiple data collection methods (interviews and observation) and multiple data sources (advisors and the students they advise) were utilized to triangulate the data. According to Patton (1990), "triangulation is a powerful solution to the problem of relying too much on a single source or method, thereby undermining the validity and credibility of findings because of the weakness of any single method" (p. 193).

In addition, to clarify and respond to researcher bias, the researcher reflected upon his own subjectivity and how it was used and monitored in the research. Ongoing personal dialogue recorded in the reflexive journal allowed the researcher to address these concerns as they surfaced in the study.

Finally, all field notes, patterns and themes derived from the data, interpretations, and drafts were member checked by the research participants for clarification, accuracy, verification, and to assure that the research findings emerged from and truly reflected the respondents' experiences and perspectives. Member checks, according to Merriam (1988), involve "taking data and interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible" (p. 169). This process was ongoing throughout the fieldwork phase of the research and the analysis of the data. Data were examined, verified, corrected, or challenged by the sources of the data—the subjects of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Manning (1999) believes "in keeping with the

trusting, collaborative nature of constructivist inquiry, the respondents must be involved

in each step of the process" (p. 24).

<u>Data Analysis and Interpretation</u>

Patton (1990) asserts, "The purpose of qualitative inquiry is to produce findings.

The process of data collection is not an end in itself. The culminating activities of

qualitative inquiry are analysis, interpretation, and presentation of findings" (p. 371).

Judd, Smith, and Kidder (1991) contend that the purpose of data analysis is "to

summarize the completed observations in such a manner that they yield answers to the

research questions" (p. 360).

To understand the data, reduce the volume of information, and identify significant

themes and patterns, data collected from videotaped observations, field notes, and

participant interviews that occurred over a period of eleven months were transcribed and

organized using the method of constant comparative analysis developed by Glaser and

Strauss (1967). Data were coded and recoded according to this method until themes

began to emerge. Merriam (1998) explains:

> The researcher begins with a particular incident from an interview, field notes, or
> document and compares it with another incident in the same set of data or in
> another set. These comparisons lead to tentative categories that are then
> compared to each other and to other instances (p. 159).

Inductive reasoning in constructivist inquiry begins with data, collected prior to

any theorizing, as a source of explanation or interpretation. These data were inductively

analyzed and categorized, expanded into themes, and folded into findings and

interpretations (Manning, 1999).

In this case analysis, all interview transcripts and observation field notes were coded using techniques suggested by Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995). *Open coding* permitted an initial reading of all interview transcripts and field notes line-by-line to identify and construct any and all ideas, issues, or themes derived from the data. A second line-by-line analysis based on topics that emerged during open coding constituted *focused analytic coding*, as a smaller set of promising categories or ideas were used in the search for major themes and topics within and across case studies. As recommended by Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995), theoretical memos were written while the line-by-line analyses were conducted in order to "clarify and link analytic themes and categories" (p. 143).

The result of this analysis led to a list of recurring topics that were categorized into concepts drawn from the evidence gathered through videotaped observations, subject interviews, and reflections contained in the reflexive journal and field notes. These terms were separated into discrete, stand-alone ideas and printed on index cards. The index cards were sorted into categories based on their similarities and differences. These categories were added to, adapted, and expanded until the participants' and researcher's ideas were adequately conveyed. Once the researcher believed the categories had reached saturation, defined by Manning (1999) as the time "when additional information does not add meaning to the emerging themes" (p. 21), the categories were posted into a matrix under the broad, defining heading, "Characteristics of Caring Advising."

To ensure the rigor of the assessment, the researcher utilized the method of confirmability as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985), who suggest the data and

interpretations be confirmed by someone other than the researcher. An experienced

colleague, also an advising professional at The University of Texas who oversees an

advising unit, was asked to review the matrix that had been designed. After her insightful

review, two adjustments were made to the original framework, shifting the order of two

of the categories and placing two of the emergent terms under different categories. This

shift made the topics more meaningful as they were more directly related to the new

categories.

Through constant comparative analysis and the identification of themes, patterns

and emerging categories, the respondents' voices were expressed through rich, thick,

descriptive vignettes to reveal the qualities and characteristics that defined the significant

role caring plays in the advising relationship.

In the following chapter the themes derived from the findings will be examined.

These themes will be presented in relation to the categories devised to illustrate the

research data.

Chapter Four: Findings, Analysis, and Discussion

Introduction

Themes Uncovered: Interpretation and Analysis of Caring Advising

As I combed through the data I had collected in this study, the hours of videotaped observations, the seemingly endless reams of printed interview transcripts, and the well-worn, dog eared pages of my reflexive journal, I nervously sat, shifting my attention from the screen of my iMac to the pages and pages of data stacked and sorted on the desk beside me. Attempting to mentally discern meaning from this wealth of material, I searched for words to accurately describe the themes that I had extracted from the data. I closed my eyes and recalled what it felt like to be in the presence of the advisors I had observed, witnessing my colleagues performing their magic with students, hearing their laughter, watching them ease a student's frustration or calm a student's concern. In my mind's eye I watched as one of the advisor participants meticulously reviewed a complicated degree plan, making sure each step of the way that the student understood. Switching on the videotaped chronicle of one advising session, I watched again as one of the advisor participants, Sandy, comforted and encouraged a student who had been placed on academic probation, assuring her with a smile and a soft, almost motherly voice, "I know you can do it. I'm here to help you." Pausing the tape, collecting my thoughts, I asked myself, "What's going on here? What do all these categorized data mean? How does all this information relate and how does it collectively contribute to my understanding of caring advising?"

Through this painstaking process, significant themes began to take shape. As I present my data in this chapter, I will examine these themes as they relate to the findings illustrated within, among, and between the categories.

For lack of a better term, I refer to the first theme as **"maternalism."** Webster's New World Dictionary (2nd ed.) does not provide a definition for my newly coined term (though, interestingly, a definition for 'paternalism' is offered). Webster's defines 'maternal' as "of, like, or characteristic of a mother; motherly. (p. 875) and, in my mind, maternalism conveys a principle of relating in a manner suggesting a mother's relationship with her children. In the data presented in this chapter, the theme of maternalism, of "advisor as Mom," is prominent in the illustrations of advising relationships portrayed in this study. This maternalism was a characteristic of both female and male participants. Presented here, the role of advisor differs significantly from what some may have considered in the past. As the analysis and interpretation of the data will illustrate, the caring advisor is not simply the person to whom a student reports for semesterly scheduling. The caring advisor considers himself or herself and commits her or his time and energy to much more than that. In many cases, he or she is the "Mom" away from home, the soft, calm, one-caring that offers reassurance, comfort, and encouragement. She teaches responsibility and accountability. While she often provides guidance and nurturance, she must also, at times, reprimand or issue sanctions.

It is important to clarify that in my definition of "mom" I am referring to a specific archetype of mom, shaped by my identity as a white, middle-class man. This distinction is influenced by my experiences within a specific socio-cultural context. I

cannot assume that the characteristics of my image of "mom" will be identical in every culture.

Noddings (1984) refers to "mothering" and an ethic of care, stating, "Mothering and care are deeply related" (p. 128). She believes firmly that "our motivation in caring is directed toward the welfare, protection, or enhancement of the cared-for" (p. 9), a motivation that parallels the protective, caring, nurturing act of mothering. In *Maternal Thinking* (1989) Sara Ruddick contends it is "hard to speak precisely about mothering." Ruddick observes, "Overwhelmed with greeting card sentiment we have no realistic language in which to capture the ordinary/extraordinary pleasures and pains of maternal work" (p. 29). Discussing what she calls maternal practice, Ruddick proposes three requirements or "demands" imposed on those involved in maternal work. "These three demands constitute maternal work," Ruddick explains. "To be a mother is to be committed to meeting these demands by works of preservation, nurturance, and training" (p. 17).

The most predominant of Ruddick's demands is that of preservation. She explains "To be committed to meeting children's demand for preservation does not require enthusiasm or even love; it simply means to see vulnerability and to respond to it with care, rather than abuse, indifference or flight" (p. 19). The demand for preservation is complemented by the second demand: nurturance of a child's intellectual and emotional growth. The third demand of maternal practice is, according to Ruddick, "made not by children's needs but by the social groups of which a mother is a member. Social groups require their mothers to shape their children in 'acceptable' ways…

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children cannot 'naturally develop in socially correct ways but must be trained" (p. 21).

To offer an example of her notion, Ruddick offers:

> To protect, nurture and train—however abstract the schema, the story is simple. A child leans out of a high-rise window to drop a balloon full of water on a passerby. She must be hauled in from the window (preservation) and taught not to endanger innocent people (training), and the method used must not endanger her self-respect or confidence (nurturance) (p. 23).

Ruddick argues "maternal work itself demands that mothers think; out of this need for thoughtfulness, a distinctive discipline emerges" (p. 24). This discipline is maternal thinking.

> Daily, mothers think out strategies of protection, nurturance, and training. Frequently conflicts between strategies or between fundamental demands provoke mothers to think about the meaning and relative weight of preservation, growth, and acceptability. In quieter moments, mothers reflect on their practice as a whole. As in any group of thinkers, some mothers are more ambitiously reflective than others, either out of temperamental thoughtfulness, moral or political concerns, or most often, because they have serious problems with their children. However, maternal thinking is no rarity (p. 24).

Ruddick believes that maternal thinking can be done by both women and men, believing that "a mother is a person who takes on responsibility for children's lives and for whom providing child care is a significant part of her or his working life" (p. 40). She continues, "I *mean* 'her or his.' Although most mothers have been and are women, mothering is potentially work for men and women…there is no reason to believe that one sex rather than the other is more capable of doing maternal work" (p. 40). Goldstein (1997) offers a thoughtful clarification, "Though not everyone will be a mother, or can be a mother, everyone has had a mother and, as a result, has had the experience of being cared for" (p. 104).

Ruddick's (1989) notion of maternal thinking and the demands of maternal practice—preservation, nurturance, and training—closely parallel the work of caring academic advisors. And this maternalism plays an important role in the relationships advisors cultivate. At a recent national conference of the National Academic Advising Association, keynote speaker and Chancellor of the University of Texas System, Mark Yudof encouraged the 2000+ attendees to maximize the chances of student success, not by lowering academic standards to enhance the graduation rates, not by coercing students, rather, "All faculty members and staff [advisors] must be motivators and cheerleaders for students—all students—and they should move heaven and earth to help them succeed, not only at calculus and chemistry, but also at developing values" (2003, p. 8). His charge struck me then as it does now: we need to be more than academic schedulers; we need to be moms.

The second relevant theme, **mentorship**, provides a slightly different, though somewhat related personal snapshot of the caring advisor. Johnson (1989) suggests that mentors on college campuses play many roles—"information source, friend, attentive listener to problems, academic advisor, activities advisor, and problem solver" (p. 120). Johnson quotes Daloz (1986) who, in his book *Effective Teaching and Mentoring,* calls mentors "guides who lead us along the journey of our lives" (p. 119). Indicating that the tradition of mentoring as it exists today has its origins in Greek mythology, as Mentor became the guardian of his beloved friend Odysseus' son during his absence, Batchelor (1993) explains, "Hence, the term *mentor* has come to mean 'trusted advisor and wise, faithful counselor.' Mentoring as we examine it today still includes the roles of advisor,

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supporter, and teacher" (p. 380). Lester and Johnson (1981) examine mentoring in higher education and explain:

> Mentoring as a function of educational institutions can be defined as a one-to-one learning relationship between an older person and a younger person that is based on modeling behavior and extended dialogue between them. Mentoring is a way of individualizing a student's education by allowing or encouraging the student to connect with a college staff member who is experienced in a particular field or set of skills. The mentor may be a teacher or an advisor who has been assigned to work with the student and has prescribed responsibilities for overseeing academic work (p. 50).

Baruth and Robinson (1987) suggest that while typically mentors are slightly older than their protégés, they can be the same age or even younger. The most important characteristic is "that mentors have skills, knowledge, or power that protégés need" (p. 372).

As evidenced in the analysis and interpretation of the data collected through the interviews in the study, caring advisors see their role in academic advising as one of mentorship, guiding their students to make sound decisions while providing support and encouragement. Johnson (1989) recognizes that mentors in higher education can be faculty, professional advisors, staff, "or other mature and caring people in the collegiate community" (p. 128). She argues that mentors are more than advisors or teachers, but are "guides through transitions, [providing] maps to development" (p. 128).   The caring advisor fosters the role of mentor through intentional efforts in establishing relationships with the students he advises. He is not just the man a student visits once a semester to confirm course choices for the upcoming term. The caring advisor is friend, big brother, teacher, mentor. Johnson (1989) proclaims:

> The key to mentoring is caring. Many [students] need someone who cares and
> can help them through the academic maze and the confusing process of becoming
> mature and achieving academic success. Mentoring is one important and caring
> solution to enhancing [student] success (p. 128)

Finally, **power** is a third theme that illuminates from the categorized data.

Scott (1998) defines interpersonal power as "the potential for influence that is based on

one person's ability and willingness to sanction another person by manipulating rewards

and punishments important to the other person" (p. 304). Johns (1996) defines power as

"the capacity to influence others who are in a state of dependence" (p. 413). Johns

emphasizes the term *capacity to influence* in his definition, pointing to the fact that power

is not always exercised. In the advising relationship, for example, students may perceive

that advisors hold potential power over them in terms of the knowledge of degree

requirements or access to specific classes. Under normal circumstances, advisors utilize

only a small amount of this power. Johns also indicates "the fact that the target of power

is dependent upon the power holder does not imply that a poor relationship exists

between the two" (p. 413). In fact, many potentially healthy relationships, parent-child,

teacher-student, supervisor-subordinate, and doctor-patient feature a power component

that does not render the relationship ineffective.

In Noddings's (1984) notion of the caring encounter, the one-caring always has

power, bringing it to the relationship and using it to fuel the interaction. Because the one-

caring has opened herself and received the cared-for, she has committed to using her

power to help serve his ends. Applying her notion to the teacher-student relationship,

Noddings (1992) explores the unequal distribution of power, stating, "The teacher-

student relation is, of necessity, unequal. Teachers have special responsibilities students

cannot assume" (p. 107). However, as Noblit (1993) points out, "Noddings argues that in a caring relation power does not render the other into an object, but rather maintains and promotes the other as subject. Power is used to confirm, not disconfirm, the other" (p. 35). Noblit continues:

> Caring is reciprocal and unequal, but while patron-client relationships with these same characteristics disproportionately benefit the patron, power in the caring relationship benefits both parties. Each benefits differently, so that the linear concept of disproportion is nonsensical (p. 35).

Extensive research on the concept of power exists in the areas of organizational theory and behavior. In defining the bases of individual power, Johns (1996) explains that power can be found in the position one holds in an organization or the resources that he or she commands. According to Johns, the first base of power, legitimate power, "derives from a person's position or job in the organization" (p. 413). Legitimate power is often called authority. He argues that when legitimate power works, it often does so because people have been socialized or conditioned to readily accept its influence.

The other bases of power, reward, coercive, referent, and expert power involve the control of important resources. Among these power bases, expert power, that which exists when an individual has special information or expertise that is valued by others, seems most relevant in the study of the relationship between advisor and advisee. Woodard and von Destinon (1993) provide an aid in understanding this power base by applying it, asking the question, "Why should *I* do *this* for *you*?" They suggest that an expert power response could be, "Because *I* know something *you* do not." The more crucial and unusual this expertise is, the greater the expert power available.

Can power, a concept I've always regarded as heavy-handed, coercive, dominant, authoritative, possibly have a place in the world of caring? Interestingly, in the relevant literature on the nature of caring, power emerges as a central theme in Noblit's (1993) ethnographic study of a second grade teacher, Pam, and her use of power in the manner in which she constructed caring. Noblit demonstrates in his study how, through the lens of caring, power can be defined as moral authority. Pam, the author attests, understood that "caring in classrooms is not about democracy—it is about the ethical use of power" (p. 24). He explains:

> Pam's power was used for many things: to keep order, to set up lessons, to evaluate performance…she used her power and her control often in the service of continuity. As Noddings has argued, what is most missing in schools is attending to 'continuity of place, people, purpose, and curriculum' (Noddings, 1992). I now see this as Pam's teacher-centeredness, [demonstrating] how routine and ritual established a continuity to the curriculum and instruction, and how the purposes of collective responsibility and work were continuous (p. 34).

Noblit summarized his experience as a visiting researcher in Pam's classroom, a place where she taught him to examine caring and power through a different lens:

> Pam created a context for me to learn about caring, and it has forever altered how I think about education and about caring. It has also led me to conclude that it is maybe only through such opportunities that we are going to understand how power is implicated in caring. I see Pam as understanding and acting not with power, but with moral authority—an authority not only legitimated by the usual mechanisms of our society but also by reciprocal negotiations between people, in this case people of unequal power and knowledge…I now know that I, like Pam, can have the power to construct continuity, morality, authority and caring (p. 37).

It occurs to me that some in the advising profession, especially those who value caring in their practice, may be uncomfortable with the notion of power as an element of caring advising. The fact is, there is power in the position of academic advisor, whether we like it or not. Referring to the bases of power identified by Johns (1996) we have

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expert power; we have a commodity (special information, expertise, knowledge, access) that students value. We have legitimate power solely in the positions of authority we hold within our organizations. I sense that legitimate power often when I meet with an advisee for the first time and he or she addresses me as "Dr. Holmes" (to which I jokingly reply, "No, not yet. But give me a few months") or when advisees answer my questions with an affirmative, "Yes sir." I realize, of course, that the students are probably practicing politeness for which their parents would be proud, but I also note that this respect demonstrates a recognition that I am an authority figure, or at least they perceive me as such. It's the same ritual I force on my priest. We have a great friendship. We share stories, experiences, and, jokes with one another. We enjoy a frankness in our communication. Although he is younger than I and although he has assured me that he feels comfortable being addressed on a first-name basis, I call him Father Mike. My reluctance to address him in any other way reflects my insistence that he is an authority, an expert and mirrors my respect for him and his position.

I don't want to be "Sir" or "Dr. Holmes" to my students. I am not entirely comfortable with the power differential that the name suggests. Sure, I want them to respect my knowledge, to recognize my dedication to them, to my profession, and to the university, but I must slightly temper that perceived power in order to minimize the unequal relationship.

Advisors search for the balance between power and concern, authority and compassion every day. Depending upon the severity of the situation that brings advisees into their domain in a given encounter, advisors constantly renegotiate their power with

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students. In examining the data in this study, the influence of power, how it is demonstrated or de-emphasized, how it is understood and dealt with, and how it relates to caring will be woven through the text in order to better understand its important role in the advising relationship.

<u>**Categorizing the Data: Linking Themes to Observations**</u>

Emerging from the data, the categories I developed illustrate the specific actions, attitudes, values, and behaviors that distinguish caring advising. These four categories paint a portrait of the events that take place before, during and after an academic advising session and provide a means to understand the important role caring plays in advising. It is through these categories that I will weave the themes, exploring, applying, excavating, and interpreting, in order to make meaning of the data and aid in an understanding of the nature of care in academic advising.

The first category, "Setting the stage," describes the efforts advisors take to create a comfortable environment for caring advising to occur. Though I found it somewhat surprising, this category emerged from my observations and the frequent mention of office space, lighting, and "comfortable surroundings" in the interviews with the advisor participants.

I named the second category, "Preparing and caring" as it illustrates the tasks advisors perform in preparing for their advising sessions and the interpersonal communication skills they utilize in the caring manner in which they approach their students. Minimizing or eliminating distractions, establishing familiarity, listening, and

maintaining eye contact were among the behaviors I observed and terms frequently reiterated by the participants.

Related to patterns illustrated in the second category, my third category, "Building relationships: commitment and connection," presents themes of trust, empathy, sincerity, warmth, compassion, and, most importantly, relationship, patterns that appeared so significantly in the data, bringing to light the fact that academic advisors who place caring among their most important priorities see care as something that extends beyond the tasks they perform with students within a thirty minute advising session. It is within these categories that the participants' notions of interconnection emerge.

The fourth category, "Being a valuable resource," illustrates an important topic reiterated by advisor and student participants, signified as one of the most important characteristics of caring advising. In this category, I explore the direct connection in academic advising between caring and the advisor's responsibilities of knowledge and accuracy, a commitment noted by both advisors and students as essential in the caring advising relationship.

It is important for me to mention that these four categories are not presented in what I feel are the order of importance. If I presented my findings in order of significance based on the data obtained from my observations, interviews, field notes, and reflexive journal I would, without question, place "Building relationships" or "Being a valuable resource" first in my order of presentation. I have chosen not to describe and interpret the data in this order. Rather, my data are presented in a manner that

approximates the student's experience in an advising encounter, and the advisor's experience in preparing for, engaging in, and following up after a session.

In the pages that follow this introduction, I will present the categories of recurring ideas and topics derived from my data that convey the characteristics of caring advising. More importantly, I will present analysis of the identified themes relative to each of these emergent categories. Each category will be discussed in turn and each discussion will follow the same format; I will offer a snapshot of each advisor participant's work that reveals important details about the category, and will then offer interpretation of the data in the snapshots in relation to the three themes of maternalism, power, and mentorship. This analysis and interpretation will aid in understanding the data presented and guide in understanding advising in bold new ways.

Setting the Stage: Striving to Create a Comfortable Environment for Students

Snapshot of Sandy: McCombs School of Business

"Comfortable" and "peaceful" were the first words I logged in my field notebook as I sat beside Sandy's desk preparing to observe her scheduled sessions. Sandy, an advisor on The University of Texas campus for 13 years, occupies the third office in a U-shaped cluster of 10 rooms in the Undergraduate Programs Office in the McCombs School of Business. The majority of the professional advising staff in the business school are assigned a space in this section of the undergraduate office and each advisor is given the authority to decorate and arrange the space as she or he deems appropriate. Sandy's space was tidy and meticulously organized. Folders were neatly stacked on the desk space behind her chair. A floor lamp, 2 desk lamps, and a task light located in the section below the cabinets in her modular desk provided the soft, but adequate lighting in her office; Sandy prefers not to utilize the harsh, fluorescent ceiling lighting that her space offers, indicating to me as I prepared for her session that, in her opinion, the softer lighting makes her feel more relaxed. As I settled into my chair to observe her appointments, I agreed with her assessment. Sandy's chair faces the advisee who sits on the opposite side of the desk. An additional guest chair normally sits against the wall, though on this day I have moved it closer to Sandy's desk in order to closely observe her interactions. The computer monitor sits on the desk to Sandy's left and her advisee's right, allowing both to easily view the screen with only a slight turn of the head. On the desk in front of Sandy and her advisee lie a pen and the student's advising folder.

Hers is a colorful office. "I think [the environment] plays a pretty big part in the session," Sandy stated. "I think that's part of making [students] feel comfortable." Vibrant framed artwork and photos of her family and pets adorn the walls, the rear desktop, and the shelf unit in her space. "If [students] come into a stark, white room with nothing on the walls…I know that can sometimes affect how comfortable students feel, " Sandy remarked. She continued:

> In trying to make them feel at ease, I think it's really important to have pictures, because they're curious about your life just like you're curious about their lives. I think letting them see that you're just as human as they are makes them feel more comfortable.

I carefully observed each of her students to gauge their level of comfort. I asked myself, "Does [the student] seem comfortable here? Do I note any obvious discomfort? Is he/she relaxed? Nervous? Impatient? Does she/he shift in the chair?" I noted that the students, like me, seemed to feel at ease in Sandy's space, comfortable in the soft lamplight. It felt more like I was visiting Sandy in her home, than in a professional office setting. Sandy welcomed students into her domain, a place she had carefully appointed with soft, sweet, colorful pieces of her world. Sandy's domain was orderly, but not sterile.

Between student appointments I teased Sandy about her immaculate office and desk space. She laughed and, in her typical self-effacing style, replied:

> I have a tendency to be really messy when we're really busy. I have piles everywhere, but I try to straighten up before they come in because it's embarrassing that I have a big mess in there and, even if I'm not quite organized at the time, I want them to know that their information is really important to me. I don't want them to think that if they give me a form it's going to get lost in a big pile. So, I think that's important to instill their confidence in me.

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Apart from wanting students to feel comfortable and "at home" while visiting her office, it is obvious that Sandy places importance on appearing competent, prepared, and ready for her students. Her students' confidence in her is essential to Sandy. In her personal and professional life, Sandy strives to achieve the balance: caring, nurturing, thoughtful and kind on one hand, knowledgeable, trustworthy, diligent, and adept on the other. It's a balance that caring advisors must achieve. Sandy strikes it skillfully.

Snapshot of Lloyd: College of Education

A twelve year veteran of advising at The University of Texas, Lloyd's advising office in the College of Education's undergraduate division was somewhat cramped, but his efforts to create an inviting environment within the confines of his assigned space were noticeable. While Sandy's space could be characterized as tidy, calming, and peaceful, Lloyd's small office was busy and vibrant. Almost every inch of his walls and bulletin board was covered with brightly colored memos, posters, greeting cards, and postcards from friends, colleagues and students. His shelves and desk were hardly visible beneath the mementos and gifts he displayed for visitors to see. Lloyd commented:

> I make a conscious decision about how my office looks…normally the response I get from students is that they feel relaxed in the environment because there are a lot of colors and there's a lot of things to make them feel comfortable. It doesn't feel sterile or anything like that. I think that helps in some way.

Though movement was somewhat restricted in his space (I actually had to sit in the doorway as I observed his appointments, adjusting the video camera occasionally to frame Lloyd and his student so that I could see their interactions), students could undoubtedly get a glimpse into his life and appreciate his warm, unique character. One of the students I observed in an advising session with Lloyd later commented, "His office

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is colorful. I like that about it. I don't know, he seems like a kid at heart and I relate to that because I know I'm a kid at heart, too…it is a really warm environment—very comforting."

Lloyd joked that the size of his office had some influence on his seating arrangement. As he advised the students I observed, Lloyd had students sit at the side of his workstation, rather than directly in front of him. He elaborated:

> The student IS physically close to me because there's really no room for them to get away! So, I sort of set up a triangle where the computer can be viewed by the student and by myself from where we're both sitting, and I can look at the student and not have to completely turn around but just sort of glance over to look at the computer screen. I hope by that triangle it makes [information on the computer monitor] accessible and doesn't make me feel like I have to pull so far away.

Lloyd, like his colleague Sandy, obviously puts a great deal of thought into the messages his space conveys. Lloyd is one of the most popular advisors on campus, among his colleagues and with his students. He is joyful, charismatic, affectionate, and loving. Lloyd is everyone's friend and his students appreciate his kind nature and his wealth of knowledge. His office space reflects his affable nature. Though cramped, his space creates a place where meaningful encounters occur.

Snapshot of Beth: College of Liberal Arts

Beth is fortunate to share a large office space in one of the older, architecturally significant buildings on the university campus. On the cool spring morning of my visit, crisp, warm morning sunshine beamed into her office through two large wooden windows. Separated by large bookcases, Beth, an advisor for 25 years, and her colleague in the Spanish and Portuguese Languages advising office share a room that has been carefully decorated with plants, aging, yet comfortable office furniture, and colorful

artwork with a distinctly Latin flair. On the walls above her desk, Beth had posted

masterpieces lovingly created by her children. In addition, Beth explained, "I have an

advising award posted on my wall and that's actually an object of question from them. I

think showing [the award] tells them that I can do a pretty good job and I think that

establishes the trust that I think is so important." When asked later how she created

rapport with her students, Beth's initial reply focused on the physical space she maintains

for her students. "It allows them to feel comfortable," she noted. "My office is

welcoming. I have plants and many things they can look at."

Beth's desk faces the wall of her office. She sits with her back to the office door

and turns in her chair to face the student sitting beside her. A small, open task table sits

partially between Beth and her advisees. She emphasizes, "There is no barrier between

myself and the student." Advisor and student, in fact, sit side by side as Beth reviews a

printed degree audit or helps a student find her way through the course schedule. This

closeness minimizes the power differential and allows Beth and the student to share in the

advising experience.

Snapshot of Serena: McCombs School of Business, Department of Finance

An advisor in the McCombs School of Business for four years, Serena smiled

warmly as she guided her second student of the day, Ludmilla, into the office for their

scheduled session. She paused to introduce me to her advisee and reminded her of the

reason for my presence. As Ludmilla handed me the consent form she had completed

while waiting in the lobby, she said she was happy to participate in the study. "I've had

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great experiences with academic advising at UT," she offered. She took her seat across the desk from Serena and their conversation began.

Serena's office was tidy and organized. Her space, like Sandy's, was decorated tastefully with prints and personal photos. "I think the students like to think of you as a real person," she commented. "When you have some of your personal things from home or pictures up—just some things that kind of signify you, I think it makes them feel a little bit more comfortable." On her desk Serena had stacked multiple copies of three separate forms. One was a listing of web sites related to the business school, links where students could obtain more information about a degree plan or specific classes or programs. The second provided directions for joining the listserv in the Ford Career Center in order to be updated on scheduled interviews and activities related to internships and job searches. The third stack of forms offered detailed course descriptions for each of the courses in the finance department. I noted in my journal, "This is great. She has obviously received questions from students in the past about each of these areas of interest, so she has prepared ahead and condensed this info into concise handouts. Good thinking!" (Field Notes 04/04/03).

I noted that Serena also chose not to utilize the fluorescent overhead lighting, relying instead on the light generated by three lamps. When asked about this later, Serena offered, "I'm not that big on fluorescent lighting so I like to have lamps turned on and set up. I think that makes [students] feel a bit more comfortable and I guess it creates a more homey sort of atmosphere."

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As the encounter progressed, Serena and Ludmilla covered a variety of topics,

some academic and some personal. One minute they discussed Ludmilla's upcoming

internship interview and her graduation from the business school, while in the next breath

they talked about Ludmilla's current job at The Olive Garden, and shared stories about

their sisters, realizing that both had siblings preparing for their respective high school

proms. At one point, while reviewing her advisee's degree audit, Serena leaned forward

across the desk, rising slightly from her chair and twisting her body a bit in order to close

the gap created by the desk, "sitting" side-by-side with Ludmilla as they scanned the

printed audit Serena had placed on the desk top between them. Later, Serena justified her

awkward positioning:

> I want to convey that I'm interested in things they have to say. I'm sitting across
> from my student, so I feel like I really have to get up on one leg and lean in
> towards the student. That's just the person, the type of person I am. I want to
> listen to them. I want to hear what they have to say.

As the session reached a conclusion, Ludmilla gathered her things again

mentioned her pending job interview. "I'm really excited about the interview," she said.

"I will keep my fingers crossed for you," Serena promised. "You will knock their socks

off!" Before turning to leave the office, Ludmilla reached out and warmly embraced her

advisor. "Thank you so much," she whispered to Serena, "I feel so much better now."

Snapshot of Sam: College of Communications, School of Journalism

A line of students formed outside Sam's door on the afternoon of my scheduled

observation. Registration was a week away and many of Sam's journalism students

wanted to see him before registering for summer and fall classes. I positioned my video

camera and settled into a corner of the room so as not to interfere with his brief, but

thorough meetings. Sam's office, like that of so many of his colleagues, was relatively

small but not necessarily cramped. Two colorful oil paintings depicting scenes from a

tranquil seaside villa hung on his walls. Interestingly, I noticed that his walls were not

the "institutional egg shell" color found in most university office spaces. Sam's walls

were a painted a peaceful shade of blue. He later commented, "When I first started

advising in journalism I had the option to paint the walls," he said. "And so I selected

[blue] because I did research on the colors and blue is supposed to be very calming...it

turned out a little bit darker than I wanted, but nonetheless I think it is a very soothing

office."

One by one his students entered and took their place in front of Sam's desk. Sam,

now in his sixth year in academic advising at the university, sat behind the desk facing

his students, but admitted later that he was not always comfortable with the message he

believed might be conveyed by that arrangement. However, he argued, this perceived

position of power one conveys when sitting behind a desk facing an advisee can be

tempered once rapport has been established. He mentioned the need to get physically

closer to students and I observed him leaning in toward each student he advised. Sitting

in the middle of his L shaped desk arrangement, Sam swiveled back and forth from one

side of the L, where he had placed his computer terminal, to the other side of the L,

where, across the desktop, his advisee sat. As the afternoon progressed, I witnessed as

Sam met each student as "one-caring" addressing their individual needs, answering

difficult questions, encouraging, confirming. His depth of knowledge about the

journalism degree and its specific classes as well as the outlook of career prospects

impressed me. His students also seemed to appreciate his knowledge and the time he took to answer their specific questions. Sam's second appointment of the day had progressed very smoothly, and although the student had experienced some difficulty with her academics in the past she seemed confident in her performance in her current classes. After planning her course selection for the upcoming semester, reviewing a degree audit, and discussing possible internship placement opportunities, she appeared pleased with the session and the care she had received from her advisor. "I think everything is great. You answered everything," she announced to Sam. "Thank you again." She shook Sam's hand and politely excused herself. Sam smiled, made a few notes in her file and prepared for his next appointment.

Making Sense of the Advising Environment

Though Noddings (1984) argues that a caring encounter can occur almost anywhere, the location of the advising encounter and the physical environment in which the advising session takes place held significance for the advisor participants in this study. The intentional efforts to set the stage for advising encounters in an environment where students felt comfortable and welcome was a primary concern among advisors participating in this study and they agreed that creation of the "comfortable environment" was most often achieved through the personal choices they made concerning lighting, arrangement of office furniture and printed resources, room décor, and tidiness. With regard to Noddings's (1984) model of caring, it was in this comfortable place that advisors, the "ones-caring," would receive the "cared-fors," their student advisees. It is in this place that receptive engrossment would occur.

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As I sorted through my data, I was surprised by the degree of emphasis and the important role environment seemed to play in establishing a place for caring advising encounters to occur. Initially, I questioned whether or not too much attention was being paid to office furniture, framed prints, or lighting. After the observation and interview phase of my research I wrote an analytic memo in my field notebook:

> I can't believe I'm writing so much and discussing in great lengths the physical space the advisors work in. This is beginning to sound a little too much like an episode of "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy." Yet, each advisor is so *deliberate* in creating a space where students will feel comfortable and relaxed. Color choices, lighting, the location of the computer terminal—these are all intentional, well-planned considerations the advisors have made in order to demonstrate to students that they care enough about them and their interactions with them that even the physical environment is significant (Field Notes 04/09/04)

But there was more significance in these actions than my immediate response recognized. Turning to my themes, while I noted that there was not much evidence of mentorship within the environmental aspects of the data, examining and interpreting the data related to the themes of maternalism and power provided a wealth of information to be considered.

My concept of maternalism revolved around actions, behaviors, and attitudes that are "mom-like." Maternalism is specifically maternal; it is not parental. In *Maternal Thinking,* Ruddick (1989) distinguishes:

> I speak about a mother's thought—the intellectual capacities she develops, the judgments she makes, the metaphysical attitudes she assumes, the values she affirms…a mother caring for children engages in a discipline. She asks certain questions—those relevant to her aims—rather than others; she accepts certain criteria for the truth, adequacy, and relevance of proposed answers; and she cares about the findings she makes and can act on. The discipline of maternal thought, like other disciplines, establishes criteria for determining failure and success, sets priorities, and identifies virtues that the discipline requires (p. 24).

It is a maternal quality and a "mom-like" approach we see in the work of caring advisors as they create cozy, comfortable, peaceful, "homey" environments for their students. For example, Serena's descriptive adjective in defining her office place, "homey," illustrated a place unlike the typical office space one might imagine within the walls of the business school. Serena didn't characterize her office as "professional" or "scholarly" or "organized." Like a mom, Serena wanted students to feel relaxed and "at home" in her space. Serena welcomed students to a place where they could feel safe to explore their academic concerns. Similarly, Sandy's attempts at "making students feel comfortable" demonstrated a maternal concern, a concern of nurturance. During my observation of Sandy's advising encounters I wrote in my journal, "Like a mom, she wants her kids to feel safe and comfortable, yet it is also very important to her that they see her as someone who is proficient; someone who can help them." (Field Notes. 03/31/03).

The caring advisors participating in this study created comfortable environments and demonstrated a maternal quality in their concern for the subtleties of lighting and color in their advising spaces, as evidenced in both Serena's and Sandy's preferences for soft, comfortable lamplight rather than fluorescent lighting, and in Sam's intentional effort to create a soothing atmosphere by painting his walls a calming shade of blue. The advisor participants were mom-like in their choice of room décor and their preferences to display bright, colorful artwork and family photos, as Serena illustrated in her comment, "When you have some of your personal things from home or pictures up—just some things that kind of signify you, I think it makes them feel a little bit more comfortable."

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The advisor participants demonstrated maternalism and painted a portrait of a caring, concerned, and competent mom in demonstrating to their students that they were capable, reliable, prepared, and trustworthy. Serena's stack of pre-prepared handouts and forms, Beth's proud display of her advising award, and Sandy's immaculate, organized desk and her comment about wanting students to know that their information was important to her, so important that she would make sure not to lose anything "in a big pile" attested to this fact.

Like a mom, these advisors put their students' needs first, demonstrating a commitment to their students' comfort, sometimes even at their own expense. This was most evident in Serena's efforts to share in the advising experience, placing herself in awkward physical positions in order to review a document side-by side with her advisee. She eased the student's burden and offered encouragement and support and sacrificed her own comfort in the interest of the student. These intentional efforts closely paralleled Ruddick's concept of nurturance—comfort, security, mentoring activities and needs— attending to what she calls 'administrative' tasks.

I noted with interest that several of the advisor participants chose to sit behind their desks while meeting with students, while others positioned their chairs so they could sit side by side, on an equal playing field as they met their advisees. Thinking back on my observations of Serena and Sam, I wondered why they felt the need to sit behind the desk, forcing themselves into uncomfortable positions in order to achieve a sense of "closeness" with their students. Serena's concern for her students' level of comfort seemed to eclipse her regard for her own. Sam expressed concern and a level of

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discomfort that his position behind the desk conveyed a message of power, yet he remained there, rather than moving to the other side of the desk in order to sit side by side with the student. Was he forced to sit behind the desk due to the physical constraints of his office space, constraints he was powerless to change? Did the location of his computer and additional resources restrict his moving to the opposite side of the desk? Or did he need to establish authority and power with his students, tempered with kindness and concern?

In considering these questions, I am reminded of an incident that occurred on the first day I reported to work for a previous employer. As I stood in my new office, preparing to move a bookcase and credenza to the opposite side of the room, the Dean, my supervisor, stopped by to greet me. "You settling in okay?" he asked. "Yes, thank you," I replied, "but I wish I could move the desk so that I wouldn't have to sit behind it when I meet with students." He declared, emphatically, "I want you behind the desk. I want all my advisors behind a desk. Students need to see you as an authority figure." Surprised somewhat by his response, but not wanting to press the issue on my first day, I responded, "I understand. But, of course, students are coming to me for academic counseling. They also need to see me as a counselor." He shook his head. "No, they need to see you as the principal." It was the first of many fundamental differences in philosophy we would encounter in our professional relationship. My power, my legitimate power in this case, was assigned. He turned and walked into his office, squelching further discussion on the matter.

Advisors balance power in their caring relations with students in many ways. Yet, there is a certain amount of ambivalence with regard to power that can be discerned in the environment. At times, advisors may struggle with the role power plays in their positions and the manner in which students perceive it. As described previously, the advisors go to great lengths to create a comfortable, homey atmosphere, to make sure their space looks personal rather than institutional. These efforts reflect maternalism but also serve as a way to downplay the power that is afforded to advisors by the very nature of their positions within the university. In addition to demonstrating her desire to put students at ease, Serena's willingness to contort her body into an uncomfortable position in order to review a form side-by-side with her student illustrated a desire on her part to minimize power differentials. Sam's awareness of his desire to minimize the power differential he perceives by sitting behind his desk illustrated the balance he attempts to strike with regard to power and provided further evidence of this ambivalence. Interestingly, this issue emerged in another advisor participant's interview.

Ann, an advising veteran who has served students in the psychology department for 23 years (15 as an academic advisor), enjoys her space in one of the newest buildings on campus. Ann positions her advisees' chair next to, rather than in front of, her desk. "I like to have an arrangement where I don't have a barrier between me and the student,' she affirmed. Ann continued:

> I used to have my desk in between me and the student back when I was young and insecure about my skills and needed that authority thing going on, but I think it's a barrier. I like to have open space so they can get up and walk around if they have to. They're not blocked in.

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Ann, a seasoned professional, feels no need to sit behind the desk to convey a message of authority. Her knowledge and experience convey her power. This is not to say that, based on her physical position relative to her student, Ann is a more caring advisor than Sam. As we have seen, that is not the case at all. Caring advisors balance power and authority in their work. We utilize, temper, and negotiate power in every encounter.

Illustrated in the discussion of this category, the attempts to share the advising experience, neutralize the power differentials, and create comfortable, "homey" environments for students convey a balance of maternalism and power that is important to the advisor participants and significant in our understanding of caring advising. The steps taken to create comfortable places where students would feel welcome and warmly received were only the first of several intentional efforts these advisors expended to enhance their advising encounters and enrich the dialogue that would occur when students sought their assistance.

Preparing and Caring

Snapshot of Ann: College of Liberal Arts, Department of Psychology

Ann welcomed me to her office with a warm smile and returned to her desk to prepare for her next appointment as I adjusted the video camera to record her session. Bright summer sunlight beamed through the windows of Ann's office, providing natural lighting and casting shadows on the new tile floor. Ann's radio played softly as she and I attended to our preparatory tasks. An electronic wait list alerted her that her next

appointment had arrived, so Ann took a few minutes to review the student's online file to familiarize herself with his academic history and notes from previous sessions. She spoke of her reliance on the information available in the university's online Advisors Toolkit. This web-based academic record contains thorough details about each student's academic performance, including courses undertaken or attempted and grades earned, standardized test scores received, as well as student's addresses, declared majors and minors, and courses transferred. Additionally, students' university ID photos are available on the site. Any contact with a student may be recorded in the advising notes section for review at a later date and secure, private email may be forwarded to a student and recorded in the advising notes as well. The Interactive Degree Audit function allows an advisor or an advisee to prepare a detailed electronic display of all degree requirements for a given major indicating whether each specific course requirement has been fulfilled, is in progress, or remains to be achieved. Ann praised the online system for its role in helping her establish rapport with her advisees:

> Toolkit notes have really helped because I can pull up something we've talked about before and refer to that to try to get back into the groove of what we were discussing and see how that has played out since then and maybe continue the discussion we started the last time they came in…I'll look at the most recent note. When we're in an appointment phase, when we're talking about long-term planning, career goals, and those sorts of things, I'll review the whole record of notes and their history of courses and do a full review before they get there.

After printing a copy of the student's degree audit, Ann stepped into the hallway to greet her advisee.

Drew took his seat in the sunlight at the side of Ann's desk as they reviewed the audit and discussed the courses he would register for in the upcoming semester. Ann's

voice was calm, quite, soothing, almost inaudible from my vantage point, but Drew, sitting only a foot or so from her, could hear every word. She called him by first name several times during their encounter; "She must know this student well—they seem very familiar with one another" I wrote in my field notebook. As they began to discuss his options for graduate study, Ann's office phone rang. She ignored the distraction and continued her conversation with Drew. Later Ann told me she felt it was important to ignore incoming phone calls and minimize distractions in order to demonstrate her presence in the encounter. "I think it really matters quite a bit that you don't have distractions, that you don't have a phone ringing, that you really focus on what's going on with [advisee]," she stated. As the appointment came to a close, Drew thanked Ann for her time and, smiling, assured her he would return again for academic guidance.

Snapshot of Joan: School of Architecture

Joan stepped into the hallway outside her spacious office and called the name of her next advisee. As the student entered, Joan placed her hand gently on the young woman's shoulder guiding her to her seat. Joan's advisee was a prospective transfer student, planning to apply to the competitive and highly regarded School of Architecture. As they took their seats, Joan leaned forward in her chair and described the application process, outlining the forms that would be needed as well as the application review process employed by the admission committee. She listened intently as the student highlighted her previous academic experience and her reasons for applying to the program, smiling and nodding occasionally to demonstrate that she was following the conversation and understanding the student's points of interest. Again, as in Ann's

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encounter, an incoming phone call threatened to interrupt the dialogue and divert Joan's attention and focus on the student's needs. However, Joan completely ignored the ringing phone, continuing unfazed by the distraction, her eyes fixed on the student sitting before her.

As the session progressed, Joan explained the time commitment necessary for success in the architecture department, the long hours of classes and labs, the intense, sometimes draining project work her students had encountered. As the student considered Joan's explanation, the advisor took a few seconds to allow her to gather her thoughts. "Hmmm. What else?" she asked the prospective transfer student. "I know this is a lot to think about." After a few more questions, the student indicated that she had received the information she had hoped to acquire. Joan leaned forward across her desk and put her hand gently on the student's, "Whenever you want to talk, I'm here," she said softly. "You let me know what you want to do, when you want to apply, and how I can help." Smiling, the student rose from her chair and extended her hand for a friendly handshake. "Thank you so much. You've been very, very helpful." She said. Taking one of Joan's business cards, she glanced down at the card, looked up and said, "Thank you, Ms. Clayton." The advisor smiled and escorted her to the door. "Joan," she said. "Please. It's Joan."

Snapshot of Roger: College of Education

We sat quietly as Roger took a few moments to review the online file of the student he was preparing to see. Roger's space was orderly, uncluttered. Large windows on the east side of his office provided natural lighting and afforded Roger a view of the

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expansive green lawn that framed the front of the College of Education building. Roger, a 19-year veteran of the advising profession, smiled as he pointed in the direction of the spacious window. "I love that," he grinned. "You know, it energizes me." On the opposite wall, I noticed three framed certificates, each one commemorating Roger's selection as a James Vick Outstanding Academic Advising Award winner. In addition, Roger showcased the national award he had received for excellence in advising from the National Academic Advising Association.

His advisee, Monica, entered and took her seat next to Roger's desk. After exchanging pleasantries, Roger, glanced at her online file and said, "I notice you recently ran a degree audit on your own. Great. We have a starting place."   Noting that Monica had not been in to see him for some time, Roger asked, "Are you self-advising?" She confirmed his suspicion, and Roger smiled, saying, "Well, I'm glad you're here." Slowly, Roger and Monica reviewed her current schedule, Monica offering her take on the pros and cons of each. Although she had only seen Roger once in the past, Monica demonstrated her trust in him, feeling comfortable enough to open up to him and offer a frank and candid personal assessment of each course and instructor in her current schedule. Roger listened, facing his student. Eye contact between the two was constant. "Listening is so important" he would tell me later. "Not just hearing, but listening— active listening."

As the session continued, Roger turned the attention to the courses Monica would consider in registering for the upcoming semesters. He gave a thorough description of each course and outlined where the course would fit in the sequence of classes Monica

would take in the next two semesters. Monica listened carefully, nodding as Roger asked direct questions to assess her understanding of the information he was presenting. "Are we answering your questions here? Do you think we have a plan there? Does that seem to make sense?" Roger asked as he outlined Monica's course plan.

After 25 minutes, Monica glanced at her watch and indicated to her advisor that she needed to leave in order to make it to her next class on time. Roger smiled and said, "Well, this should get you started. Come back if you have any questions." Confirming her intent to do just that, Monica gathered her books, smiled, and said, "Thank you so much."

Snapshot of Julie: College of Natural Sciences, Department of Computer Sciences.

An advisor on The University of Texas campus for eight years, Julie has seen many students enroll and graduate from the computer sciences program. I squeezed into the corner to observe Julie's afternoon appointment with a prospective transfer student from Arkansas. Julie indicated before the session began that she had already met with this man before the lunch hour, but he had asked to return in the afternoon for more information, and since he had traveled quite a distance to meet with her to weigh the possibility of moving to Austin to continue his education, she had agreed without hesitation. Roy entered just after 1:00 and sat next to Julie at her desk. Julie turned from her desk and sat in an open position facing Roy with no desk, table, or barrier of any sort between them. Julie addressed him by his first name several times, in an attempt to establish a sense of familiarity between them. Julie later told me that that she always makes a concerted effort to remember students' names, faces, and personal stories. "I ask

about personal situations they've talked about with me, you know, 'Last time I saw you, you had a job interview. How did that go?' Julie provided another example, recalling, "There's one student I remember asking, 'Please show me your very famous organizing book!' She actually color codes everything she does for a whole semester. And I teased her a little about that because I was proud of her."

For the next 90 minutes, Julie continued to outline the undergraduate curriculum, discuss career possibilities for computer sciences graduates, and profile faculty areas of expertise. Responding to his many questions, Julie detailed the process for establishing in-state residency for the purpose of tuition and informed him of the differences between UT's program and some of the others he was considering. Checking for understanding with each response, Julie utilized a nonverbal approach. Rather than asking, "Do you understand?" Julie paused frequently during the lengthy advising appointment and simply looked at Roy, waiting for a positive response from him before she continued. As a silent observer, I found myself growing increasingly impatient with his many questions. I wrote in my field notes:

> Does she maintain a time limit for her appointments? We're up to an hour now!
> How much longer is he going to belabor this point? She is following him very
> closely so far, but I'm growing impatient with him. Julie is really doing well,
> however. (Field Notes 06/23/03)

Through the course of the seemingly endless process, Julie remained calm, attentive, thorough, and thoroughly engrossed. I was most impressed with the eye contact she continuously maintained with Roy. Responding later to an interview question related to rapport and engrossment, Julie answered honestly:

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I work hard at making and maintaining good eye contact with students. When I need to I am staring at the computer screen at a 45-degree angle as I'm looking for some piece of information. But I always make sure to turn my head back and make eye contact while I'm delivering that information or commenting on it. So eye contact is probably my biggest tool.

Her efforts did not go unnoticed by the student. "This is great," he announced several times during the session. At the end of the session he thanked her repeatedly for taking the time to answer his questions so thoroughly and patiently. After spending the better part of a day with Roy, Julie walked him to the door and offered her support as he prepared to apply for admission.

Interpreting Advisor Preparation and Attending Behaviors

Once the stage had been set for the advising encounter, the advisors participating in this study described the efforts undertaken to demonstrate to advisees that they were physically, emotionally, and intellectually present for the forthcoming encounter. Advisors demonstrated to students that they were prepared and present for the encounter by familiarizing themselves with the student's academic record and notes of previous visits and by preparing a degree audit. Nutt (2000) suggests that planning for advising involves intentional efforts on the part of the advisor to learn as much as possible about the student. He continues:

> The advisor reviews academic history, test scores, educational goals, and other information sources that might be available. An important source of information is advising notes from previous sessions. These notes are invaluable in helping to set the agenda or content of an advising session. The can also be used to remind the advisor of things that still need to be accomplished by either the advisor or the advisee (p. 224).

Additionally, advisors sent a clear message of their presence in the encounter by minimizing distractions. Nutt (2000) cautions, "the effectiveness of any advising session

is seriously jeopardized by not carefully planning to avoid interruptions, which suggests to the student that the session is not an important activity" (p. 225). Advisors communicated their presence through the intentional demonstration of basic relational techniques or "helping skills" necessary for all counseling sessions: eye contact, checking for understanding and listening. Noddings (1984) emphasizes the importance of listening in the role of one-caring:

> The one-caring comes across to the cared-for in an attitude. Whatever she does, she conveys to the cared-for that she cares. If she is in conversation with a colleague, she listens and her eyes reflect the seriousness, humor, or excitement of the message being spoken…she feels the excitement, pain, terror, or embarrassment of the other and commits herself to act accordingly. She is present for the cared for. Her attitude is one of receptivity (p. 59).

In essence, these advisors demonstrated to their advisees that they were prepared for their questions and concerns; they were ready to receive the student and ready to focus on her or his needs exclusively. These themes were prevalent in advisor participant responses to questions related to their perceptions of caring in advising.

What Mayeroff (1971) refers to as "being with", Noddings (1992), in defining the characteristics of a caring encounter, employs the term *engrossment*. "By engrossment, I mean open, nonselective receptivity to the cared-for. Other writers have used the word 'attention' to describe this characteristic" (p. 15). Noddings believes that all caring involves engrossment. She contends, "The engrossment need not be intense nor need it be pervasive, but it must occur…my first and unending obligation is to meet the other as one-caring" (1984, p.17).

In *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education,* Noddings (1984) explains:

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The one-caring, in caring, is present in her acts of caring. Even in physical absence, acts at a distance bear the signs of presence: engrossment in the other, regard, desire for the other's well being. Caring is largely reactive and responsive. Perhaps it is even better characterized as receptive. The one-caring is sufficiently engrossed in the other to listen to him and take pleasure or pain in what he recounts. Whatever she does for the cared-for is embedded in a relationship that reveals itself as engrossment and in an attitude that warms and comforts the cared-for (p. 19).

Noddings contends that in order to achieve receptive engrossment, the one-caring, as the advisor participants in this study have demonstrated, "is listening, looking, feeling…we must settle ourselves, clear our minds, reduce the racket around us in order to enter [a receptive mode] (p. 34).

Noddings (1996) illustrates the first two components of the caring encounter, both of which were clearly present in the advising sessions observed in this study. She explains:

When we care—when we are in the position of carer—our consciousness exhibits two fundamental characteristics. First, we are in a receptive mode. We attend non-selectively to the cared-for. We are, at least momentarily, engrossed in the other's plans, pains, and hopes, and not our own. Second, we feel our motive energy flowing toward the other. We want to help in furthering the plan, relieving the pain, or actualizing the hope. What we actually do to enact our part in the caring relation is contingent on many factors, but these two fundamental characteristics describe our basic consciousness (p. 161).

In this motivational shift, as the motive energy of the one-caring flows toward the cared-for, Noddings emphasizes that the one-caring need not relinquish herself, but allows her motive energy to be shared, putting it at service to the cared-for. She refers to this necessary component of the caring encounter as *motivational displacement*. In *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education*, Noddings (1992) explains further:

Experiencing motivational displacement, one begins to think. Just as we consider, plan, and reflect on our own projects, we now think what we can do to help another. Engrossment and motivational displacement do not tell us what to do; they merely characterize our consciousness when we care (p. 16).

The mere nature of the academic advising encounter facilitates motivational displacement. It is inherent in the advising relationship. In fact, in can be argued that motivational displacement actually may occur before the advising session begins. As advisors prepare for an encounter, anticipating the needs and questions of the student, preparing degree plans, interpreting degree audits, motive energy has shifted to the advisee and his or her needs and concerns. Throughout the encounter, as advisors, the ones-caring, address the concerns articulated by the advisee, the advisor's personal thoughts, issues, and concerns are not a part of the equation. The focus is directed toward the plans, goals, ideas, questions, and concerns of the cared-for, the student advisee.

In examining the data presented in this category in relation to the themes of maternalism, power, and mentorship, a wealth of supportive information can be identified. With regard to the theme of mentorship, it is important to note that the caring behaviors exhibited in encounters described here, such as the advisor's efforts at establishing familiarity early on, encouraged the development of lasting advisor-advisee relationships. These early encounters play a vital role in moving the advising relationship to one of mentorship. And, as Batchelor (1993) points out, these mentoring relationships, which make a significant contribution to the lives of students, take time, commitment and effort to establish and nurture. Intentional efforts to engage students, to listen to their concerns, to be engrossed in their needs, to meet them non-selectively and

unconditionally as ones-caring provide the building blocks for mentoring relationships to come.

In my discussion with Lloyd, he spoke eloquently of the significance of mentorship:

> Of all the roles we play as advisors—teacher, student, advocate, liaison—the most crucial role is that of mentor. At a large university, it is easy for students to feel disconnected from the resources that can make college a vibrant and meaningful environment. Through our role as mentors, we have the opportunity to reach out to our students, through e-mail, phone, and advising sessions, and we ask them questions they may not ask themselves. A mentor not only guides by example, but also takes an active role in challenging the student to possibly dream bigger than he or she has dreamed. In essence, through mentorship we are challenged to see our students for what they have the potential to become.

Data supporting the theme of maternalism were abundant in this category. The attempts to establish familiarity with students, to meet them as one-caring in a intimate way illustrated a maternal, affectionate effort on the part of caring advisors. Ann's frequent and intentional use of her student's first name throughout her advising session conveyed a sense of closeness with Drew. Joan's insistence that her advisee address her on a first-name basis aided in establishing rapport with the student and expressed an invitation of "mom-like" intimacy to the student. Similarly, touch conveyed a closeness and aided in establishing rapport, demonstrating an advisor's care and illustrating an advisor's maternalism. In *Stories Lives Tell: Narrative and Dialogue in Education*, Witherell and Noddings (1991) argue that a caring relation requires dialogue. The authors contend, "The material of dialogue is usually words, but touch, affectionate sounds and silences, and glances may also be a part of it" (p. 7)

Touch is a sensitive issue in the professional environment and while some advisor participants chose to convey their care in non-physical ways, the majority of the advisor participants used some form of physical contact, most often a handshake, in the encounter. In Serena's snapshot illustrated in the previous section of the chapter, Ludmilla initiated an embrace before leaving the session. In Joan's encounter, she touched the student gently on her hand to reassure her. In her interview, Joan discussed her philosophy of touch in establishing rapport:

> I feel that, in some way, you need to touch a person not only mentally but also physically. Like as far as a handshake or even if you're talking and their arm is on the table. And I know that you have to be careful with these things, but that physical touch does something, especially if a person in brand new and they're in a stressful environment…I know that it makes a connection that transcends no contact at all. I think you can do fine with no contact, but it's just something that, in my years of experience, has made a difference for me. It really registers with the other person. I know that. I've not done the scientific research but I know that it does make a difference. There's that connection made there.

The connection that Joan makes iss one of warmth and intimacy. Joan's attentiveness, sense of familiarity, and affection brilliantly illustrate her "maternal thinking" (Ruddick, 1989) and her maternalism warms and comforts her students.

The interpersonal skills employed by caring advisors as evidenced in this category such as appropriate, ongoing eye contact and active listening were indicative of an advisor's receptive engrossment in the student and, according to the participants in the study, were most essential components of the caring encounter. Eye contact and active listening conveys to the advisee that the advisor is engrossed, fully present, and prepared to receive the information given. Nutt (2000) maintains that communication skills are "perhaps the most important set of [interpersonal] skills needed by advisors in building

relationships with their advisees" (p. 221). He emphasizes that advisors must establish

and maintain eye contact with students. He explains:

> Students must feel they have the undivided attention of their advisors if they are to communicate openly and honestly on issues of concern. In addition, maintaining eye contact with students can enable advisors to pick up on nonverbal cues that students may be giving that contradict their words (p. 221).

Caring advisors are mom-like in their concern and their attentiveness for the

cared-for. Caring advisors, like caring moms, are engrossed and receptive. Caring

advisors, like caring mothers, anticipate the needs of their students, preparing for their

caring encounters and putting their motive energy at service to the cared for. Referring

back to the snapshot of Sandy in the first section of the chapter, her mom-like receptive

engrossment and motivational displacement was evidenced in her preparation for each

student appointment. After reading the student's online record and previous advising

notes, Sandy placed only two items on her desk: a hard copy of the students folder

(including his or her degree plan) and a pen. Aside from the computer monitor, which

displayed the student's Advisor Toolkit record, there were no other items between Sandy

and her advisee. I wrote in my field notebook:

> Sandy's message to the student is clear: for the next 30 minutes I am available and present for you and you only. I am focusing on your needs and your questions and concerns. I will not be distracted by outside interferences. This session is entirely devoted to you. (Field Notes 03/31/03)

Sandy demonstrates to students that she cares by setting aside her own personal

agenda to attend exclusively to the needs of her advisee. This belief defines motivational

displacement as elemental in the caring advising encounter and illustrates the maternal

thinking that so clearly punctuates Sandy's work.

Efforts to minimize power were evident in the advisors' attempts to downplay the legitimate power inherent in their positions, engaging students and building relationships characterized by familiarity and caring concern. Joan's willingness to touch her student's hand and to guide her gently to her chair, and Serena's caring embrace with Ludmilla in the vignette offered earlier in the chapter neutralized the power differential and conveyed a sense of maternalism and familiarity, leveling the playing field in the encounters. The persistent, attentive, non-threatening eye contact modeled by Roger, Julie, and Joan minimized the power differential and illustrated to their advisees that they were engrossed and involved in their issues—listening and caring without judgment. The significance of appropriate, ongoing, non-threatening eye contact was, in the opinions of the participating advisors, a most essential component to the caring encounter and helped tp minimize inherent differences in power.

Similarly, and perhaps most importantly, power is neutralized in an advisor's encouragement of the use of first names, rather than names that suggest authority or position. Having advised students for more than 15 years, Joan illustrated her experience with this dynamic as she related a story from her past:

> Years ago I was with a student who had been seeing another advisor. I'll always use my first name, but in the [previous] office they wanted me to use, you know, 'Mrs. Clayton.' But a name is a name and I use my first name. But this one advisor said to the student, "Call me Dr. So-and-So.' And so what that said to the student was that this label is more important than what you were just trying to say to me. I mean, that's fine, you've earned that. But is *that* really important when you're working with a student who has real issues and needs to feel comfortable and is reaching out?

Joan's concern for the student and her intentional efforts to minimize the power differential and create a sense of familiarity that was recognized by her advisee and undoubtedly appreciated.

The work of caring advisors clearly occurs before an academic advising encounter commences and continues throughout the session, as they skillfully convey to students that they are present, prepared, engaged, and focused exclusively on the needs of the advisee. Advisors balance power with nurturance, explore possibilities for mentoring and set in motion the momentum necessary to build lasting, significant, caring relationships with the students who seek their counsel.

Building relationships: Commitment and connection.

Snapshot of Sheila: McCombs School of Business, Department of Management

"Let's see," Sheila pondered as I prepared to observe her advising session, "What else do I need to do to get ready for the next one?" Corey, her next student appointment, was running slightly late for his scheduled visit. Sheila was not rattled by her student's tardiness; this momentary lull in the activity allowed her to take a second glance at the degree audit she had prepared in advance for Corey. A few minutes later, Corey stepped into Sheila's office, apologized for his late arrival, and took his seat across from her desk. "I'm graduating and I just wanted to make sure everything is cool," Corey announced. Sheila passed Corey his degree audit and responded, "Everything looks good from here, Corey. As long as you pass all your courses this semester, you are good to go!"

For the next few minutes, Sheila outlined the steps Corey would need to take in order to certify his graduation. Corey listened intently as Sheila took him step by step through the process. She asked him if he had completed the application to graduate and if he had alerted the Dean's office of his intent to participate in the commencement ceremony. Corey informed her that he had submitted the graduation form but did not plan to walk in the ceremony. Sheila gently encouraged him to participate in the commencement ritual, discussing the "once in a lifetime" experience and its potential to provide a means to proudly cap off his university career in a meaningful manner. "I know it may sound like a big pain, but I wish you would consider it, Corey, " she said. "You've been through so much these past few years and I think, in the end, you should celebrate your success and pat yourself on the back in a public way." "Maybe I'll do it," he said as he thanked her for her advice. "I really trust your opinion after everything you've done for me. I'll think about it." A few minutes after he had left her office, the student returned, leaning in her doorway to make sure he wasn't interrupting another student's session. Smiling, he informed Sheila that he had taken her advice and stopped by the Dean's office to add his name to the commencement list. "Thank you so much, Sheila. You've meant a lot to me." he added before leaving for his next class.

Snapshot of Lloyd: College of Education

"I really like my classes a lot!" Lisa announced proudly as Lloyd perused her online academic record. "Fantastic!" he replied. "I know when I saw you last week at the Jester Store you mentioned that you were much happier this time around."

As advisor and student sat closely reviewing Lisa's record I noticed the obvious rapport the two had built. I wrote in my journal:

> This is a great encounter! These two have established an ongoing relationship and they seem to enjoy one another's company. Laughter, smiles—there is obvious affection here and much evidence that their relationship moves beyond the typical advisor-advisee relationship. He's her friend, her big brother, her mentor. (Field Notes. 04/09/03).

In the moments that followed, Lloyd described the placement process for prospective teaching candidates in the college, providing a thorough, description of the steps Lisa would soon take in order to enter the teaching profession. Following his every word, Lisa jotted down a few notes in her planner, making certain to highlight important dates and deadlines. "I'll send you an email to remind you of what we've talked about so you won't miss a deadline, "Lloyd commented. He would later tell me that this extra step he took, the additional initiative in assisting Lisa, was, in his opinion, important in demonstrating his care for her. He reflected, "I think the follow up that I try to do with every student demonstrates to the student that I have heard what they've said and I care about whether or not they follow through with [their plans]."

After making notes and gathering her book bag, Lisa stood to make her exit. Extending her hand, Lisa smiled, saying, "Thank you so much. Thank you, Lloyd. You are so cool." Lloyd smiled proudly as Lisa happily left to meet her friends for lunch. "She's great," he whispered to me, "One of my favorites."

Snapshot of Sam: College of Communications, Department of Journalism

"Courtney," Sam called to the group of students waiting in line for their turn to visit with him. A tall, athletic blond hurried into the office and, dropping her bag next to

the chair in front of Sam's desk, immediately took command of the session "Okay," she announced, "I am graduating in the fall and I need to make sure the classes I need will be offered this summer and next semester so I can finish this degree!" Sam grinned as he sat behind his desk. "We've got it under control," he said laughing. Courtney responded with laughter as Sam turned to his computer to confirm her address and social security number. As Sam typed, Courtney informed him of her current internship at a local television station. "Keep talking, I'm listening," he said as he quickly completed his administrative task. Once he returned to face her, Courtney and Sam discussed the ins and outs of her internship and her newfound interest in television news. Reviewing her courses for the upcoming semester, Courtney breathed a sigh of relief as she realized that every class she needed would be not only offered, but would also have registration restrictions that gave seniors registration priority. "You're a very good advisor," she offered suddenly, "I appreciate all your work." Sam thanked her and excused himself to make a copy of her planned schedule. Courtney leaned toward me an offered further assessment of her advisor, "Sam's the man. When I come for advising I always want to see Sam." "Why, exactly?" I asked. "Accuracy," she noted. "He makes things easy to understand, you know? He looks out for us and makes us feel valued. He has been so good to me for four years, going above and beyond the call for me." She added, "He's been like a guardian angel. How many people can say that about their academic advisor?"

Returning with her copies, Sam asked if there was anything else they needed to cover before she left. Courtney shook her advisor's hand and said, "Nope. That'll do it.

Thanks for everything!" As she turned to leave she whispered to me one last time, "I love Sam. He's the best."

Snapshot of Sandy: McCombs School of Business

Sandy's session had begun as I quietly turned on the video camera and took my seat against the wall. A much needed bathroom break has caused me to miss the first few minutes of her meeting with Laura, but Sandy later assured me that I had not missed much aside from the usual pleasantries. Sandy pulled a single form from the folder on her desk and checked off a box on the form. Laura had some difficulty with school in the past and Sandy had placed her on a CARE contract. The CARE program, originated in the business school, is a retention effort targeting students on academic probation and those in danger of approaching probation. CARE, which stands for Comprehensive Advising Retention and Enrichment—the duality of the acronym is intentional—allows an advisor to closely follow a student's progress through a given semester. Students on a CARE contract meet monthly with their advisors and, depending upon a student's individual needs, may meet with other campus resources as well.

"So you're feeling better about that class?" Sandy asked. Laura confirmed that her current course load was an improvement over the classes she took the previous semester. "I'm so glad to hear that, Laura,' Sandy replied. "I know it's been hard but you're making such progress. I'm proud of you." Laura responded with a shy smile. "Let's run an audit to see what you need to focus on registering for next semester, " Sandy suggested.

As the two reviewed the online audit, Sandy wrote down each course Laura needed in order to complete her degree plan. Handing the sheet of paper to her advisee, Sandy asked, "Do you think you would like to meet again before registration just to make sure we're on track?" "I'd like to, yes." Laura responded. She paused and shifted in her seat. "You know," she began. Suddenly, the phone rang, interrupting her train of thought. Sandy looked directly at her student, intentionally ignoring the incoming call, "Yes?" Laura continued, "I feel much better about everything this semester: job, school, everything! Thanks for all your help." Sandy smiled and leaned forward, "Oh, you're welcome. That's why I'm here. It was really good seeing you today."

Interpreting the Caring Components of Relationship Building

As my study progressed, a vivid representation of caring advising began to emerge. Advisor participants characterized caring advisors (and themselves) as those possessing qualities such as warmth, honesty, compassion, and a willingness to assist students in manners beyond the scope of their typical responsibilities. Student participants spoke at length about the importance of empathy, openness, kindness, a willingness to go the extra mile, and genuine concern in caring advising. These identified characteristics provided the building blocks for relationships to flourish.

Among the most predominant recurring topics in the participant interviews, one that was necessary for the establishment and maintenance of meaningful advisor-advisee relationships was that of trust. Five of the advisors participating in the study indicated their belief that trust was the most important element of caring advising. Additionally, student participants distinguished trust as a significant characteristic of caring advisors.

In discussing her ongoing contact with Serena, her finance advisor, Ludmilla smiled, saying, "She's just been great. She's very caring and I feel like I can trust her. I feel that I could say anything I wanted, any question I could ask, it was okay." In Serena's interview she echoed this sentiment from her perspective: "I think it's a great thing to build up trust because when you have a good trusting relationship between yourself and the student, they're more willing to talk to you about things that are going on in their lives."

Trust from the advisor's perspective may include trust in the student and his or her abilities to understand the information presented and to grow as a result of the advising encounter, as well as trust in his or her own knowledge and skills. Mayeroff (1971) maintains, "Besides trusting the other, I must also trust my own capacity to care. I must have confidence in my judgments and in my ability to learn from my mistakes; I must, as we say, trust my instincts" (p. 29). In the eyes of the student, trust is also reciprocal. Students trust their own abilities as well as the skills, knowledge, empathy, ethics, and confidentiality of the advisor. Mayeroff contends, "If another person is to grow through my caring, he must trust me, for only then will he open himself to me and let me reach him. Without trust in me he will be defensive and closed" (p. 57).

In *On Caring*, Mayeroff (1971) defines what he believes are the major ingredients of caring. Specifically, he lists knowing, alternating rhythms, patience, honesty, humility, hope, courage, and trust. Regarding trust, he maintains:

> Whether I trust the one who cares for me depends in large part on his ringing true for me, and on my experiences of being actually cared for by him. On the other hand, although in my caring for another person I trust him to grow and actualize

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himself (to become other than he now is), he trusts me because of what I am now, because I am for him and with him in his growth (p. 57).

Ruddick (1989) sees trust as an essential element in maternal practice, particularly in the demand of training or preparation. "A trustworthy mother instills trustworthiness in her children," (p. 118), she contends. Ruddick explains:

> Proper trust is one of the most difficult maternal virtues. It requires of a mother clear judgment that does not give way to obedience or denial. It depends on her being reliably goodwilled and independent yet able to express and to accept from her children righteous indignation at trust betrayal. Ideally, proper trust is prepared by maternal protectiveness and nurturance. It survives a mother's inauthentic moments, domineering tendencies, and evident failures to be reliable. (p. 119).

Clearly, the trust that develops between two individuals grows over time and through ongoing contact or frequent encounters. This is not to say that trust absolutely cannot occur upon initial contact. One can presume for example that a patient may inherently trust her physician the first time they interact, or a child may trust his teacher or a student may trust his advisor merely based upon the position he or she holds and the presumed knowledge, competence, skill, and authority the position demands. However, I believe in most instances trust is nurtured through continuity of contact and the experiences over time that occur within the caring encounters. In this study, advisor participants' reflections of their caring work extended beyond that which occurred within the half-hour advising sessions I observed and videotaped. In discussing caring advising, advisors spoke fondly of the relationships they nurtured with their students and the satisfaction they experienced in seeing their students grow under their persistent and caring guidance.

Nutt (2000) believes "the successful one-to-one advising relationship can be a major factor in a student's decision to remain in college and be academically successful" (p. 226). He continues

> It is clear that one-to-one advising provides students and advisors with the opportunity to build lasting and valued relationships that will positively affect students' academic performance and satisfaction with the institution (p. 226).

The connections we make and the relationships we cultivate with people who enter our worlds, however briefly, enrich our lives and enhance our experiences. In the interviews conducted after the observation phase of the study, advisor participants spoke specifically about the relationships they nurtured with the students who sought their assistance. They spoke of the importance of connecting with students and maintaining contact with them, building trust and a sense of familiarity, striving to make the advising experience more personal and less bureaucratic. This is particularly important (and not a simple task) in one of the largest, most populated universities in the country.

The data in this category provided rich illustrations to support the themes of maternalism, mentorship, and power. The warmth, sincerity, compassion, and trust caring advisors embody in their relationships with students convey a maternal quality that radiates in their advising practices. Like moms, caring advisors offer support and encouragement. We saw this in the snapshot of Sheila, as she gently encouraged Corey to participate in his commencement ceremony, which he, in turn, indicating his trust in her, agreed to do. Corey received and recognized his advisor's care in his comment, "You've meant a lot to me." We saw mom-like support in Sandy's encouragement of Laura, when, with a hint of maternalism, Sandy proclaimed, "I'm proud of you."   In her

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interview, Sandy assessed her caring encouragement of students like Laura, stating, "I try to put them at ease and make them feel comfortable enough to realize that I'm on their side and I want to help them as much as I possibly can." We see maternal encouragement in Lloyd's work with Lisa and in the appreciation she expressed in her interview, saying, "When I first started working with Lloyd I almost started crying because he was so supportive."

Like moms, caring advisors are genuine and honest. There is recognition and appreciation of Serena's gifts as an advisor in Ludmilla's loving assessment:

> A good advisor is someone who is open and caring, who does show genuine concern for the student and doesn't just say, "Okay, this is your major and your minor. You need this and this. Okay, bye." You want someone who is willing to go a little farther, to go into more detail, to show interest in you as a person and a human being. Because you're not just a student, you know, you're not just a number and a face. You're not just someone out there walking with a backpack. You're a real person and everyone has their own individual story and situation. The advisor should be genuine and sensitive. My advisor is that kind of advisor!

One of Sheila's students, Jane, characterized her advisor as someone who "really wants to help people." She continued, "Sheila cares about our lives, which is kind of hard to find in a college atmosphere. She is trustworthy, open-minded, and her caring is real. You can't teach that." Laura had a similar impression of her advisor, Sandy, emphasizing that her advisor's sincerity was "something you can't fake."

Like caring moms, advisors follow through on their commitments and promises and model that behavior to their students. We see this illustrated in Lloyd's promise to remind Lisa of upcoming deadlines. We hear it in his interview comment about the value he places in following through. In response to the question, "How do you demonstrate to students that you care? Lloyd responded, "I think the follow up I do with every student

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demonstrates to the student that I've heard what they've said and I care about whether or not they follow through." Caring advisors, like moms, are trustworthy and trusting. In his interview, Lloyd commented:

> If I could use one word [to describe the most important element in advising] I would say trust—that students feel like they can trust me to work in their best interests, be open to anything that he or she might say…and as an advisor trusting myself and my experience to know that I'm going to react in the most professional way and give the student the kind of guidance that he or she deserves.

Sandy agreed with this assessment, adding, "I think what's most important is the trust you establish with the student and the fact that, over time, they DO trust you and know that they can come to you when they have a question without feeling intimidated." Sam concurred, explaining, "When you establish trust, something that goes hand in hand with your caring attitude is the fact that you actually do follow through—you keep your word. You [demonstrate] integrity."

Noddings (1996), in defining the components of moral education from the perspective of caring, speaks of confirmation. She explains, "Martin Buber (1965) describes confirmation as an act of affirming and encouraging the best in others. When we confirm someone, we spot a better self and encourage its development" (p. 164). Noddings argues that confirmation is not achieved by formula, but must be achieved through continuity and grounded in trust. For many of the advisors interviewed, this confirmation occured through the ongoing relationships they fostered with the students they advised, relationships built on trust.

Caring advisors are mom-like in their willingness to go the extra mile for their students. Courtney's loving evaluation of Sam in the snapshot in this category brilliantly

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illustrated her acknowledgment and appreciation of her advisor's efforts to exceed the

expectations of his position. She recognized that he had gone "above and beyond" and

referred to Sam as her "guardian angel." Similarly, Laura offered an assessment of

Sandy's caring, maternal practices:

> Sandy is a great person and a lot of advisors, I think, don't really go to the extent
> that she does even though I'm sure they have the same concept in mind. But she
> goes the extra mile and that's what really matters. Advisors should have an
> impact on every student's life here and Sandy does that to the greatest extent.

The relationship that Laura and Sandy had cultivated over the past four years was

obvious in Laura's characterization of her advisor. When asked to specify the features

that she believed Sandy possessed as a caring advisor, Laura mentioned her advisor's

knowledge and preparation, her willingness to "go the extra mile" and her sincerity,

which Laura remarked, "is the number one thing [an advisor] must have because that is

what builds a relationship. All I can say is, she's the one person I will remember when I

leave school." She added, fondly, "Having Sandy as an advisor was one of the best

things that ever happened to me."

Anderson (1989) speaks of "going the extra mile" in his efforts to improve

college student persistence and achievement. In *What Would We Do if We Really Loved

the Students?* Anderson contends:

> I have been able to promote students' achievement, persistence, and development
> most effectively when I have taken an active interest in them, sought to know and
> understand them as persons, cared for them by developing personally relevant
> services, respected their individuality and uniqueness, and felt responsibility for
> their success and development. Whether through elaborate and systematic
> programs, or through fledgling, half-baked efforts, when students sense that they
> are loved, it makes a difference (p. 200).

It was this love, this motherly, honest, compassionate care that characterized the work of the advisors highlighted in this study. It is important to note that compassion, kindness, empathy, and honesty are personal attributes, albeit important ones, that many people may possess. Caring, however, involves the intentional act of putting these characteristics into action. Gordon, Benner, and Noddings (1996) explain:

> First, we want to distinguish caring from kindness, passion, involvement, or attention. Caring is often confused with an intent or an emotional attribute that exists in particular human beings, absent the skills necessary to put it into practice. But we argue that caring practices involve skill, education, and community and social resources (p. xii)

Explaining further, the authors continue:

> Briefly then, we define caring not as a psychological state or innate attribute but as a set of relational practices that foster mutual recognition and realization, growth, development, protection, empowerment, and human community, culture, and possibility…these practices are required in relationships that are devoted—for however short or long a period of time—to helping educate, nurture, develop, and empower, assisting others to cope with their weaknesses while affirming their strengths. Caring relationships are also those that foster well-being in the midst of change, crisis, vulnerability, or suffering…Caring practices always involve receptivity, engrossment, attunement, engagement, intelligence, skill, shrewdness, and knowledge (p. xiii).

While it is flattering to characterize the advisors in this study as compassionate, honest, and kind, it was not the emotional attribute that distinguished their work or that set them apart from their colleagues, defining their work as caring advising. It was, in fact, the skills they possessed, the methods they utilized, and the intentional acts they performed in their work with students that beautifully illustrated the *practice* of caring.

Mentorship is born from the relationships cultivated in these advising encounters. Kramer, Tanner, and Peterson (1995) stress the importance of faculty and professional advisor mentoring, saying advisors who "encourage students to get involved in college,

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who press them to study hard and learn, and who display a genuine interest in their

progress make a significant difference in the retention of students" (p. 64). Sam

illustrated a mom/mentor philosophy in one of his statements during the interview portion

of the study:

> What I like best about advising are the relationships that you establish with
> students and the fact that you're able to be in a position to assist them and help
> them grow and develop and reach their goals. You know, I think it's really
> rewarding especially when you work with students that are having difficulties.
> For me that's the most rewarding—when you push them just a little bit and make
> them believe in themselves and help them spread their wings and fly.

We saw true mentorship in Sandy's guidance of Laura through the business

school's CARE program, providing ongoing support and encouragement, providing

Laura with the resources to assure her academic growth. Batchelor (1993) contends that

the mentoring relationship's foundation is built implicitly "on trust, mutual agreement,

respect, and confidentiality. Emotional and social interaction makes possible the transfer

of attitudes, behaviors and skills" (p. 381). Sandy possesses the keys to academic success,

and as a mentor who cares deeply for her student she provided the guidance to foster

Laura's improvement.

Sandy indicated "her most important role as a mentor is to create an environment

that fosters communication and trust." In her interview Sandy noted that drawing upon

her own college experiences and sharing them with her students, when appropriate, was

one of the ways in which she accomplished this task. "Letting students know I've

struggled with the same issues helps validate their feelings and decreases their anxiety,"

she explained. Among the students who considered Sandy a mentor and sought her

guidance regularly, one example stood out, according to Sandy. In her interview, Sandy

recalled her student's most recent visit and their discussion regarding his career plans.

> Not only had he expressed serious doubts about attending medical school, he
> believed his recent health problems were directly related to increased stress about
> his career choice. While I could not relate to the pressures associated with
> preparation for medical school, I have experienced the angst of being in a degree
> program and/or career that I didn't enjoy. When I told him about my experience
> as an undergraduate, he asked with relief, 'So this is something that is pretty
> common, huh?' Finding some common ground is often the first step in
> establishing a real connection with the student.

Mentorship was also evident in Lloyd's relationship with Lisa, specifically his

willingness to follow up after their appointment, making sure that Lisa was aware of

important deadlines enforced by the placement center. Lloyd provided the guidance that

characterizes the caring influence of a mentor. Their obvious friendship would likely

flourish through this ongoing interaction, as Batchelor (1993) insists, "Mentoring

relationships often develop into rich and helpful lifelong friendships. The positive

outcomes and rewards are many."

Lloyd offered another powerful illustration of mentorship in our post-observation

conversation. As an advisor in the College of Education, Lloyd worked with the college

student council. As a part of this role, he coordinated the election of officers each year.

After encouraging some of the hardest working students in the group, one of the students,

and one of Lloyd's frequent advisees, finally decided to run for office, "mustering all of

the courage she could to give her speech." This student, Lana, was not elected for the

office for which she had campaigned and was very disappointed in the results. Lloyd

approached her and asked if she had considered other types of leadership roles she could

assume, but Lana informed him that she was not ready to go through an election

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experience again. Unwilling to give up on his student, Lloyd asked her to serve as a

student employee in the college's advising office. "Lana jumped at the chance," he

reported, "and really shined in the job." Lloyd continued:

> Halfway through the school year, one of the officers in Education Council
> resigned and the president of the council asked for a volunteer to take over the
> duties. Lana volunteered and, again, did an outstanding job. When elections
> came the next academic year, Lana ran for president and was elected. At the end
> of her term, Lana addressed the membership to give them praise for all of their
> hard work. In her closing, Lana thanked me for reaching out to her when she was
> feeling 'rejected' by not being elected initially. She said she was grateful that in
> her defeat, I was able to present a new opportunity for her, and to her that made
> all the difference.

Lloyd's ongoing, intentional relationship with Lana moved beyond the typical

advisor-advisee connection, to one of mentorship. Lloyd continued to mentor his

protégé and shared a meaningful bond that inspired and encouraged her to seek new

opportunities.

"I have many wonderful memories of the students I have mentored," Sam

emphasized. "One of my most memorable mentoring moments was a young African-

American student." Sam warmly recalled:

> Despite all the challenges she faced as a woman, as a first-generation student, as a
> person of color, she would come to visit me throughout her college career and
> give me updates on her setbacks and progress. She had her share of
> disappointments along the way, including those dealing with finances, academics,
> relationships, family issues and health. I believe that my role as her mentor and
> not allowing her to give up gave her strength to persevere and get her degree. I
> still remember the look on her face when she came to tell me that she was
> graduating—it is moments like these that make it all worth it. I felt that my belief
> in her kept her going and prevented her from giving up.

Like mentoring, power plays out differently in each advisor's work. Advisors live

in the middle of a continuum between Rogerian therapist at one end of the scale and rule-

bound principal at the other. Advisors must be encourager and advocate in certain situations and enforcer and consequence bearer in others. Depending upon a given student's situation, we traverse the continuum and assume power accordingly and appropriately. Though we, as advisors, typically rest in the middle of the continuum, it is important to remember that caring encompasses the entire scale. For example, if I meet with an advisee who has violated an academic policy or failed to fulfill an obligation and I must move to the enforcer role, it does not mean I care less for the student.

The reference to power was evident in Sam's reassuring comment to Courtney, when he playfully announced, "We've got it under control" signaling to her that he had the means and the will to address the problem at hand. Sandy tempered her power with empathy and an emphasis on realistic expectations. In her interview, Sandy emphasized:

> I think it helps to balance authority with empathy, letting [students] know, 'Okay, these are the things you're having difficulty with; Let's see what we can do to make things better.' It's important to maintain your composure, making them aware that you can't possibly fix everything, but that you're concerned and you're going to do what you can to help the situation.

Sandy achieved the balance of power and empathy in her ongoing work with Laura, as she did with all her students. This balance was important to her. As Noblit, Rogers, and McCadden (1995) clearly recognize, "Control and caring are threads of the same tapestry" (p. 684).

The skills and competencies illustrated in this section, the interpersonal components of compassion, trust, honesty, empathy, and the willingness to go beyond the required scope of the advising position, foster and strengthen commitment and

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connection between advisor and student. It is through these components that significant,

treasured relationships, valued by student and advisor, develop and thrive.

Reciprocity: Caring Received; Caring Acknowledged

As an advising encounter reaches its conclusion, both student and advisor look for

signs to indicate that closure is appropriate. Caring advisors seek assurance that their

efforts have guided the advisee in finding a solution to the issue she has presented, that

answers and resources have been provided and understood. Caring advisors need to

know that they have made a difference and their caring has been received. Noddings

(1984) refers to this final act in the caring encounter as *reciprocity*. She contends that

caring is embedded in reciprocal relationships. Noddings explains:

> After the one-caring and the cared-for interact, the caring encounter is completed
> once the cared-for has acknowledged the care he has received. This reciprocity is
> the sole role of the cared-for in a caring situation. Reciprocity can take different
> forms—a smile from a baby, a thank you from [a] lost stranger—but it must occur
> in every caring encounter (p. 14).

Noddings summarizes the caring encounter simply: "The caring relation requires

engrossment and *motivational displacement* on the part of the one-caring and a form of

responsiveness or *reciprocity* on the part of the cared-for" (p. 150). This recognition on

the part of the cared-for is most often demonstrated in a student's expression of thanks.

In every session I observed the advisee genuinely thanked his or her advisor before

leaving the advisor's office. For example, at the end of her advising session with Lloyd,

Lisa accepted his handshake and said, "Thank you so much. Thank you, Lloyd. You are

so cool." After considering Sheila's thoughtful advice, Corey returned to her office to

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confirm his intention to participate in the commencement ceremony, saying "Thank you so much, Sheila. You've meant a lot to me." In each session, the recognition and responsiveness to the advisor's care went beyond a simple "Thank you." And in the participant interviews, perhaps the most compelling example of reciprocity was that of Laura's assessment of her relationship with Sandy—"Having Sandy as an advisor was one of the best things that ever happened to me."

As Joan advised a prospective transfer student during my visit, she worked diligently to assure that the student would be prepared for her eventual application and entrance to the School of Architecture at UT-Austin. She helped her select appropriate courses at her current institution, discussed admission requirements to this highly competitive program, guided the student in comparing the academic requirements and rigor of both her present and prospective institution, and encouraged her to take advantage of specific campus resources. Joan's warmth, knowledge, and genuine concern were evident and the student nodded and smiled as Joan summarized the information and brought the session to a close. Acknowledging the advisor's accuracy, knowledge, and empathy, the student smiled as she rose, saying, "Thank you **so** much. You've been very, very helpful."

As Ann ended her lengthy and informative session with Dennis, a working father pursuing his undergraduate degree in psychology with hopes of eventually enrolling in a graduate program, she paused to make sure he was comfortable and satisfied with the plan they had drafted. As he turned to leave, Dennis promised, "I'm sure I'll be back. Thank you so much. I appreciate your time."

Julie's advising session was a lengthy one. A prospective computer science major

from Arkansas had traveled to campus to examine the undergraduate program offerings at

the University of Texas and compare them to other programs he was considering. As

described in the snapshot of Julie earlier in the chapter, Julie worked diligently for 90

minutes answering every question, exploring every possibility and entertaining every

notion. Her efforts did not go unnoticed by the student. "This is great," he announced

several times during the session. "That's really good to hear." As the session (finally)

drew to a close, and Julie confirmed that his questions and concerns had been addressed,

the student smiled and nodded, "I really appreciate you being honest with me. This is

awesome. I really appreciate you doing this for me." As Julie escorted him from her

office, he added, "Thank you. This is much more than I expected. This is so good."

Obviously, her willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty and the care she

offered were both recognized and appreciated by the student.

"The cared-for 'grows' and 'glows' under the perceived attitude of the one-

caring," Noddings believes (1984, p. 67). It is this growth and genuine sense of relief or

accomplishment or pride that students who fill the role of the cared-for exhibit that sends

a clear message to the caring advisor that their care has been received and their efforts

rewarded. Noddings (1984) adds:

> What the cared-for gives to the relation either in direct response to the one-caring
> or in personal delight or in happy growth before her eyes is genuine reciprocity.
> It contributes to the maintenance of the relation and serves to prevent the caring
> from turning back on the one-caring in the form of anguish or concern for self (p.
> 74).

Can an advising session be characterized as a caring encounter in the absence of this important element of the equation? What if, despite an advisor's best efforts and intentions, an advisee promptly gathers her belongings, turns and exits the session without an acknowledgment of the care she has been offered? If reciprocity is not present in the encounter, can the advising session still be considered a caring interaction? No, Noddings (1984) argues, offering this explanation:

> Does this mean that I cannot be said to care for X if X does not recognize my caring?   In the fullest sense, I think we have to accept this result…So, what if '…X does not feel that I care.' Therefore, sadly, I must admit that, while I feel that I care, X does not perceive that I care and, hence, the relationship cannot be characterized as one of caring. The result does not necessarily signify a negligence on my part. There are limits in caring. X may be paranoid or otherwise pathological. There may be no way for the caring to reach him. But, then, caring has only been partially actualized (p. 68).

Happily, I can report that I did not witness a lack of reciprocity in a single session I observed in my research. In each instance, the student demonstrated a genuine appreciation for and a firm recognition of the care he or she had received from the advisor. Common courtesy? I asked myself. Good Southern manners? Perhaps, though I firmly believe (and confirmed in my student interviews) that this recognition and reciprocity were honest and heartfelt. Advisors and students recognized that this reciprocity was an important and meaningful indicator that the advising encounter had achieved one of its most significant goals. In outlining the characteristics of caring advising, Jane reflected on her experiences with her advisor, Shelia, stating, "If you have students coming back and they're saying, 'Hey, thanks so much.' Or if [an advisor] has established a good reputation with them and they're coming back…then obviously you're doing something right!"

Reciprocity takes on many forms, but its presence in the caring advisor encounter is both essential and appreciated. Sandy illustrated her take on reciprocity with the following example:

> I saw a student today who had some complicated issues, some problems with registration. I think he was really pretty stressed out. But I think what I did for him really helped and he said, "You know, I really appreciate the time you took." He was really appreciative and he said, "This helps so much. I feel much better."

In Sandy's example, her student clearly appreciated the care he had received and reciprocated by indicating to his advisor that he appreciated her efforts in solving the problem. This brief, but meaningful exchange exemplifies Noddings's (1984) claim that "the recognition of caring by the cared-for is necessary to the caring relation" (p. 71). She reiterates, "The one-caring is engrossed; the cared-for 'fills the firmament'…there must [be] reciprocity" (p. 74).

Sometimes, reciprocity continues after the initial response in the encounter and surfaces again. In her interview, Sandy spoke humbly but appreciatively about the gifts and thank you notes she received from students. Thinking about her commitment to the advising profession, Sandy mused:

> I still love this job. Even after 13 years it's still enjoyable. And even though you may say the same things over and over it's still nice to get a thank you note or to feel like you've made a difference to someone. That feels really good. It's sometimes surprising—a lot of times you get [a thank you note] from [students] you don't ever expect to get it from!

I think back on the kind notes I've received from students, the hugs, the heartfelt thanks. At the end of a difficult week this reciprocity, in my opinion, makes all the hard work worthwhile. And, like Sandy, I love this job. Knowing I've made a difference in a student's educational experience is the most gratifying compensation I am afforded.

Being a Valuable Resource: Caring, Knowledge and Accuracy

Snapshot of Beth: College of Liberal Arts

"Sally, how can I help you today?" Beth asked as the student took her seat. Collecting her thoughts, Sally explained that she was considering a number of options in putting her Spanish degree to use. "I'm thinking about possibly teaching or even minoring in business," she clarified. "I don't know, I guess I just want to look at the possibilities." Setting aside the degree audit that Beth had prepared in advance of Sally's visit, Beth adjusted herself comfortably in her chair. As Sally listened, Beth explained the process for gaining secondary teaching certification, the classes required, the student teaching experience, the requirements for state certification, and the opportunities for employment. Delicately, she corrected the student's misinterpretation of the minor requirement for business; students at the University of Texas cannot actually minor in a discipline in the business school but can, instead, enroll in a set of courses in the Business Foundations Program, that allow non-business majors to be exposed to the fundamentals of accounting, management, marketing, and management information systems, she explained. Sensing the student's primary interest in the first option discussed, Beth steered the conversation to the original topic. "Let's look at the UTEACH information together," she suggested. Sitting side by side, Sally and her advisor glanced over the brochure as Beth outlined each of the required courses. During the review of courses, Beth noticed a course listed that was typically taught by a professor in the history department. "Do you know Dr. Stanford?" she asked. "Let me tell you a wonderful story

about him." Sally laughed as Beth relayed a story about one of her former students and his positive experience in the professor's class.

Returning to the printed degree audit, Beth outlined the courses Sally lacked in her degree plan. "So when we register next, we're going to take six hours this summer, correct?" she asked. Sally confirmed Beth's assessment and looked curiously at the printed audit. "Do you know how to use the IDA (Interactive Degree Audit) system?" Beth questioned. Sally shook her head and Beth turned the computer monitor for her to see more clearly. She motioned for Sally to move closer. "Let me show you how. It's a great tool and you can run an audit yourself any time you want." For the next few minutes, Beth slowly demonstrated the procedure, glancing at Sally to make sure she was closely following the directions.

Snapshot of Joan: School of Architecture

Audrey calmly took her seat and handed Joan a copy of her transcript. Currently studying in another department, Audrey expressed interest in changing her major to interior design, a department housed in the School of Architecture. "Wow! You've done great!" Joan exclaimed, glancing over the student's transcript. "What a great student! If you continue on this path your chances for admission are very good."

As Audrey listened with interest, Joan suggested changes she could make to her upcoming semester schedule in order to better prepare for transfer into the interior design department. Joan spoke at length about the specific content of each course for which Audrey could register, focusing on the direct or indirect relation each course would have in Audrey's future course of study.

Impressed with the student's credentials, Joan added, "You know, you may eventually want to consider the Master's program." Joan then briefly highlighted the programs offered at the graduate level as Audrey recorded a few notes in her spiral notebook. Finally, Audrey announced, "Well, I think that about does it. Thank you. This has been really informative." Joan smiled, "I know I'll see you soon.

Snapshot of Sam: College of Communications, School of Journalism

Mariana sat quietly as Sam reviewed her academic record. Her frustration was obvious; she informed Sam upon entering his office that there were "no more courses left to take." Sam carefully scrolled through her online file before noticing that she had, in fact, failed the prerequisite Grammar, Spelling, and Punctuation test twice, preventing her from registering for upper division courses in her major discipline. Putting a positive spin on the consequence, Sam encouraged her, "Oh, you missed it [a passing score] by only a few points! Very, very close the second time, Mariana." Realizing that her course options would be limited until she passed the exam, Sam offered, "Let's prepare two possible schedules today for the fall, one if you're able to take major courses, and one if you haven't completed the prerequisite. I know you'll do well next time you take the test, but let's do two schedules just in case." Mariana seemed comfortable with the suggestion, so Sam prepared the degree audit. Slowly, carefully, Sam outlined two possible scenarios for Mariana's course selection. Noticing that Mariana had indicated an interest in radio broadcasting through the courses she had requested, Sam encouraged her to volunteer at the student radio station. "That would be a great experience, don't you think?" he asked. She nodded.

After a thorough explanation of the steps she would need to take to register for the courses in each of the two plans, Sam confirmed to make sure Mariana understood her mission. "Now, tell me what you're going to do between now and the fall?" he asked. She repeated the plan as Sam nodded approvingly. "Okay, I think that will work," she announced, collecting her printed audit. "Again, thank you for everything."

Understanding the Importance of Knowledge in Caring.

Academic advisors are responsible for a wealth of information and one of their primary duties is to provide this information to students as thoroughly and accurately as possible. Advisors must be knowledgeable of specific degree requirements and course content for their respective disciplines. They must be keenly aware of university policies as well as academic rules and regulations. They must keep abreast of pertinent deadlines, inform their students of these important dates, and understand (and convey) the consequences when deadlines are not met. Some advisors on the University of Texas campus also work with departments to schedule classes for upcoming semesters, monitor class availability, and enforce prerequisites. Knowledge and accuracy are requisite skills for the academic advisor whose chief responsibility is assuring that his or her students complete their academic goals in a timely manner and in a manner that makes the academic experience as fulfilling and meaningful as it can be.

As knowledge and accuracy play such a significant role in the advising process, it is interesting to consider how these vital elements relate to the concept of caring. Mayeroff (1971) lists "knowing" as the first of his major ingredients of caring. He argues:

We sometimes speak as if caring did not require knowledge, as if caring for someone, for example, were simply a matter of good intentions or warm regard. But in order to care I must understand the other's needs and I must be able to respond properly to them, and clearly good intentions do not guarantee this. To care for someone, I must *know* many things. I must know, for example, who the other is, what his powers and limitations are, what his needs are, and what is conducive to his growth; I must know how to respond to his needs, and what my own powers and limitations are. Such knowledge is both general and specific (p. 19).

In the course of this study, I observed a direct link between caring in advising and the responsibility advisors accepted to be well informed, thorough, and accurate in their knowledge. Through observation and in conversation with advisor participants and their students, an interesting and important point surfaced: One way academic advisors demonstrate their care for students is through their knowledge of the academic landscape and their commitment and concern for accuracy.

In examining this significant link, Julie stated:

Accuracy is one of the most important ways we can show that we care because giving inaccurate information can really leave such a very negative impact on a student's life. I find myself, no matter what I do, being as accurate as I can be. I feel that giving people accurate and informed options from which to choose is one of my primary tasks.

Yudof (2003) recognizes the relationship between caring and knowledge in academic advising, offering:

To do the job well, advisors are required to have a broad understanding that crosses the boundaries of educational theory, psychology, sociology, cultural studies, and other disciplines. They require patience, perseverance, and imagination, and of course, a facility with the demands of rule-bound and process-oriented educational bureaucracies. However, probably more than anything, advisors must like people (p 7).

The maternal nature of caring in advising is woven into the concern advisors express in their commitment to knowledge and accuracy in their work with students. In

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her interview, Beth listed the defining characteristics of her caring advising, stating initially, "I'm thorough. I care about my students, and I want to provide correct information to them. I care that they do the right thing, and I care that the right things happen to them."

Maternalism resonated in the statement of her advising philosophy Sandy gave me as I prepared to conclude my study. Eloquently, Sandy summarized her feelings regarding the important connection between knowledge and caring:

> One of the first things we are taught as advisors is the importance of attention to detail. We are trained to interpret policy and understand complex publications so that we may successfully guide students through the academic maze of higher education. We familiarize ourselves with campus resources in an effort to increase the likelihood of our students' success. We suggest, recommend, advise, and respond to a barrage of questions, comments, and concerns on a daily basis. However, it is not just the knowledge we posses that brings students back to us each semester. As advisors, we offer what a catalog or website cannot provide—compassion, understanding, encouragement, acceptance, validation, recognition. It is the human element that makes a difference in the life of a student. At the end of the day, I know it is also what makes a difference in my life as an advisor, and the primary reason I have found a place in this profession. (Personal Statement, February 2004).

Sandy is not a mother, but her students, coworkers, and I suspect her family would likely agree that she is very maternal. In the five years we have worked together I have never heard her raise her voice to a student. Yet she is firm when a given situation calls for firmness. She knows when she needs to be tough and she recognizes when a student attempts to manipulate her or take advantage of her kindness (rather like some children will try to manipulate a kind mother, only to be thwarted in their efforts by a kind mother who also happens to be *wise*!) It feels safe to be in Sandy's presence. And, like a mother, she is knowledgeable and trustworthy, she creates a place where secrets

can be shared, lessons can be learned, and privacy is respected. In her interview, Sandy

mentioned that she tooks a special interest in caring for the students who had presented

her with the most difficult situations, as well as those students whom others considered

demanding or "challenging to work with." Her caring is unconditional.

In reference to the demands of mothering articulated by Ruddick (1989), Sandy

preserved, keeping steady what is within one's immediate control, she nurtured, offering

comfort, mentoring needs and activities, and she prepared, training her students to take

over the work of preserving and caring for themselves. She (as well as her caring

colleagues profiled in this study) taught, modeled, guided, and mentored in various overt

and covert modes.

It is this unconditional, mom-like caring and maternal thinking that distinguish the

work of academic advisors like Sandy. Their knowledge is fundamental and, in very

maternal ways, they share their knowledge with students in encouraging, compassionate

ways. They prepare and train, and, as in the example offered by Ruddick (1989) in the

introduction of the chapter, they train with a method that does not compromise their

advisee's "self-respect or confidence (nurturance)" (p. 23).   We see this illustrated in the

vignettes presented previously, portrayed in Joan's motherly encouragement of Audrey as

she reviewed her exceptional academic record, illustrated in Sam's gentle encouragement

of Mariana, whose failure to achieve a passing grade on the prerequisite exam was met

with positive regard rather than disappointment or disapproval. We witness maternalism

in Beth's mentoring, as she taught her student how to complete an online degree audit,

providing her with skills of independence. We see moms captured in caring moments

with those who depend on them, providing them with the knowledge necessary to

succeed in the academic arena.

There is inherent power in the knowledge experienced advisors acquire. Noblit

(1993) examines Michel Foucault's conception of power and knowledge ["It is not

possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not

to engender power"]. When asked if she believed advisors exhibit care through their

accuracy and knowledge, Joan emphasized:

> Yes. They can and they should…knowledge is power and if you're empowered you're comfortable sharing this information. And the person is the receptor of this and they're comfortable receiving it because they can tell that you have something to give them and it's of value and it's going to help them in the long run.

Joan's brief interaction with Audrey exemplified the power of her knowledge and

the significance that knowledge plays in the caring manner in which she thoroughly

described the content of each course her student would explore and their relevance to her

plans to study interior design. We see power evidenced in a frustrated Mariana's visit

with her advisor, Sam. Feeling hopeless in her situation, she turned to someone who she

perceived had the knowledge and the power to remedy her dilemma. Beth's encounter

illustrated the power of knowledge in her understanding of degree requirements outside

her own discipline and her careful explanation to aid in Sally's overall understanding.

Observing Beth's session with Sally, I wrote in my field journal:

> Beth doesn't rush her students. She covers a lot of ground in her appointments and gives lengthy explanations when she feels the students need them. I am very impressed with her knowledge of the faculty in her department. She is extremely thorough in addressing every issue a student brings to the table. (Field Notes 03/27/03)

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Aware of the power differential, Beth neutralized the power in her use of the noun "we" making an unequal relationship appear equal, signaling to her advisee a sense of, "We're in this together." This minimization of power transforms an unequal relationship to one of mentorship.

Light (2001) declares that mentored experiences have a strong and lasting impact on students. Grites and Gordon (2000) contend that mentoring, teaching, and "modeling decision making, encouraging intellectual curiosity and critical thinking, and generating enthusiasm for life-long learning is, and always has been, part of the developmental advising approach" (p. 14). Knowledge is a critical component in the mentoring relationship; mentors are experts, teachers, role models, and coaches. They provide a set of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors for the mentored to emulate. They provide encouragement and support and help the mentored gain self-acceptance, and an opportunity to discuss personal concerns, anxieties, goals, and aspirations (Johns, 1996). Knowledge in caring mentorship is essential. Joan saw mentoring as a primary function in her role as an advisor. In her interview, Joan asserted:

> I see [students] on the cusp of really figuring out who they are and where they want to go in life. I like to be a facilitator in helping them find that direction. UT can be such a difficult ocean to navigate and so I am very interested in helping students navigate the system, helping them become very self-reliant and independent.

Joan's experience and extensive knowledge of the academic landscape provided a foundation for her growth in this role as caring facilitator. Sam perceived the important connection between knowledge and the care he demonstrated to his students. He explained:

[Knowledge and accuracy] go into part of establishing that trust—that [students] will trust what you're telling them and will come back to see you when another questions arises. You're not only a teacher and mentor; you're also a lifetime learner in that you're constantly gathering information to pass on to them.

Teaching is often synonymous with mentoring. Crookston (1972) defines teaching as any experience that "contributes to individual growth and that can be evaluated. The student should not be a passive receptacle of knowledge, but should share responsibility for learning with the teacher" (p. 12). Frost (1991) offers suggestions directed to advisors who work to enhance their effectiveness. Her first suggestion: "Consider the advising relationship as an opportunity to teach students. Treat them as partners by sharing responsibility for advising with them" (p. 73).

Sam explored the connection between teaching, advising, and mentoring in his post-observation interview. Indicating that he had, at one time in his life, aspired to a teaching career, specifically in junior high or high school, "Because,' he said, " I feel that this is the point that students are the most impressionable as to what path they choose." Sam said he wanted to be a part of young people's lives and have a positive influence in helping them reach their full potential. Sam paused before continuing:

> As the years have gone by, I have realized that advising is just like teaching. We are able to shape and influence young people's lives. We have the same impact teachers have. We are able to accomplish this by providing caring and compassionate attention and by mentoring our students. We mentor our students as they discover who they are and what they want to become. Many times, what we have to do in our mentoring capacity is to serve as a sounding board for their ideas. There are times when we have to do a little bit of coaching or encouraging. There are other times when we only have to provide positive feedback or simply show the students that we believe in them. And then there are those times when all we have to do is be a friend.

Sam realized through his exhaustive, intentional efforts in advising and

mentoring, his dream to have an impact on the lives of students had materialized in a

noticeable and meaningful way.

Knowledge and caring: Can one exist without the other?

Kramer and Spencer (1989) emphasize accuracy and knowledge in characterizing

the effectiveness of an academic advising program:

> The focus of the academic advising program should be on giving [students]
> accurate and specific information, accessibility to advisors, and a friendly and
> concerned academic advisor. Three key words—available, knowledgeable, and
> interested—summarize effective academic advising (p.104).

If we agree that knowledge and accuracy are, indeed, components of caring

advising, two important questions must be posed: Can an advisor be thorough, accurate,

and knowledgeable and not care? Conversely, can an advisor care and not be

knowledgeable or committed to accuracy in her work?   Ann considered both questions,

and laughing, responding, "That's a hard one because I've known people who have been

very knowledgeable but they don't come across as caring, and vice versa. That, I think,

is actually worse. At a very basic level advisors need to be accurate." Lloyd pondered

the first question for a few minutes before replying:

> Yes, I think they can. I think the way you convey information there's always an
> element of emotion involved with information sharing within an advising session
> and the way an advisor shares information can either make the student feel that
> the person providing the information was truly listening to the questions being
> asked, was aware of that person's particular situation and cared how the student
> felt about the information being given. So, yeah, I can tell a student, you know,
> "You've taken this class, it's not going to count toward this degree it's going to be
> an elective course. You may end up having to take another class." I can give that
> information as "That class doesn't count." And that's the right information but
> that's not giving the student any sort of feedback…and how I convey that can
> mean a lot to the student, because students make those kinds of errors all the time

when they self-advise or when they think they know what they're doing or talk to their brother or sister. So, the way you convey that can make a lot of difference to the student. If I just flippantly say, "Sucks for you," that's going to convey a lot of information not just about whether or not the information is accurate but also how I feel about the student and how I convey that information.

A caring advisor who lacks the knowledge, accuracy, and follow through his job demands can also present problems. "I think someone *could* be caring and not be thorough, because a big part of this job is talking with students and you do want them to tell you about their lives because oftentimes it affects their academic performance, " Sandy argued. "But if that's all you do, I don't know that you're really helping the student. You're letting them know that you care about them, but you're not really helping them progress academically."

Lloyd considered the prospect of an advisor who cared about his students but did not place the same importance on his level of knowledge or his commitment to accuracy:

> I think that's probably more common in our advising profession, where I think just by the nature of the profession—and I'm going to speak just on the University of Texas campus because that's what I know the best—I feel like so many of the people on this campus truly care about the students that they're working with. Now, how much they follow up and make sure they have the most accurate information…some folks may and some folks may not. They may truly want to be there for the student and care about the student but equally as important is making sure everything that comes out of their mouth is as accurate as can possibly be. Or, if not, be willing to acknowledge that I made an error. If a person is consistently making errors and not learning on their own they're not doing the students any service. Having someone [care about] you on campus is great, but [having] someone who likes you *and* can give you good information…that is the optimal solution.

The advisor participants eventually agreed that while it may be possible for an advisor to care and not place as great an emphasis on accuracy or knowledge, and while some advisors could potentially be quite well informed, but lack the skills necessary to be

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considered caring, the ideal advising situation should exemplify both. In other words, the

optimal caring advising encounter will occur with an advisor who places a commitment

to academic knowledge and accuracy among his most significant priorities. Ann

concluded:

> You have to be knowledgeable but you also have to be approachable. You can't
> be effective if you're lacking one or the other. And you can really do some
> damage if you're very approachable but you give them bad information. Oh boy,
> I've seen that happen and that's not pretty. That breaks the trust…there is no way
> to rationalize bad information.

Chapter Summary

The identified themes of maternalism, mentorship, and power were abundant

within the categories utilized to organize the wealth of data in this study. As illustrated in

the interpretation of the data, caring advisors often approach their work with students

with a maternal quality. This portrait of "advisor as Mom" illustrates characteristics and

practices that differ considerably from advisor roles previously described in advising

literature. In the study of caring advising, we see advisors stepping into the position of

Noddings's (1984) one-caring, offering guidance, nurturance, and protection. We see a

vivid enactment of Noddings's description of the caring encounter:

> The one-caring is engrossed in the cared-for and undergoes a motivational
> displacement toward the projects of the cared-for…the one-caring receives the
> other for the interval of caring, completely and nonselectively. She is present to
> the other and places her motive power to his service (p. 176).

In organizing and controlling the environment in which caring encounters occur,

advisors engaged in 'maternal thinking' in their intentional efforts to create "homey,"

inviting spaces, with concern for proper lighting, décor, the arrangement of furniture and

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the display of personal effects. Caring advisors, in their maternal way, sought to assure

that students felt comfortable in the advisor's domain, but also made a point of conveying

that they were capable and prepared for the encounter. In preparing for a student's visit,

caring advisors took steps to receive the cared-for completely, familiarizing themselves

with the student's history prior to the encounter, minimizing distractions, and creating

and maintaining a sense of familiarity with the student. Engrossed in the needs of the

cared-for, caring advisors listened attentively, remaining focused on the student's needs

and interests, practicing patience, remaining present. As the motive energy of the one-

caring flowed toward the cared-for, caring advisors set aside personal thoughts and

agendas and directed their thoughts, energy, and motivation toward the needs and

concerns of the student.

In the relationships caring advisors fostered with the students who sought their

guidance, honesty, warmth, empathy, and a willingness to go above and beyond the call

of duty to provide a foundation for these relationships to flourish. Trust, a fundamental

element in maternal practice (Ruddick, 1989, p. 119), proved essential in the

establishment and maintenance of the advisor-advisee relationship, which grows and

strengthens over time. Caring advisors, like caring moms, are trustworthy, supportive,

encouraging, and diligent in their work with those who depend on their assistance. As

Noddings testifies, "Our motivation in caring is directed toward the welfare, protection,

or enhancement of the cared-for" (p. 23). And in these encounters, when caring is

received and acknowledged, the caring cycle is completed in the reciprocity of the cared-

for. Like a child accepting and recognizing the care of her mother, students receive,

recognize, and appreciate the care of an advisor, as has been illustrated in numerous

vignettes throughout this chapter. This recognition and response is critical in the caring

relation, as Noddings (1996) contends:

> The recipient of care, the cared-for, contributes to the relationship by responding
> in some positive way to the efforts of the carer…These responses, as all parents,
> teachers, physicians, and nurses know, are non-negligible. A relation cannot be
> labeled *caring* in their absence (p. 31).

Maternalism was evident in caring advisors' concern for knowledge and accuracy

in their work and in their commitment to assuring that their students were well informed

and well prepared for their academic and life pursuits. The caring illustrated in the

snapshots and interview responses in the study revealed advisors who saw significance in

their responsibility for accuracy and information and the sharing of that information.

This relates precisely to Ruddick's (1989) third demand of maternal practice—

preparation or training—the commitment to assist in the development of socially

acceptable life skills. In this study we have witnessed the wisdom and knowledge of

caring advisors and their efforts to share their knowledge in encouraging and

compassionate ways.

While maternalism played out so clearly in the caring advising portrayed in this

study, the diligent guidance and support illustrated in the words of advisor participants

also supported the theme of mentorship. According to Johnson (1989), the "key to

mentoring is caring" (p. 128) and caring is evident in the support and encouragement

offered by advisors who have taken their advisor-advisee relationships to the next level.

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Baruth and Robinson (1987) contend that mentors "teach, advise, open doors for, promote, cut red tape for…and believe in protégés, thus helping them succeed" (p. 372). This belief resonated in the data presented in this chapter.

In preparing for advising encounters and in practicing caring interpersonal helping skills, advisor participants demonstrated concern and a commitment to being fully present for the duration of the encounter. This most basic, initial commitment laid the foundation and encouraged relationships to blossom and move beyond the information seeker—information provider dyad. It is within these expanded advisor-advisee relationships that mentoring is born, as advisors help students grow academically, emotionally, and socially, provide tools for success, act as advocate and role model, see students' potential and actively encourage their involvement. We saw this illustrated in the relationship Lloyd had developed with Lana, and again in Sam's story about his undying support of the student who overcame so many obstacles to compete her degree. We heard the power of commitment, connection, caring, and mentorship in Sam's post-observation interview response:

> I consider myself very blessed to work in such a dynamic profession where I know that at the end of the day I made a positive impact on a student's life and perhaps planted the seeds for perseverance and success. The most rewarding event of my profession is attending commencement and watching my students cross the stage as their names are called. I get chills every time, especially if I know that the students encountered a lot of challenges along the way and I know I was able to assist them through the process.

The salient theme of power, the capacity to influence others, was explored and analyzed within the context of caring advising in the pages of this chapter. Recognizing and examining the legitimate power of authority and the expert power inherent in their

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positions, caring advisors search for a balance of power in their work with students. Advisors emphasize or de-emphasize, temper, and negotiate power differentials in every caring encounter, depending on the particular circumstances inherent in each advising situation.

In the advisors' discernment of their caring environments we saw ambivalence with regard to power and the messages conveyed through desk and chair placement, as some advisors went to great lengths to downplay power differentials. Others, perhaps unaware of the messages sent, continued to place a physical distance between themselves and their students. Perhaps, like Ann, they will become aware of it in retrospect. Acute awareness of power differentials was evident in the intentional efforts to downplay the legitimate power of their positions in the attending behaviors exhibited by caring advisors, as they placed emphasis on the warmth and attentiveness of their interactions. Encouraging the use of first names, engaging students in light-hearted banter, and conveying a sense of familiarity neutralized the power in the advising relationship and set the stage for meaningful connections to occur.

In developing relationships with their students, the caring advisors profiled here sought to maintain a balance of power, balancing roles of authority figure on one end of the continuum and trusted confidant on the other end. Advisor participants were careful to maintain their positions of power characterized by authority, continuity, and caring, and not allow the balance of their relationships to shift toward friendship. Noddings (1992) warns against this possibility, noting that if the caring relation "moves in this direction it becomes one of mature friendship, and the formal relation, the necessary

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relation, fades away" (p. 107). The awareness of the power differential in caring, the nature of the caring encounter itself, and the emphasis on the professional nature of the relationship prevent this blur from occurring.

Finally, regarding the connection between power and knowledge, Joan's comment, "Knowledge is power" may sound clichéd, but there is truth in her assessment. Caring advisors hold expert power in their comprehensive knowledge of courses, degree requirements, university policies and procedures, and career preparation and advisors utilize and neutralize power in the caring dissemination of this knowledge.

Finding Relevance and Significance in the Discovery

To grasp the relevance of this study, it is important to consider Peggy Jordan's assessment of advising in her article, "Advising Students in the 21st Century" (Jordan, 2000). Jordan asserts:

> In the best interest of professional advising, as well as in the best interest of students, as much substance as possible should be brought to the connections advisors make with students. The professional advisor is one of the first and one of the last college representatives to whom students speak in their college careers (p. 24).

Additionally, Frost (1991) argues that academic advising that encourages long-term connection between the student and the academic side of an institution can be a powerful force toward insuring student success at the institution. She contends, "The ongoing relationship established between advisor and student can engender a strong sense of understanding and appreciation that will motivate the student" (p. xvii). Frost continues:

> When one aim of advising is to increase meaningful contact between students and advisors, students can become more involved in academic aspects of college.

Involved students are more likely to be academically and socially integrated into the college community. And integration can lead to students' persistence and success (p. 2).

At the core of any advising effort is the concern for and commitment to student success and satisfaction with the educational experience. Academic advising plays a monumental role in assuring student success and retention. As the literature reviewed in Chapter Two suggests, the advisor's responsibility in assisting students with educational, personal, and vocational planning and in creating and maintaining an atmosphere where this growth can occur is fundamental to the success of students in higher education. And, as this study demonstrates, caring, intentional, developmental advising encourages relationships that leave lasting impressions.

This study introduces a new lens through which we can view academic advising. It expands our view of the academic advisor and illustrates the various approaches caring advisors apply in their work with students, practicing the nurturance and preparation of maternalism or the encouragement and persistence of mentorship. This study sheds light on the significance of power and how it plays out in the caring advisor's work, how power is balanced, utilized, negotiated, and neutralized. This study illustrates the practices advisors engage in to demonstrate their care for students, in their concern for creating comfortable spaces for their interactions, in the preparation, knowledge, trust, empathy, and skill they value, and in the significance they place in the commitment to developing and fostering relationships with the students they advise. Jordan (2000) maintains:

Developmental advising involves developing and maintaining an authentic relationship with the student…authenticity leads to a genuine relationship rather than one built on superficial social roles. The developmental advisor [seeks] an authentic relationship with an advisee (p. 26).

We saw authentic, caring relationships repeatedly in the snapshots provided in this study. Applying the themes of maternalism, mentorship, and power we saw caring advising in a new light that illuminates a bright, fresh perspective on the important role caring plays in the academic advising relationship. The themes connected to provide a vivid illustration of the various forms of caring in advising, the significance of connectedness, and the balance and negotiation of power.

Noddings's (1984) model of caring is accurately represented in this portrait of caring advising. The advising encounters depicted in the study demonstrate Noddings's notions of engrossment and motivational displacement, and, in many instances typify Ruddick's (1989) demands of maternal practice—preservation, nurturance, and training. Nodding's final component of caring, reciprocity was evident in many of the vignettes and within the interview data.

This study provides new insight into the role of the caring advisor in the profession of academic advising. The study illustrates the significance of caring in helping to re-define the role of academic advisor. The information recorded here moves us further away from pre-conceived, antiquated notions of advisor as scheduler, planner, or bureaucrat to an enhanced understanding of advisor as mentor, Mom, teacher, guide, advocate, expert, cheerleader, and role model. Advising is elevated to new levels of understanding, emphasizing the importance of the relationships that develop and the significance of these relationships from both advisor and student perspectives.

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Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

I wouldn't be doing this if I didn't love it. I mean, I'm in my 19th year advising at UT and I would have been, I don't know, a zookeeper or something if I didn't really like what I'm doing. But, truthfully, I love what I do.

Roger

Personal Interview – February 12, 2004

In this qualitative study, I examined the work of professional academic advisors identified by their peers as "caring," exploring the nature of care in the academic advising relationship. As a practicing professional advisor myself, I hoped that my inquiry would not only contribute to the scholarly study of academic advising and the body of knowledge in student affairs research, but also that my findings would influence my own work with the students I advise. As such, my experience in this scholarly effort was a personal journey as much as it was a quest for significant results. Embarking on this adventure, I learned a great deal about my colleagues along the way.

In my collaboration with the ten professional advisors participating in this study, I briefly entered the worlds of individuals who approached their profession and their students with infectious enthusiasm. I shared in the experiences of highly motivated, trustworthy, caring professionals whose commitment to their students extended beyond the confines of brief, 30 minute advising sessions. I encountered advisors who actively fostered relationships with their students, whose caring was evidenced in the attention they paid to creating an environment where students felt comfortable and safe, and whose commitment to knowledge and accuracy was recognized and appreciated by those who

sought their assistance. I have been encouraged and motivated by their personal stories. They have taught me more about caring than I could have ever imagined.

To fully understand caring, the academic advisors' contribution to the practice of caring, and the relationship between caring and advising, I will, first, respond to the research questions posed in the study. Additionally, I will highlight the implications of the results of the study and offer suggestions for future research.

Conclusions

The conclusions are derived from the responses to each of the research questions guiding this study. Each research question was examined in the course of the videotaped observations and advisor participant interviews. Additional information was also gathered from interviews with several selected student advisees.

1. How is care defined within the context of academic advising?

Hunter and White (2004) argue that academic advising is "perhaps the only structured campus endeavor that can guarantee students sustained interaction with a caring and concerned adult who can help them shape a [meaningful learning] experience" (p. 21). In this study, advisor participants indicated their belief that the relationships they foster with students most significantly define their notion of care in academic advising. Stated simply, caring advisors build and sustain relationships with their students. According to my participants, the tools they used to build these relationships are warmth, sincerity, empathy, trust, preparation, and a commitment to knowledge and accuracy. In addition, caring in academic advising is reciprocated through students' acknowledgement

and appreciation of the care they receive. Caring advisors, serving their students as Mom and/or mentor, bring these tools, their unique gifts, to their cherished relationships with the students they serve.

Warmth, sincerity, empathy, and trust are salient characteristics of the caring academic advising relationship. As illustrated in the vignettes and interview data outlined in Chapter Four, caring advisors see themselves and their colleagues as warm, empathic, passionate and compassionate individuals who place their students' needs first among their priorities. This resonated in Sandy's statement, "As advisors, we offer what a catalog or website cannot provide—compassion, understanding, encouragement, acceptance, validation, recognition. It is the human element that makes a difference in the life of a student." Warmth and sincerity were best illustrated in Sandy's work with Laura and Laura's recognition of the impact her relationship with Sandy had on her college experience. These characteristics were also exemplified in Sam's thoughtful and compassionate work with Mariana, as she struggled to achieve the required score on her prerequisite testing. Sam's testimonial in Chapter Four provided further evidence of his sincere, maternal empathy as he indicated his sense of reward in working with students experiencing academic difficulty and his joy in seeing students "believe in themselves" and in helping them "spread their wings and fly."

Trust, according to the majority of advisor participants, was the most significant element of caring advising, and one that is necessary in establishing and sustaining advising relationships. Among them, Lloyd spoke of the importance of trusting in oneself and in gaining the trust of students, working to assure "that students feel like they

can trust me to work in their best interest, to be open to anything he or she might say."

Ludmilla praised her advisor, saying, "She's very caring and I feel like I can trust her."

And her advisor, Serena, affirmed her advisee's sentiment, speaking specifically of the

importance of establishing trust in order to open the door for sincere communication.

Lloyd's promise to email Lisa to remind her of upcoming deadlines illustrated a

way in which caring advisors demonstrate they are worthy of students' trust through their

commitment to "follow up" and "follow through" on issues that need to be resolved after

an advising session ends. Furthermore, as evidenced by Laura's assessment of Sandy's

dedication and Courtney's evaluation of Sam's initiative, advisors earn students' trust by

keeping their promises and "going the extra mile" to assist students' in their academic

endeavors.

Advisors committed to care in academic advising are physically and mentally

prepared for their encounters. They take steps to familiarize themselves with students'

academic histories, as was demonstrated by Sheila in her careful review of online

advising notes prior to her session. Caring advisors are committed to minimizing

distractions, illustrated in the snapshot of Joan when she ignored an incoming phone call

so as not to interrupt the flow of the advising session. Advisors are committed to

maximizing conditions to create a comfortable environment that is conducive to a caring

and productive advising session. We saw this vividly illustrated in the office environment

maintained by Sandy described in the previous chapter. Caring advising occurs when an

advisor demonstrates receptivity, as illustrated most pointedly in Sandy's placement of

only a pen and folder on her desk, conveying a message of complete attention to her

student, placing her own thoughts and concerns aside in order to receive the student and anticipate her issues, and allowing herself to become engrossed in her concerns and committed to her needs. Listening skills and eye contact further demonstrate an advisor's engagement and convey to the student that she is present, that she "is there" for the student and fully available for items of importance on the student's agenda.

Care is exemplified through an advisor's steadfast commitment to knowledge and accuracy. Advisor participants and students interviewed placed advisor knowledge among the most important characteristics of caring advising. Among the advisor participants, Beth, in evaluating her own caring, indicated her belief that her most significant caring characteristic was her knowledge and accuracy. "I'm thorough,' she said. "I care about my students and I want to provide correct information to them." Additionally, Joan emphasized the importance of knowledge, declaring, "Knowledge is power," and Julie underscored the concern for accuracy, deeming it "one of the most important ways we can show that we care." As observed in the previous chapter, advisors agreed that while an advisor *could* be deemed caring and not particularly knowledgeable about her subject area, degree requirements, and institutional policies and procedures, and while a highly informed and accurate advisor *could* be regarded as uncaring, the optimal situation involved an advisor who placed caring *and* accuracy and knowledge among her most significant professional commitments. Advisors argued that knowledge and accuracy were necessities in serving their students and in demonstrating to advisees that they cared enough about their students to make certain that they were well-informed, well versed, and worthy of their trust. This was best amplified in Ann's

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commentary, as she argued that knowledge and approachability were necessary in advising, saying, "You can't be effective if you're lacking one or the other."

As illustrated in many of the advising interactions described in Chapter Four, caring in academic advising is a shared commitment, reciprocated in the student's recognition of the care demonstrated by the advisor, care the student receives, acknowledges, and from which the student benefits. We saw reciprocity demonstrated in the appreciation expressed by Courtney as her session with Sam came to an end, as she thanked him sincerely, then turned to me and added, "I love Sam. He's the best." Reciprocity was also illustrated in Ludmilla's regard for her advisor, as she thanked Serena for her caring guidance with a warm embrace. This reciprocity fosters the relationship that blossoms between student and advisor. These ongoing, professional relationships clearly benefit both advisors and the students they advise, and define the nature of care within the context of academic advising.

2. What are the characteristics of caring advising?

The significant themes identified in the advising observations and advisor interviews and the categories I devised to examine these themes provide a thorough illustration of the characteristics of caring advising. My study reveals that the advisors and the student advisees I observed and interviewed distinguished caring advising in the identification of specific actions used by advisors to convey a message of care to students.

a. Caring advisors create and maintain a comfortable, welcoming environment for caring advising encounters.

The advisor participants made a concerted effort to create a space where their advisees felt comfortable, relaxed, and welcome. As illustrated in Chapter Four, the advisors participating in this study demonstrated intentional efforts in the arrangement of office furniture, accessibility to print and electronic resources, and overall appearance of their advising areas. Advisor participants such as Sandy and Serena discussed the importance of creating comfortable, "homey," spaces for students but also emphasized the significance of the placement of chairs, desk, workspaces, and computer terminals. Advisors displayed efforts to maximize the effectiveness of their encounters and neutralize power differentials by arranging the seating in a way that would maintain closeness with the advisee and prevent the need to look away from the student in order to view information displayed on the computer monitor. For the same reason, advisors intentionally placed needed materials, such as Serena's informative handouts, within reach thereby minimizing the time needed to search for printed resources. Participants paid particular attention to office lighting and décor, striving to maintain a warm, comfortable, welcoming space, free of the harsh, institutional glare of fluorescent lighting and colorfully representative of their personalities. In preparing for the caring encounter yet to occur, the advisors, like caring, nurturing moms, led students to a welcoming place where they could feel relaxed and open to share their ideas and ambitions.

b. Caring advisors are prepared for the encounter and are fully present once the caring encounter is underway.

The advisors participating in this study demonstrated the necessary preparation that must occur prior to a caring advising session. As Sheila demonstrated as I watched her prepare for her session with Corey, after potential distractions were minimized or eliminated, advisors carefully reviewed students academic records, prepared degree audits and outlines, and read notes from previous sessions. Additionally, they familiarized themselves with the students they would soon greet by glancing at the students' online photos and recalling conversations they had held in the past. Advisors spoke of the importance of remembering a student and demonstrating that familiarity, frequently using the student's first name and recalling and revisiting a story or a point of discussion that had surfaced during a prior visit. Julie illustrated this point in asking an advisee about the results of her job interview and in asking another student to display her "very famous organizing book." This sense of maternal familiarity, advisors agreed, conveyed to the student that they cared enough about them to genuinely remember their faces, names, and topics of interest.

Once the session begins, caring advisors demonstrate their receptive engrossment in the student and his or her issues. "Active listening," which Roger saw as fundamental, clarifying and checking for understanding, and direct eye contact are essential skills in conveying to an advisee that an advisor is engaged and fully present in his or her caring. These skills were modeled by the advisor participants and presented in the vignettes, exemplifying their engrossment in the encounters. Caring advisors also shift their motive energy to the advisee and his or her concerns, thoughts, ideas, and goals. This

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motivational displacement sends a clear message to the advisee that he or she is the absolute focus of the encounter and his or her issues are of paramount importance.

c. Caring advisors are sincere, compassionate, trustworthy and willing to 'go the extra mile.' **Meaningful relationships are built through caring advising.**

Ender and Wilkie (2000) contend that if advisors are to be successful, "an interpersonal relationship between the student and advisor is essential" (p. 121). Both advisors and students participating in this study discussed the important role caring played in helping them foster ongoing professional relationships with one another. The significance of the notion of relationship building in advising indicates that caring advising extends beyond the initial scheduled academic advising session, growing into a lasting and recurring dialogue between student and advisor. Participants spoke fondly of the students with whom they had built advising relationships and noted that these relationships were one aspect of their work they treasured most. Student participants also recognized the importance of establishing caring relationships with their advisors. Nowhere was this better exemplified than in Laura's genuine appreciation for the impact Sandy has made in her life when she indicated that Sandy was "the one person I will remember when I leave school. Having Sandy as an advisor was one of the best things that ever happened to me."

Empathy, trust, and a "genuine concern" for students are not only attributes, but more importantly, in caring advising they are skills advisors develop, methods they utilize, and practices they perform in their work in order to cultivate relationships with the students they serve.

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Advisors and students participating in the study agreed unanimously that empathy and compassion were of paramount importance in caring advising. Advisors spoke of their commitment to honesty and the sincere interest and affection they had for their students. We saw this portrayed beautifully in the mentoring relationship Lloyd described in his work with Lana as he persisted in encouraging her growth as a student leader. Student participants recognized care in their advisor's willingness to do more than the minimum required of their positions, going above and beyond the call of duty for their students, as illustrated in both Courtney's and Laura's assessments of the extra attention Sam and Sandy provided their advisees. Students recognized their advisors' willingness to serve as an advocate for students, making phone calls, or searching for additional information or answers related to an academic issue. Ludmilla's call for an advisor who was "willing to go a little farther, to go into detail, to show interest in you as a person and a human being" was met in her connection with Serena, as Ludmilla proudly proclaimed an "advisor should be genuine and sensitive. My advisor is that kind of advisor!" Students and advisors agreed that these intentional acts exemplify the practice of caring.

Trust emerged as a dominant relationship characteristic in this study, taking its place as one of the most salient elements of the caring advising relationship. Trust is established in the initial advising encounter, fostered in subsequent sessions, and provides the foundation for the relationship. Students discussed the importance of trust with regard to their advisor's commitment to accuracy and knowledge, as well as their abilities and skills. These sentiments were articulated in Jane's assessment of her advisor, Sheila,

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"She is trustworthy, open-minded and her caring is real. You can't teach that." Advisor participants regarded trust as a critical component in the caring advising relationship, indicating that its presence was necessary in planting the seed for the advising relationship to flourish. As noted in Chapter Four, five of the advisor participants listed trust as the most important element of caring advising. Among them, Lloyd emphasized the importance of gaining the trust of students, "that students feel like they can trust me to work in their best interests" as well as having trust in himself and his professional obligation to serve his students. Sam also emphasized the significance of trust in his efforts to follow through, and "keep [his] word," demonstrating integrity to his students.

d. Advisor accuracy and knowledge are essential components of caring advising.

Academic advisors and students participating in the study agreed that one significant way advisors demonstrate care for students is through sharing their knowledge of degree requirements, course content, university policies, and student achievement and through their commitment to being thorough and accurate in presenting this knowledge. For example, Sam acknowledged the advisor's dual role as teacher and mentor in helping students successfully navigate the academic landscape and drawing a parallel between teaching and advising, saying, "I have realized that advising is just like teaching. We are able to shape and influence young people's lives. We have the same impact teachers have…providing caring and compassionate attention and by mentoring our students."

Demonstrating Ruddick's (1989) maternal demand of training or preparation, advisors assumed a responsibility to equip their students with the knowledge and skills necessary for success in the academic arena. Study participants emphasized the

significance of knowledge in their work and recognized the danger of advising students

in the absence of knowledge and commitment to accuracy, a point Ann illustrated in

offering her advice, "You can really do some damage if you're very approachable but

you give [students] bad information…that breaks the trust…there is no way to rationalize

bad information." Student participants unanimously agreed that advisors who care about

their advisees must be knowledgeable about the information they convey in advising

sessions and must be careful to assure that the information presented is thorough and

correct. "Knowledge is definitely important," Ludmilla reminded me. "After all, that's

the basic reason why the student is there: to ask questions about their degree plan, their

major, their minor."

e. Caring cannot be achieved by formula. Caring advising is enacted in unique, personal

ways.

> In *The Challenge to Care in Schools,* Noddings (1992) acknowledges:

> [Caring] requires address and response; it requires different behaviors from
> situation to situation and person to person. It sometimes calls for toughness,
> sometimes tenderness…the desire to be cared for is almost a universal human
> characteristic. Not everyone wants to be cuddled or fussed over. But everyone
> wants to be received, to elicit a response that is congruent with an underlying
> need or desire (p. 17).

> As the participants in this study demonstrated, there is no set formula, set of rules,

or list of specific behaviors that can be followed in order to "achieve" caring in academic

advising. Each advisor participant enacted caring advising in a slightly different,

personally idiosyncratic manner. Although the participants shared many characteristics

in their work with students, caring played out in their work in very different ways

because of the individual gifts they brought to the table as unique, diverse people. For

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example, the maternal qualities that characterized Sandy's advising relationship with Laura contrasted with Julie's fact- or information-centered style. Both advisors exhibited a calming, controlled demeanor, and both were easily distinguished as caring in their work with students, yet in the vignettes their caring was characteristically very different. Interestingly, in their interviews, Julie indicated her belief that accuracy was the most important characteristic of caring advising, while Sandy believed that trust and relationships were most important.

In similar ways, Ann demonstrated caring in a way that was very different from Joan's or Sheila's. While all three made a concerted effort to establish familiarity with their students through the intentional use of students' first names, and while each was comfortable with and skilled at disseminating a wealth of detailed information, Ann's very quiet, calm, controlled style varied slightly from the more jovial, talkative maternal nature of Sheila and Joan in their encounters with students. Joan's maternalism was punctuated by her belief in the importance of touch, and she was not afraid to gently touch her student's hand or offer a kind embrace. The caring connections she made with students were warm and intimate. Ann did not make this physical connection with students in the sessions I observed, but she cared no less for her students than Joan. Their caring was simply enacted in different ways.

Though they both served students in the College of Education, caring advisors Lloyd and Roger exhibited caring in both similar and dissimilar ways. Lloyd, the amiable, playful "kid at heart" as his student, Lisa, characterized him, saw his role as mentor as "the most crucial role" he served in caring advising. Lloyd's relationships with

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students extended beyond the workday, as he oversaw their work in student organizations and leadership activities. Roger, orderly, older and more experienced, met his students as one-caring in a manner more closely resembling that of a counselor, which was fitting considering counseling was the area in which he received his training and advanced education. Any student would be well served in working with Lloyd or Roger; their caring was evident and genuine. However, as we have seen in the snapshots offered in the previous chapter, the flavor of each advisor's caring was unique.

Like Sandy and Joan, Serena's caring was very personal, very intimate. Serena was her students' mom or big sister. As witnessed in her encounter with Ludmilla, Serena brought a bit of her own world to the advising relationship, feeling comfortable discussing her family, as she and Ludmilla compared stories about their sisters' proms. Serena's concern for creating a "homey" space for her advisees and her commitment to their comfort, even at the expense of her own, characterized her caring advising as a very personal endeavor. In contrast, though warm and welcoming, Beth did not bring her personal life to the conversation (though her family and their importance in her life was displayed colorfully on her walls). Instead, Beth's caring was enacted in her knowledge of the Spanish degree and specific classes in the degree plan, and her familiarity with faculty. Beth, like Julie, was a knowledgeable resource and skilled guide. Serena was, unquestionably, a resource as well, but, like Sandy and Lloyd, her caring was personal and maternal. Ludmilla would likely have had a very different advising relationship with Julie, or Roger, or Ann, than she had with Serena.

Students clearly recognize the unique, individual characteristics of caring their advisors bring to the relationship. As evidenced in Chapter Four, Drew appreciated the knowledgeable advice shared by Ann. Corey acknowledged Sheila's skills and her caring guidance in offering his thanks, saying, "I really trust your opinion after everything you've done for me." And, finally, Courtney testified to the unique caring she had received in her relationship with Sam, offering, "He has been so good to me for four years, going above and beyond the call for me. He's been like a guardian angel. How many people can say that about their advisor?"

Readers who had hoped for a recipe or a procedural guide for caring advising may be disappointed to learn that a cookie cutter mold for caring does not exist. Like practitioners of any other profession rooted in human relationships, academic advisors bring themselves, their uniqueness, and their individual strengths and personalities to the encounters to create caring relationships that flourish under their incomparable guidance.

f. Caring can be inconsistently present in advising practice.

Finally, another characteristic of caring advising appeared only slightly in the data but warrants discussion here. Because caring is genuine and grounded in human feelings, it can, at times, be inconsistently present in practice. Advisors bring their unique personalities to the encounter, but they also bring their own baggage, their own biases, and their own very human limitations. This issue is not black or white; we cannot argue that advisors are either always caring or never caring. Rather, advisors have "off moments," "off days" and missed opportunities to meet their advisees as one-caring.

Caring advisors, like any and all caring professionals, are imperfect and it would be unrealistic to assume otherwise.

Although the students participating in this research never indicated that they felt uncared for by their advisors, people are, by nature, inconsistent, and even the very best advisors exemplified here demonstrated momentary behaviors inconsistent with the concept of caring understood and explored in this study.

If we consider caring in its purest sense, as defined by Noddings (1984), we are reminded that caring "is always characterized by a move away from self" (p. 16). Noddings reminds us that in engrossment "When I receive the other, I am totally with the other" (p. 32). In motivational displacement, "our attention is on the cared-for, not on ourselves" (p. 24). Therefore, as we have discussed, in caring we place our own agendas aside, we step away from our own thoughts and concerns in order to be totally, non-selectively present to the cared-for. With this notion in mind, we could argue that when Serena strayed from the discussion to talk about her sister or her husband she had shifted the attention to herself rather than Ludmilla and her concerns. Similarly, when Sandy discussed her own "experiences as an undergraduate" while assisting a disenfranchised pre-med student, she turned the focus on her own experiences and momentarily neglected the experiences of the student. Arguably, this assessment seems a bit hypercritical; neither of these encounters could be deemed uncaring when viewed as a whole. However, in theory, these incidents *could* be considered uncaring moments by a Noddings purist. Interestingly, when one considers the depth of relationship between Ludmilla and Serena and the high regard each student held for her advisor, such

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momentary lapses in theoretical caring have little effect on the overall impact of the encounter.

In my opinion, more significant lapses in caring occurred when technology interfered with the encounter. The positive and negative impact of technology in caring advising will be explored further in the pages that follow, but two specific incidents warrant mention in this section to illustrate the point of inconsistency in caring.

On the day I observed Beth's advising sessions, I watched as she turned away from each student in order to view information on her computer screen, which was located in the corner of her desk, directly opposite the student's chair. Turning back and forth to face the student, then the terminal, and sitting with her back to the student as she sought information from the student's online file, Beth's potential for engrossment was severely compromised. "Beth's computer is interfering," I wrote in my field journal, "She is not engaged in this appointment at all at this point." Once she had acquired the information she needed and was able to remain face-to-face with the student, her attention was re-focused. As further detailed later in this chapter, Beth realized the problem and made necessary corrections.

Sam had a similar, though more significant, problem with regard to technology and computer monitor placement. On several occasions during my observation, Sam's attention was diverted by his need to obtain and clarify information in the student's online record. In several incidents, Sam clearly missed opportunities for caring moments with his students due to the fact that his attention was focused on his technological tasks rather than on the student sitting in front of him. Again, once he had completed his tasks

at the terminal and gave his undivided attention to the student seeking his guidance, Sam's caring was enhanced significantly.

It is important to remember that while inconsistencies in caring did not surface significantly within the context of this study, they do exist. There is a certain sense of artificiality inherent in videotaped observations, a conscious or subconscious attempt on the part of the subject to "perform" to the best of his or her ability, to be on one's best behavior. So, naturally, caring advisors as study participants are likely to work hard to assure that uncaring behaviors be kept in check. However, as an experienced advisor, I can provide assurance that advisors, as genuine, feeling humans, have their uncaring moments. They cannot meet every student, in every situation, at every moment in a given encounter as one-caring. However, when they take the time to recognize these momentary lapses in caring they can then work to address the issues in order to better serve students and meet them unconditionally and non-selectively as one-caring.

3. How do students recognize care in an advisor and why is this significant from their perspective?

Echoing the beliefs of the advisor participants, the students interviewed in this study clearly recognized that advisors demonstrate care for their students by their deliberate actions in working to establish and maintain trusting relationships, in their commitment to being available, prepared, knowledgeable, and accurate, and in their compassion and empathy for the students they advise. Student participants agreed that the trust born and nurtured in the advising encounter was key to the relationship,

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providing the foundation for the collaborative efforts to occur. Asserting her belief that

honesty was "the number one thing [an advisor] must have because that is what builds a

relationship," Laura affirmed her trust in Sandy's sincerity, depicting it as "something

you can't fake." Students spoke of trust and knowledge as necessities, agreeing that the

caring advising process would be much less effective in the absence of these two

important elements.

An advisor's accuracy and his or her command of the academic information for

which she or he is responsible are crucial factors in caring advising practices, according

to both advisor and student participants, conveyed in Courtney's praise of her advisor,

Sam, as she testified, "He makes things easy to understand…He looks out for us and

makes us feel valued."   Advisor participants suggested that an advisor's knowledge of

the academic content required of the position was a necessary component in

demonstrating care for students. As previously mentioned, Julie expressed her belief that

accuracy was a primary way advisors demonstrate their care for students, because, she

believed, "giving inaccurate information can really leave such a very negative impact on

a student's life." Students also recognized the importance of technology in advising;

helping caring advisors to stay informed and committed to accuracy in their work. In

interviews, several students mentioned their advisor's prompt and thorough responses to

questions and concerns via electronic mail as another way advisors demonstrate caring.

In the interviews and vignettes, students acknowledged an advisor's compassion,

empathy, and sincerity as significant characteristics of caring advising. Jane's

characterization of her advisor as someone who "really wants to help people," was

punctuated by her belief that "Sheila cares about our lives, which is kind of hard to find in a college atmosphere." Student participants spoke fondly of the encounters they had experienced with honest, compassionate, caring advisors, expressed poignantly in Lisa's recollection, "When I first started working with Lloyd I almost started crying because he was so supportive." They also indicated their intentional efforts to build relationships with these caring professionals. Student advisees pointed to the importance of these characteristics and testified to the significance of the relationships they had fostered with advisors in relation to their overall satisfaction with academic advising and the college experience in general. Undoubtedly, Laura's comments about her advisor and her indication that the relationship with Sandy was "one of the best things that ever happened to me" serves as a testament to the significance of caring advising from the student's perspective.

Light (2001) offers suggestions for advisors who wish to be effective in their work with students. He contends that as students reflect on their own college experiences, one common thread emerges. "Part of a great college education depends upon human relationships" (p. 85). As the findings of this study indicate, one such relationship should, ideally, develop between each student and his or her academic advisor.

4. How do Noddings's notions of engrossment, motivational displacement, and reciprocity apply to the academic advising encounter?

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Noddings (1992) believes "to care and be cared for are fundamental human needs. We all need to be cared for by other human beings…we need to be cared for in the sense that we need to be understood, received, respected, recognized" (p. xi).

Noddings's notion of the essential elements of caring: engrossment, motivational displacement, and reciprocity, applies brilliantly to the academic advising encounter. The advisors observed in this study went to great lengths to prepare for their encounters in their careful review of online advising notes and student records, and to receive their students fully, allowing themselves to become engrossed in their students' questions and needs. Putting other business aside, these caring advisors listened intently, maintained eye contact with their advisees, and demonstrated their comprehension of issues raised. They posed questions when needed for understanding, as Roger demonstrated verbally in asking "Are we answering your questions here? Does that seem to make sense?" and as Julie demonstrated non-verbally in her intentional use of silence, pausing and waiting for an affirmation of understanding from her advisee before continuing. In nearly every instance captured on videotape, the advisors observed in this study, in Noddings's words, demonstrated "open, nonselective receptivity" (1992, p. 15) to their advisees. Clearing their desks, clearing their minds, and reducing the distractions of their environment, advisor participants entered a receptive mode, prepared and open to address the needs of their student advisees.

It can be argued that the inherent nature of the advising encounter, in and of itself, facilitates the motivational displacement Noddings believes necessary in the caring relation. Preparing to receive the student, the caring advisor places his or her own

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motives on hold as he or she focuses on the dreams, plans, ideas, and concerns of the student. Motivational displacement was evidenced in this study in the messages advisors conveyed to their students to demonstrate that their undivided attention and their complete focus was on the needs and perspective of the student. In the interview phase of the study, advisors discussed the skills they employed to see things from a student's perspective, as Sandy illustrated in her work with the frustrated premed student, and the importance of conveying to students that they were completely "there" for the student and engaged in the encounter. In the observation phase I noted additional steps advisors had taken to convey this message as well. Sandy clearly sent a message to her students as she sat at her desk with only a pen and the student's file before her. Her message: "I have pushed my own world aside for you and I am here to receive you and see things from your perspective. For the next half-hour I am completely available to you, focusing solely on your issues."

Reciprocity was evident in every session I observed, as students thanked the advisors for their time and advice, acknowledged the help and the beneficial information they had received, and expressed appreciation for the advisor's care. Reciprocity was demonstrated in many ways, from Mariana's simple "Thank you for everything" to Corey's "Thank you so much, Sheila. You've meant a lot to me" to Courtney's "You're a very good advisor; I appreciate all your work" to Ludmilla's exuberant embrace of her advisor at the end of her advising session. The form reciprocity took in each instance varied, but in every encounter observed it was present. Advisors also mentioned thank you notes, letters from students, and gifts they had received that expressed students'

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appreciation and recognition of the care they had experienced under the guidance of their academic advisor. Sandy agreed that even after 13 years of advising "it's still nice to get a thank you note or to feel like you've made a difference to someone." For the advisors participating in this study and the students they serve, care, both in the advising encounter and in the ongoing professional relationships fostered outside the encounter, was evident, abundant, and reciprocated.

This study illustrates that caring and the relationships nurtured in caring are important elements of academic advising. Caring advising enhances students' educational experiences. Students (and their advisors) benefited from these relationships and shared the opinion that caring advising made a difference in their lives.

Implications and Recommendations

The findings in this study of the relationship of caring and academic advising have broad implications in the research and practice of the profession. This study illuminates the caring practices of advisors and illustrates how caring is enacted, expressed, and modeled by academic advisors. It provides new insight, guiding advisors and the students they advise in an understanding of the characteristics and significance of caring in the advising relationship. The advisors profiled in this study have formed rich, meaningful connections with students, providing their advisees with guidance and important information while demonstrating and modeling care, concern, and regard.

In this final section of the chapter several significant implications will be highlighted including: the impact of technology on advising practice; the importance of

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organizational models that foster advising relationships; and the significance of

professionalism and the emphasis on advising as a profession. Additionally, suggestions

for further research and practice in the field of academic advising will be provided.

Technology and advising: Friend or foe?

As I approached my study of caring advising, it did not occur to me that

technology and its significance in advising would surface so prominently in the data.

After all, caring is a human skill; caring occurs between people in personal encounters.

How would technology relate to this topic in any imaginable way? It didn't take long for

me to observe the connection and to realize that the influence of technology on academic

advising is profoundly present in both positive and negative ways. Through this study I

have realized that technology and its influence in caring advising practices can reap

benefits for both the student and the advisor. Conversely, with the introduction of

technology in advising, certain liabilities are possible.

In this, the information era, society has become more reliant on technology as a

means for communication, a source for entertainment, a resource for information, and a

tool for instruction and education. Never before has information been so available and

accessible. According to Sotto (2000),

> Technology has transformed our world from the Industrial Age to the current
> Information Age—and indeed, the Information Age is quickly transitioning to a
> Learning Age in which learning has become more accessible through the
> technology of communication and computers (p. 249).

Through this transition to the Learning Age, academia has been awarded the

opportunity to develop enhanced educational options, offering students and educators

advanced mechanisms for communication and the delivery of services. On college and

university campuses, as computerized record keeping systems were developed to

maintain student academic files, manage registration processes, and collect and

disseminate academic information, student record management in academic advising has

transitioned from a manual, paper and pencil function to a quick and efficient task.

Academic advisors rely on automated degree audits, transfer course equivalencies, web-

based student profile systems, and electronic appointment calendars. Increasingly,

regular correspondence occurs with students via electronic mail or through "instant

messaging." McCauley (2000) believes that "implementation of these systems [has]

dramatically reduced the time advisors expended on record-keeping chores, and paved

the way for a more developmental focus for advising" (p. 239). Hunter and White (2004)

agree, stating:

> Networked advising technologies have freed advisors from routine
> bureaucratic tasks such as completing curriculum check sheets. They
> allow advisors to engage in the teaching and mentoring that is at the core of
> academic advising (p. 23).

At The University of Texas at Austin, academic advisors have a wealth of

information at their fingertips. The Advisor's Toolkit provides a thorough,

comprehensive web-based file for every student enrolled at the university. The student's

complete academic history is stored and can be instantly updated as new information

(standardized test scores, change of major, final course grades) becomes available. The

advising notes section allows an advisor to record a narrative detailing the outcome of

each student appointment, or to read notes from previous meetings. A secured academic

note (SAN) can be forwarded to a student if confidential information must be sent via

email; access to the note is restricted and available only to the intended student, who

retrieves the information through his or her electronic ID and password. Automated

degree audits process all coursework on a student's record and post it to an online degree

plan, taking the guesswork out of the process and accurately recording a student's

progress toward completion of his or her degree. Kramer and Spencer (1989) contend:

> Computers cannot replace people as advisors; there's no such thing as 'computer advising.' But personal advising coupled with the use of computers has demonstrated greater efficiency and program improvement. The computer can be an effective tool in helping students and advisors know and monitor academic requirements. Most important, with computer assistance in place, institutions are in the enviable position of being able to deliver academic advising services through faculty, peer, or professional advisors (p. 105).

Speed and efficiency are obvious advantages of online resources for academic

advising. In retrieving student information, the Advisors Toolkit and automated degree

audit systems allow an advisor instantaneous access at the touch of a finger. As

McCauley (2000) argues, this decreases the time advisors spend collecting student

information and allows advisors more time for richer discussion and developmental

advising efforts. Examining the benefits of technology with regard to the themes that

have emerged in this study, in defining caring advising we have discussed the

significance of establishing familiarity with students, remembering their names, faces,

and histories. Additionally, we have noted the importance both advisors and advisees

place on knowledge and accuracy. These easily-accessible online data systems allow an

advisor to review student records before, during, and after an advising session,

familiarizing themselves with a student's current class schedule, completed coursework,

notes from previous advising sessions, as well as the student's photo. This increases their

familiarity with a student and, in the eyes of the student, can enhance the advisor's

credibility. After observing the beginning of one of Roger's sessions, during which he

referred to issues discussed during the student's previous visit, I noted her reaction in my

field notes:

> She is obviously impressed with his memory of items discussed in their previous
> meeting. "He remembers me!" her facial expression seems to convey. Of course,
> unbeknownst to her, he did 'cheat' a little by reading notes in the Toolkit, but it
> doesn't seem to matter here. What comes across in this exchange is his sense of
> familiarity with her. (Field Notes 04/15/03).

Sandy referred to the student photo now available on the Advisors Toolkit page

and discussed its usefulness in helping her identify and remember her advisees:

> Obviously we [see] a lot of students, and there will be times when I'll see a name
> on my calendar and even though I may have advised them once or maybe twice, I
> can't remember them,. So pulling up their picture helps to jog my memory about
> what we met about last time. It just helps me feel a little bit more familiar with
> the student.

Knowledge and accuracy are also enhanced by the fact that these resources are

comprehensive and readily available. The automated degree audit, in essence, takes the

guesswork out of preparing a degree plan, a task formerly completed by hand. The

margin for error in this manual system was much greater and the process definitely took

much longer. Now, an advisor simply enters a student's major, minor, and catalog into

the web-based form and within minutes the automated audit is ready for viewing.

Advisor participants recognized the benefits of online resources and the relation

to their caring advising. Beth spoke of the importance of technology as a necessary tool

because it allows countless student records to be organized and accessed quickly and

efficiently. She also mentioned the value of email, saying, "Dashing off a quick email

answer helps a lot because then the student doesn't have to come in. If I can't answer

[the student's question] in a quick email I invite them in. I also think students expect

instant gratification and they can have that electronically." Ann also indicated her

satisfaction with the informative weekly email messages she sent to all psychology

majors. She added that the online degree audit was a very valuable tool in her advising.

Lloyd spoke specifically about the advantages of online resources and how the

availability of these resources allowed him to focus more on the needs of his advisees:

> After using Toolkit for a couple of years now, I know exactly where everything is
> and I can visualize it in my head. And before I've seen the student I have that
> initial glance where I can get a sense of the questions I might have just based on
> their record. But then also if a question comes up about placement tests and
> things like that I can easily access that information without having to go back and
> forth, so that I'm not spending too much time away from the student. I think prior
> to the Toolkit, there was a concern on my part about having to go one place for
> one thing and another place for a different thing and then always feeling like I had
> to pull away from the student to find that information.

The advantages of technology in academic advising become apparent in observing

the advisors and in discussing their work with students. But, as I found while observing

their work, the use of technology also has the potential to hinder the caring encounter.

A liability that became most obvious to me in the observation phase of my

research was the tendency for advisors to allow themselves to be drawn into their

computer monitors for periods at a time, interrupting eye contact, distracting them from

the conversation with the advisee. An advisor's ability to be engaged in the conversation

is hampered if he or she fixes his or her gaze on her computer terminal, rather than the

eyes of her student. In this situation, technology could interfere significantly with an

advisor's receptive engrossment, potentially affecting this important element of the

caring encounter.

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On the morning I observed Beth's advising sessions, I noticed almost immediately that Beth's computer monitor sat in the right corner of her desk. Each of her advisees sat to her left, slightly behind Beth's shoulder. As Beth reviewed a student's online record, she actually turned her back to the student. Consequently, each time she needed to reference the student's file, run an automated degree audit, or refer to another online campus resource, Beth turned away, then turned back to address the student. I wrote in my field notes: "Beth's computer screen is getting in the way. It is pulling her away from her advisee. She is turning back and forth constantly in this configuration."

Weeks later, Beth and I reviewed the videotaped session. I asked for her immediate reaction to the segment of the tape that had captured the earliest moments of her encounter. She replied, "I wish I had moved my computer screen sooner. I now have it directly in front of me and to the side of the student rather than on the opposite side of the desk." She indicated that she had made this decision to relocate her monitor because she sensed that she was "going back and forth, turning and giving the back of my head to the student" rather than facing him or her. She suspected that a sizeable percentage of her time in the initial phase of the encounter was spent shifting her attention away from the student and toward her monitor. "I realized," she said, "that I wasn't spending 'eye contact time' with students, that I was uncomfortable. So I moved it." Beth made the necessary accommodation and now found that the monitor was no longer a hindrance in her encounters.

Sam's computer terminal also posed a problem in his ability to remain engaged at the beginning of his appointments. "How's your semester going?" he asked the first

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student who visited during my observation. As she settled in for her session, Essie

responded to his question, discussing the difficulty she was having in one of her classes.

Sam, sitting across the desk from his advisee, had turned to log in to his computer and

was now facing his monitor, in left profile from Essie's perspective. As she continued to

respond to his question, Sam gazed at the screen. Once she had completed her thought,

Sam asked her to confirm her address. I immediately wrote in my field notebook, "He

has not heard a word she said. He missed a caring moment here." A few minutes later,

still transfixed by his computer screen, Sam asked Essie about one of the courses in

which she was currently enrolled. As she responded, Sam typed the necessary

information into the online degree audit and set the program to run. "Wow," he

responded, eyes fixed on the degree audit, "that relates to what you want to do." He then

turned slightly and faced her. "Tell me again what you want to do." These two

contradictory statements gave me a clear impression that he had not been paying too

much attention to the conversation that had just occurred. Once the degree audit was

complete, Sam then turned to face Essie. His attention and focus never wavered from

that point on. Engrossed in his student's plans for the semester, Sam carefully followed

her every thought.

     As we watched the videotaped session together, I asked Sam his overall

impression of the first few encounters. "The only thing that surprised me was how much

time I spent going back and forth, going from the computer and writing things down," he

commented. Indicating his belief of the importance of giving students his "undivided

attention" and noting that his efforts in this area were much more noticeable in the latter

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part of each session, Sam spoke of the balance that must be achieved between providing

and requesting information and remaining engrossed in the dialogue. As we talked, Sam

informed me that in his current office space, (Sam has since changed positions and now

works for another academic division at The University of Texas at Austin), he had

positioned his computer monitor in a way that did not force him to turn away from his

advisee. When I asked him if he thought the use of online resources helps or hinder a

caring advising session, Sam replied

> I personally think it helps in the long-term scheme of things. I think the only time
> it hinders is just when…you know, like I said, in the beginning [of the taped
> sessions] it seemed like maybe I wasn't being as attentive to her as I could have
> been.

A second disadvantage to the use of technology is one that often falls outside an

advisor's locus of control. System failures, power outages, and network difficulties

render an advisor helpless when the advisor is unable to retrieve the information needed

for an advising session. This presents a challenge to the most patient and prepared

advisor. "It's a hindrance when it doesn't work the way you want it to," Beth laughed,

"because I rely on it!"

A third disadvantage of technology is the danger of email replacing face-to-face

contact. Lloyd warned of the tendency for students (and advisors) to rely too heavily on

email as a means for communication and the effect that this reliance can have on the

advising relationship. He explained:

> Email has become valuable in terms of communicating with students; it's so much
> easier for a student to ask questions now. But it doesn't necessarily make it easier
> for the advisor to answer the question. And so, I think we're going through a
> growing pain campus-wide, trying to figure out how much information we can
> convey through email. Not wanting to inconvenience the student but also

realizing there is only so much you can do through the written word, not having
the chance to get a true sense [of the student's] question.

Without question, as technology continues to play a more important role in our
lives, academic advisors will continue to enjoy the benefits of increased access to
information and resources, benefits that enhance the services they provide to students.
Advisors will also contend with the liabilities presented by an increase in the use of
technology—student reliance on the speed and convenience of email rather than person-
to-person interaction and the potential for technology to interfere with the basic dynamics
of the advising encounter. Certainly these pros and cons will be weighed and examined
in the years to come.

This study illustrates the fact that caring advisors utilize the tools of technology to
enhance their advising practices, enjoying the benefits of greater efficiency, a
thoroughness of available information and resources, and a means for storing and
retrieving vital student information to enhance familiarity. Caring advisors are also
cognizant of the liabilities inherent in emerging technologies and work to prevent
technological conveniences from interfering in the one-to-one human encounter that
caring advising symbolizes. Without question, the benefits modern educational
technology offers the academic advising profession far outweigh the liabilities, but the
problems exist and they are not insignificant, particularly given my earlier findings about
the importance of engrossment in caring and in sustaining relationships.

To better facilitate the use of technology in advising, this important topic should
be included in the training and development of advisors. Extensive training and
discussion about the use of technological resources and implications for the use of online

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resources for the enhancement of advisor knowledge, accuracy, efficiency, and

familiarity with advisees and the ways to use technology to enhance advising should be

included in initial and ongoing advisor training initiatives. In addition, advisors should

be made aware of the possible problems inherent in technology, most importantly, the

potential for technology to interfere with the advisor's engagement in the advising

encounter. Advisors should investigate possible ways to place their monitors so that their

face-to-face encounters with students are not compromised. Additionally, advisors'

proper use of technology should be included in performance evaluations, an important

tool that will be discussed further in the pages that follow. Information on the utilization

and influence of technology in the practice of academic advising will guide in

discovering ways systems can be better used to benefit advisors and the students they

serve.

Building relationships: Organizational models that foster commitment

An interesting implication identified in this study involves the significance of the

advising relationship. The relationships that develop between caring advisors and

students, relationships heralded in this study by those on both sides of the equation, take

time and effort in order to evolve. Noddings stresses that time is often required for a

caring relation to develop. She sees relationships such as teacher-student or counselor-

client as unequal and argues, "Unequal relationships require time. We need time to

develop relations of care, and we need time to monitor the effects of our efforts" (1996,

p. 162). These arguments support the suggestion that advising services should be

designed to allow advising relationships to develop, giving each student the opportunity

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to work closely with one advisor over the course of his or her educational experience, rather than relying on brief encounters with several advisors over time. Frost (1991) maintains that ongoing contact between one advisor and a student increases the developmental nature of the advising relationship and heightens the student's overall satisfaction with academic advising. She suggests that advising programs be modeled to increase the probability of this ongoing contact between student and advisor, stating:

> Student development theory supports an individualized system of advising. Students benefit from meaningful relationships with [advisors] and from deliberate efforts to involve students in learning. These findings contribute both breadth and depth to concepts of advising but have not succeeded in redefining practices related to advising. To accomplish this end, administrators, advising coordinators, and individual advisors are called on to consider not only the organization of advising programs but also the opportunities afforded by advising for students and advisors to develop purposeful relationships centered on informed academic planning (p. 1).

The findings of this study illustrate the positive effects of organizational models that allow for frequent, ongoing contact between advisor and advisee. Each advisor participating in the study benefited from an organizational model within their college that allowed a student to seek academic advising from the same advising professional for the entire duration of his or her academic career. But in some colleges, both at The University of Texas and on other university campuses, advising services are organized in a manner that dictates that students see one advisor for one specific issue or task and another advisor for another issue. The advisor referral depends on the nature of the student's inquiry. For example, in the College of Engineering at UT-Austin, a student meets with an advisor in the Office of Student Affairs in order to complete a given administrative task, such as dropping a course or declaring a major. The same student

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must seek course or degree advising from another advisor within the student's specific discipline.

Additionally, in some organizational models, a student could potentially meet with a different advisor each time he or she visits. In this system, students are not assigned an advisor but, instead, see the next advisor available. Advisor participants in this study agreed that the formal or informal caseload model exercised in their colleges greatly enhanced the opportunity for developing ongoing relationships with their students. Based on the results of this study, I believe that institutions should structure advising in a manner that allows each student an assigned advisor with whom the student works until he or she graduates or leaves the institution for another reason. This organizational structure provides for maximum impact in the encouragement of ongoing, repeated contact between a caring advisor and student and will be ineffective only if the student leaves or if, for some reason, the advisor leaves the institution. The strength of relationship embodied in the connection between Sandy and Laura emphasized the importance of an organizational model that facilitates frequent, ongoing contact between an advisor and her student advisee.

Emphasizing the **Profession** in Professional Advising

College and university academic advising is a profession in metamorphosis. Once viewed as a purely administrative task, academic advising has continued to develop as a profession in its own right. Gordon (1992) maintains that a dramatic increase in the number of professional advisors, and the partial or full centralization of advising services have taken place within the last 20+ years.

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The findings of this study support the call for increased professionalism in academic advising and increased attention to academic advising as a profession. Kerr (2000) suggests that four major factors must be considered in defining academic advising as a profession: the existence of a policy statement; the implementation of training and evaluation; the establishment of a means to measure advising effectiveness; and the existence of a means to provide advisor recognition and reward. Advisors must be viewed as professionals and should benefit from organizational structures on their campuses that insure that those who serve students as academic advisors are properly trained, evaluated, recognized, and rewarded.

A policy or mission statement should exist in every advising office, including statements on advising philosophy, advising goals, responsibilities of advisors and advisees, training and development goals, accountability and evaluation, and reward and recognition. Mission statements define the objectives of the advising unit and remind advisors of their primary goals: to serve students effectively, efficiently, and in a caring manner.

As ongoing academic advisor training and development are essential, attention must be paid to thorough training and professional development. One implication of this study centers around the notion that advisor knowledge and accuracy are necessary components of caring advising. The relationship between caring and advisor knowledge emerged as a prominent theme in the advisor participant interviews suggesting that this connection should be viewed with substantial consideration. The implications for the content design of advisor training and development initiatives are apparent. An advisor's

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mastery of the intricacies of the degrees for which he or she advises, an understanding of the content of courses taught in his or her discipline, and a basic comprehension of institutional policies and procedures are absolutely necessary. This knowledge coupled with a thorough understanding and mastery of the interpersonal skills required of an advisor and a commitment to the principles of caring should be included as requisite components of academic advisor skills training and professional development.

Habley (1995) recommends that every advisor training program include three fundamental components: concept components, such as the definition of advising, student expectations of advising, and the rights and responsibilities of advisors and advisees; information components, such as institutional rules and regulations, program and course offerings, and referral sources and services; and relational components, the behaviors advisors need to demonstrate in order to reach out to students in their advising, including many of the caring characteristics illustrated in this study. Training and development programs on The University of Texas at Austin campus (and elsewhere) vary significantly in content, length, and effectiveness. Organizational structures that systemize effective training and professional development would greatly benefit professional advisors and the students they serve and would enhance advisors' sense of professionalism.

The efforts of academic advisors must be properly evaluated. According to Habley and Morales (1998), less than one-third of the colleges and universities responding to the American College Testing's Fifth National Survey of Academic Advising indicated that they evaluated the performance of academic advisors. If advisors

are to be effective, it is essential that they receive feedback about their performance. Not unlike training initiatives, evaluation efforts vary greatly from institution to institution, if they are conducted at all (Habley and Morales, 1998). In my experience, this is certainly the case on The University of Texas at Austin campus. Advisors should be assessed regularly on their knowledge, approachability, availability, use of resources (including technology) and their caring work with students. They should receive feedback from their students, through standardized evaluation instruments that include open-ended, qualitative questions. Advisors should be encouraged to perform self-assessment and should be regularly evaluated by a supervisor. The evaluation instrument should be designed to reflect the goals and objectives established in the mission of the academic advising unit and should emphasize the skills and behaviors necessary for effective, caring advising.

Rewarding and recognizing professional advising encourages increased professionalism and increased attention to the advising profession. Institutional efforts to recognize excellence in advising, such as the James W. Vick Excellence in Academic Advising Award on The University of Texas campus, should be commonplace on campuses across the country. Released time, increased compensation, and other forms of acknowledgement should be encouraged.

In addition, another important implication of this research is related to the issue of professionalism in advising and deserves thoughtful consideration. The results of this study suggest that students are well served in the relationships they cultivate with caring *professional* advisors. These professionals are dedicated solely to the academic and

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developmental needs of their students. Faculty, on the other hand, are primarily concerned with research and teaching, as their positions (as well as promotion and tenure) dictate. Though some institutions employ a faculty-only advising model, this study suggests that students may be better served by advising delivery systems that rely on the dedicated services of well-trained, committed professional advisors.

Academic advising must be studied more closely as a discipline and scholarship in academic advising must be encouraged. McGillin (2002) calls for additional research in theory and practice of academic advising. She states:

> It is evident that the research agenda for academic advising must become a national priority. The very status of advising as a field and of roles, institutional support, training and recognition will all depend on the generation of qualitative and quantitative research documenting what advisors do (p. 374).

This dissertation serves as an answer to that call. Though limited in scope and narrow in focus, the implications of this research study inspire possibilities for further investigation in the areas of academic advising and caring.

Findings from such studies could help to advance academic advising as a discipline worthy of increased scholarly attention and professional acknowledgement. Additionally, these findings can encourage the development of graduate level courses in academic advising offered to students in Master's and doctoral programs in educational administration. Kansas State University currently offers the only graduate certificate program in academic advising in the country. Graduate students at The University of Texas at Austin and other institutions would be well served by similar course offerings.

Additional Suggestions for Further Research

As a result of my study, several additional significant areas of interest surfaced as possible areas for further investigation. These topics were not explored in this study but their importance justifies thoughtful inquiry, as they could provide additional insight into the nature of caring advising and influence the future of the academic advising profession.

Intentionally, so as to protect the anonymity of the subjects involved in this study, I revealed little about the ethnic or cultural backgrounds of the advisor participants. Further exploration into the issues of race, gender, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, and native language with regard to caring advising should be undertaken. Caring advising relationships between advisors and students of different racial backgrounds and caring advising between and among males and females should be studied to provide insight into similarities and differences that exist and to enhance our understanding and guide our practices. Socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural influences in caring advising could aid in our understanding of ways to reach students whose backgrounds differ from those of advisors. Additionally, issues related to the sexual orientation or advisees or advisors and the manner in which this awareness or perception influences caring in advising could provide tools for serving students in an increasingly diverse population.

Research on the pathways into the advising profession would guide us in understanding the nature of academic advising as a career. Exploring how and why individuals become professional advisors would be a first step in the investigation.

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Interestingly, among the 10 advisors participating in this study, five (six if I include myself in the assessment) are former teachers. In my experience as a professional advisor, this transition from teaching to academic advising is not uncommon; many of my colleagues are former primary or secondary school teachers. Additional insight into the career paths of advisors could be gained by asking research questions such as: How does teaching lead to a career in academic advising? Why did former teachers leave one profession to embark on a journey in the advising profession?

The advisor participants in this study were all veteran professional advisors. A study of advisors new to the profession and early in their respective careers could explore the significance of experience as a factor in the development of caring advisors. Can new professionals be regarded as caring by their students or peers? Is caring in advising enhanced as an advisor becomes more experienced? These questions have implications for the training and mentoring of new professionals and for the design of professional development initiatives.

The years of experience and service to the institution the participants in this study demonstrated indicate a possible relationship between caring advisors and job satisfaction. Exploring employee satisfaction among caring advisors could assist in the design of staff development programs to better encourage the retention of these caring professionals. Why do these advisors remain in the profession? Specifically, what factors encourage them or influence their decision to serve the students at one institution for so many years? Are the rewards intrinsic or extrinsic? Does the existence of a recognition and reward system on this campus influence their retention?

It would also be helpful to hear the stories of former academic advisors whose professional paths led them to other careers. Why did they leave the advising profession? Was academic advising a step on the path to a related career? Were the rewards in advising nonexistent or insignificant in their experiences? Information in this area would aid in advising staff retention efforts. Advisor retention is important if advisor-student relationships are to be sustained.

Another area of possible inquiry involves the diversity of the sample. As the location of this research focused on advisors who served students at a large, public institution, including advisors from other types of institutions would increase and diversify the sample from which the data would be generated. Advisors who serve students at smaller universities, private institutions, community colleges, rural, or commuter campuses may experience caring advising in very different ways. Larger and more diverse sampling could enhance our understanding of the relationship between caring and academic advising and assist in the development of training initiatives specific to institutional type.

Finally, student retention is a significant topic of interest on many campuses. Studies focusing on the effects of the caring advisor/student relationship with regard to student satisfaction and retention could prove invaluable in the design and structure of advising services, the recruitment of advising professionals, and the training and development of advisors. The link between caring advising and retention has been recognized in the advising literature, but it must be further explored.

This dissertation has implications for academic advisors, the students they advise, and the advising profession. Habley (2000b) issues an impassioned plea for research in academic advising. First, he attests that through research advising professionals realize their vision. He argues, "We cannot affirm advising without research, and we will not advance advising without research" (p. 7). Studies in advising practice contribute to the scholarly study of academic advising and contribute a significant body of knowledge to higher education. Second, Habley asserts, "Research affirms the work of advisors. It provides documentation of our accomplishments. Without research, our claims of success have little merit" (p. 7). Examining caring advisors and advising encounters provides an opportunity to enhance practices in advising, as well as a means to understand effective advising practices and the meanings generated by both advisor and advisee. Highlighting caring advisors and their skills and constructing a profile of the caring advisor encourages recognition of excellence in the advising profession. Finally, Habley declares, "Research guides our decision making. It answers questions, such as what is the best way to deliver advising…Do students respond better to different advisors…different techniques? Research gives us the answers that guide those decisions!" (p. 7). This study illuminates the characteristics of caring and what caring entails within the context of an advising encounter. It will guide advisors and the students they advise in understanding the significance of caring in the advising relationship. In essence, this dissertation illustrates why caring must be recognized as a fundamental feature in academic advising and why academic advising must be recognized and celebrated as a worthy and necessary endeavor.

Appendix A: Letter of Request for Participation

Date

Dear Colleague,

I am writing to request your active participation in a dissertation study entitled *Handle with Care: The Significance of Caring in Developmental Academic Advising*. You have been identified by a group of your colleagues a professional who exemplifies caring in your advising practices. It is my intent to construct a profile of the caring advisor by observing, videotaping, and audio taping advisor participants as they lead advising sessions with student advisees. Additionally, I plan to interview advisors and selected student advisees to explore their understanding of the caring advising encounter. Taped observations, interviews and all data collection will be kept strictly confidential. I have included a confidentiality agreement that provides further details of the manner in which information will be gathered, stored, and discarded in order to assure confidentiality.

If you choose to participate, I will schedule a three to four hour initial observation period as well as a one to two hour debriefing session. Observations will occur during normal work hours when students seek your assistance. The debriefing session will be scheduled at a convenient time that will allow you to view the videotaped session and participate in an open-ended interview.

Within the next week I will contact you to determine if you are interested in participating in the study. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me at work (xxx-xxx-xxxx) or at home (xxx-xxx-xxxx). Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this request and I look forward to speaking with you in the coming days.

Very sincerely,

Cole Holmes
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational Administration

Appendix B: Interview Guide (Advisor)

1. Tell me about your professional background.

2. What do you like best about the academic advising profession?

3. In your opinion, what is the most important element of advising/the advising relationship?

[Show videotape of selected sessions]

4. How do you establish rapport with the students you advise?

5. What role do you think the environment plays in an advising session? How do you create an atmosphere conducive to an effective advising session?

6. In terms of technology, do you think the use of the toolkit and other online resources helps or hinders the advising session?

7. How do you begin your advising sessions? Do you ask questions to ascertain why the student has come to see you? Do you automatically run a degree audit for every student?

8. How do you demonstrate that you are present for the student?

9. How do you demonstrate to students that you care? In the session? In your relationship?

10. What characteristics define your role as an advisor?

11. If I were to interview the students with whom you have built an ongoing professional relationship, what would they tell me about you?

12. Do you have any final questions or comments?

Appendix C: Interview Guide (Student)

1. Tell me about your educational background.

2. Describe your academic advising experiences at UT? How significant a role has advising played in your academic life at this institution?

3. In your opinion, what is the most important element of advising/the advising relationship?

4. How does your academic advisor establish rapport?

5. What role do you think the environment plays in an advising session? How does your advisor create an atmosphere conducive to an effective advising session?

6. How does your advisor demonstrate that he/she cares? In the session? In your relationship?

7. What are the most definitive characteristics of a good advisor?

8. Do you have any final questions or comments?

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form (Advisor)

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

The University of Texas at Austin

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The Principal Investigator (the person in charge of this research) or his/her representative will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Title of Research Study:

Handle with Care: The Significance of Caring in Academic Advising

Principal Investigator(s):

*Cole Holmes, MA, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Educational Administration, College of Education, The University of Texas at Austin, (xxx) xxx-xxxx
*Marilyn Kameen, Ed.D. , Faculty sponsor, Professor and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research, College of Education, The University of Texas at Austin, (xxx) xxx-xxxx
*Lisa Goldstein, Ph.D., Faculty sponsor, Associate Professor, Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, The University of Texas at Austin, (xxx) xxx-xxxx

Funding source:

The costs of this study are minimal and are being covered by the Principal Investigator.

What is the purpose of this study?

This study is a dissertation research project examining the role caring plays in developmental academic advising. You are being asked to participate because you have been identified as a knowledgeable professional in the field of academic advising. If you agree to participate, you will be one of approximately 20 to 25 people in the study.

What will be done if you take part in this research study?

If you decide to participate, you may be asked to participate in a two-hour focus group. In addition, you may be asked to allow several of your advising sessions to be videotaped, followed by a discussion and interview with the Principal Investigator. Advising observations, discussions and interviews will take approximately one to two hours each. To protect your privacy, video and audiotapes will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them. Video and audiotapes will be kept in a securely locked closet in the Principal Investigator's office, heard and viewed only by you, the Principal Investigator and his associates, and will be erased after they have been transcribed and coded or at the conclusion of the research study.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. Your responses will not be linked to your name in any written or verbal report of this research project.

What are the possible discomforts and risks?

There may be risks that are unknown at this time, but the potential risks involved in this study are minimal. Since there is no physical contact involved, physical risks are minimized. Participants will be asked non-threatening questions therefore reducing psychological risk. As described above, careful steps will be taken to assure confidentiality.

If you wish to discuss the information above or any other risks you may experience, you may ask questions now or call the Principal Investigator listed on the front page of this form.

What are the possible benefits to you or to others?

Participants will benefit from an increased understanding of the significant role caring plays in developmental academic advising.

If you choose to take part in this study, will it cost you anything?

There is no cost for participation in this study.

Will you receive compensation for your participation in this study?

No monetary compensation will be awarded to participants or the Principal Investigator.

What if you are injured because of the study?

Physical injury is highly unlikely for participants in this study. However, if injuries occur as a result of study activity, eligible University students may be treated at the usual level of care with the usual cost for services at the Student Health Center, but no payment can be provided in the event of a medical problem.

If you do not want to take part in this study, what other options are available to you?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to be in the study, and your refusal will not influence current or future relationships with The University of Texas at Austin

How can you withdraw from this research study and who should you call if you have questions?

If you wish to stop your participation in this research study for any reason, you should contact: Cole Holmes at (xxx) xxx-xxxx. You are free to withdraw your consent and stop participation in this research study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits for which you may be entitled. Throughout the study, the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

In addition, if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Clarke A. Burnham, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

How will your privacy and the confidentiality of your research records be protected?

Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin and the Institutional Review Board have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. If the research project is sponsored then the sponsors also have the legal right to review your research records.

Otherwise, your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order.

If the results of this research are published or presented at scientific meetings, your identity will not be disclosed.

Signatures:

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, the procedures, the benefits, and the risks that are involved in this research study:

_____ ___

Signature and printed name of person obtaining consent

Date

You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this Form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

_____

Printed Name of Subject

Date

_____

Signature of Subject   **Date**

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form (Student)

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

The University of Texas at Austin

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The Principal Investigator (the person in charge of this research) or his/her representative will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Title of Research Study:

Handle with Care: The Significance of Caring in Academic Advising

Principal Investigator(s):

*Cole Holmes, MA, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Educational Administration, College of Education, The University of Texas at Austin, (xxx) xxx-xxxx.
*Marilyn Kameen, Ed.D. , Faculty sponsor, Professor and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research, College of Education, The University of Texas at Austin, (xxx) xxx-xxxx.
*Lisa Goldstein, Ph.D., Faculty sponsor, Associate Professor, Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, The University of Texas at Austin, (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

Funding source:

The costs of this study are minimal and are being covered by the Principal Investigator.

What is the purpose of this study?

This study is a dissertation research project examining the role caring plays in developmental academic advising. You are being asked to participate because you are currently being advised by one of the academic advising professionals participating in the study. If you agree to participate, you will be one of approximately 20 to 25 people in the study. Only students of legal age (18 or older) may participate in this research study.

What will be done if you take part in this research study?

If you decide to participate, you may be asked to allow your advising session to be videotaped. At a later date, you may be contacted for an interview with the Principal Investigator. Advising observations, discussions and interviews will take approximately one to two hours each. To protect your privacy, video and audiotapes will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them. Video and audiotapes will be kept in a securely locked closet in the Principal Investigator's office, heard and viewed only by you, the Principal Investigator and his associates, and will be erased after they have been transcribed and coded or at the conclusion of the research study.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. Your responses will not be linked to your name in any written or verbal report of this research project.

What are the possible discomforts and risks?

There may be risks that are unknown at this time, but the potential risks involved in this study are minimal. Since there is no physical contact involved, physical risks are minimized. Participants will be asked non-threatening questions therefore reducing psychological risk. As described above, careful steps will be taken to assure confidentiality.

If you wish to discuss the information above or any other risks you may experience, you may ask questions now or call the Principal Investigator listed on the front page of this form.

What are the possible benefits to you or to others?

Participants will benefit from an increased understanding of the significant role caring plays in developmental academic advising.

If you choose to take part in this study, will it cost you anything?

There is no cost for participation in this study.

Will you receive compensation for your participation in this study?

No monetary compensation will be awarded to participants or the Principal Investigator.

What if you are injured because of the study?

Physical injury is highly unlikely for participants in this study. However, if injuries occur as a result of study activity, eligible University students may be treated at the usual level of care with the usual cost for services at the Student Health Center, but no payment can be provided in the event of a medical problem.

If you do not want to take part in this study, what other options are available to you?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to be in the study, and your refusal will not influence current or future relationships with The University of Texas at Austin

How can you withdraw from this research study and who should you call if you have questions?

If you wish to stop your participation in this research study for any reason, you should contact: Cole Holmes at (xxx) xxx-xxxx. You are free to withdraw your consent and stop participation in this research study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits for which you may be entitled. Throughout the study, the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

In addition, if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Clarke A. Burnham, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, (512) 232-4383.

How will your privacy and the confidentiality of your research records be protected?

Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin and the Institutional Review Board have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. If the research project is sponsored then the sponsors also have the legal right to review your research records. Otherwise, your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order.

If the results of this research are published or presented at scientific meetings, your identity will not be disclosed.

Signatures:

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, the procedures, the benefits, and the risks that are involved in this research study:

_____   _____   _____

Signature and printed name of person obtaining consent   Date

You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this Form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

_____

Printed Name of Subject   Date   Age

Signature of Subject

Signature of Principal Investigator   Date

Please list a local address and phone number below, so that the Principal Investigator may contact you later for an interview:

Local Address:

Local Phone:

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Vita

Cole Evan Holmes was born November 10, 1960 in San Antonio, Texas to Coley E. Holmes, Jr. and Sue Summers Holmes. After graduation from Tivy High School in Kerrville, Texas, he entered The University of Texas at Austin, where in 1984 he earned a Bachelor of Science in Education. After briefly teaching with the Klein Independent School District and the Austin Independent School District, Cole accepted a position at St. Edward's University in Austin, where he worked for ten years in undergraduate and graduate admissions and student advising. He received a Master of Arts in Human Services from St. Edward's University in 1992.

In September 1996, Cole entered the Graduate School of The University of Texas at Austin to pursue a doctorate in Educational Administration. The following year, he began working as an academic advisor on the UT-Austin campus, and in 1999 Cole accepted the position of Director of Advising in the undergraduate division of the McCombs School of Business.

Permanent address: 11703 Three Oaks Trail, Austin, Texas 78759

This dissertation was typed by the author.