

Student Work

1-1-2019

Teacher Perceptions on Advisory Model at the Middle Level Through the Lens of Conflict and Connection

Emili L. Brosnan
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/studentwork>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Please take our feedback survey at: https://unomaha.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8cchtFmpDyGfBLE

Recommended Citation

Brosnan, Emili L., "Teacher Perceptions on Advisory Model at the Middle Level Through the Lens of Conflict and Connection" (2019). *Student Work*. 3677.

<https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/studentwork/3677>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Work by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu.

Teacher Perceptions on Advisory Model at the Middle Level Through the Lens of
Conflict and Connection

by

Emili L. Brosnan

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
the Graduate College of the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fullfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Education

Major: Educational Administration

Under the Supervision of Jeanne Surface, Ed.D., chair

Omaha, Nebraska

January 2019

Supervisory Committee:

Jeanne Surface

Kay A. Keiser, Ed.D.

Tamara Williams, Ed.D.

Phyllis K. Adcock, Ph.D

ProQuest Number: 13427802

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 13427802

Published by ProQuest LLC (2019). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

Abstract

Teacher Perceptions on Advisory Model at the Middle Level Through the Lens of Conflict and Connection

Emili L Brosnan, Ed.D

University of Nebraska, 2019

Advisor: Jeanne Surface

In education, we seek to prepare students in a variety of facets. In order to prepare those students, we must look at a multitude of different factors in regard to that preparation. As students continue through their educational career, their time with the teachers that are educating them often decreases. In order to continue to advocate for students and build skills with students, we have seen a shift to focus on student relationships as well as curriculum.

Using data collected with Pianta's Student-Teacher Relationship Scale-Short Form and open-ended questions, this study seeks to investigate the effectiveness of the current middle school advisory model, and the preparation and training received in regard to that model. Previous studies have indicated that the advisory model has been given a clear purpose, but teachers may not always know that purpose. There is also little research completed in regard to the best practices for advisory programs at middle school and how to train and prepare staff. To investigate this issue, staff completed two Likert Scale surveys and four open-ended questions. Each survey was completed with a student in the teacher's advisory in mind, a student with exemplary behavior and a student with challenging behavior. These categories were then used to review variance between whole group responses, and teachers who were deemed high in each categories responses. The open-ended questions were reviewed using grounded-theory open-coding, and codes were determined for each response. Results of the study indicated that teachers had a clear understanding of purpose, but that more research need to be completed to determine best practice for training and preparation.

Acknowledgments

My deep belief in the good in humanity was prevalent through this process with the individuals that I had the pleasure of working with. There are countless individuals who supported and pushed me through this journey. Dr. Surface was the guiding force as I completed this project and helped me to navigate the process, and supported me with each draft. Dr. Keiser and Dr. Ostler both continued to assist me long after I had completed their courses, and as I altered my study at each step I took.

Thank you to all of my colleagues who have supported me through this process, specifically, Dania Freudenburg who has been there to be a sounding board, a teacher, a mentor, and friend. Thank you to my parents and sister who helped me to develop the skills I needed to ultimately be successful in this adventure. Thank you to my sons, who unknowingly have pushed me to complete this challenge. Finally, thank you to my husband, Brian Brosnan, who has always taken an active role in my adventures and supported me through every challenge and celebration.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Abstract..... | i |
| Acknowledgments..... | ii |
| Table of Contents..... | iii |
| Chapter 1 Introduction..... | 1 |
| Conceptual Framework..... | 3 |
| Problem Statement | 7 |
| Purpose of the Study..... | 10 |
| Research Questions..... | 10 |
| Definition of Terms..... | 10 |
| Assumptions | 11 |
| Limitations..... | 11 |
| Delimitations..... | 11 |
| Significance of the Study..... | 11 |
| Outline of the Study..... | 12 |
| Chapter 2 Review of Literature..... | 13 |
| Caring behaviors in teacher-student relationships..... | 13 |
| Importance of caring relationships..... | 16 |
| Engagement and Academics..... | 18 |
| Behavior and the Whole Student..... | 21 |
| Teachers’ Ability to develop Caring Relationships..... | 24 |
| Conclusion..... | 26 |
| Chapter 3 Methodology..... | 27 |
| Design..... | 27 |
| Research Questions..... | 28 |
| Subjects..... | 28 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Data Collection..... | 29 |
| Demographic..... | 30 |
| Dependent Variable..... | 31 |
| Data Analysis | 31 |
| Computer Assisted Data Analysis..... | 32 |
| Chapter 4 Results..... | 33 |
| Presentation of Findings..... | 33 |
| Whole Sample Analysis..... | 34 |
| Demographic Data..... | 34 |
| Categorical Determination..... | 34 |
| Closeness and Conflict Determination..... | 38 |
| High Closeness: Challenging Behavior..... | 38 |
| High Closeness: Exemplary Behavior..... | 41 |
| High Conflict: Challenging Behavior | 44 |
| High Conflict: Exemplary Behavior..... | 47 |
| Respondents in multiple categories..... | 52 |
| Conclusion..... | 52 |
| Chapter 5 Conclusions and Discussion..... | 54 |
| Purpose and Effectiveness | 54 |
| Preparation and Training..... | 56 |
| Further Implications and Research..... | 58 |
| References..... | 60 |
| Appendix..... | 67 |

List of Tables

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| Table 1..... | 35 |
| <i>Question/Variables with Codes</i> | |
| Table 2..... | 36 |
| <i>Whole Sample Responses</i> | |
| Table 3..... | 30 |
| <i>Coded Responses by Category</i> | |

List of Figures

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1 Graphed Survey Responses High Closeness: Challenging Behavior | 40 |
| Figure 2 Graphed Survey Responses High Closeness: Exemplary Behavior | 43 |
| Figure 3 Graphed Survey Responses High Conflict: Challenging Behavior | 46 |
| Figure 4 Graphed Survey Responses High Conflict: Exemplary Behavior 4..... | 9 |

Chapter 1

Introduction

“It is as if no one is listening to the troubled voices of these children throughout the country.” (Elias & Muller, 1994, p.3)

There is a need for the development of the whole child at the middle school as students are on the cusp of identity development. Relationships with teachers become valuable through this development despite perceptions that students may begin valuing peer relationships more. (Elias & Muller, 1994; Raufelder, et al., 2016). It has become apparent that one of the strongest tools an educator can possess is the ability to connect with a student, and it has been demonstrated that students can reach a higher level of achievement when they feel a connection with the teacher that is caring and supportive. A great opportunity for teachers to develop caring relationships is through an advisory program. The Association for Middle-Level Education and The Developmental Designs for Middle School program promotes advisory as valuable for just that purpose. A guiding principle “is that knowledge of students' intellectual, social, emotional, and physical needs is as important as knowledge of content” (Wall, 2013 p. 42). Arguably the need for that knowledge is even more valuable.

The most significant purpose of education most simply put is for students to learn. Now, learning may take many avenues creating a myriad of results that are so infinite that they are almost undefinable. More specifically, the need to increase student achievement and engagement is a constant driver of education and educational reform. Coupled with this is the value of educating the whole child. When a student has a caring and connected relationships with an adult, it may yield greater academic success as well as successes that may not be academic in nature. While it is shown that building a relationship is one of the most powerful tools in a teacher's arsenal, it is also apparent that some teachers at a variety of junctures in their career

have not developed caring relationships with students. In particular, at the middle level, students are transitioning in a myriad of ways, and a healthy relationship with a teacher assists that student in learning and growing. It is essential to examine the relationships that teachers feel they are developing with students. At the middle level, advisory models are structured to fulfill this purpose. The advisory model should be giving each student an adult that develops a relationship with them and maintains that relationship for three years. Through this examination, we will be able to look for commonalities in teachers' perceptions of the level of connectedness and conflict in student-teacher relationships with students in an advisory model.

The understanding of the importance of building relationships is a concept many people feel they have a grasp on merely because they are a human being. The simple fact is that we are all complex human beings in an ever-changing society. This fact requires teachers to continue in the development of relationship skills as societal trends are fluid (Eryilmaz, 2014). It is crucial that we develop these relationships because it assists in preparing our students. Student's opportunities to learn are the most significant value, and through the creation of a connected and caring relationship, students are better able to find successes. "A close and supportive relationship with the teachers presumably serve as an external source of stress regulation, allowing children to direct their energies toward engagement with tasks, peers, and teachers in the classroom" (Hughes, 2012, p. 321).

The focus on engagement and classroom productivity is a central concept of the development of children in academics. The use of relationships as a foundation for engagement and productivity is to some a foreign concept. The logistics behind the development of relationships is hard concept to obtain. It is not a piece of curriculum, and it does not look the same for each student and teacher. For some, it is not even recognized, and often exists without

being in their conscious knowledge, this does not devalue it. The classroom is more effective when relationships are developed, but the students may not feel that change (Raufelder, et al., 2016). Students may not have an awareness of the characteristics of positive relationships or be able to define positive relationships, and without may become disengaged as they become part of the social mainstream (Elias & Muller, 1994). Relationships with students have been seen in several facets of educational research as critical elements to increase not only student achievement but in assisting in educating the whole student.

A relationship is meaningful because it has also been found to be a critical piece in developing students' values. "Only when you build a relationship can you transmit values" (Berreth & Scherer, 1993, p. 13). A classroom that is structured on intrinsic values is one that has a more significant opportunity to eliminate many behavior problems. Furthermore, by using relationships as a tool to develop behavior, we can create confident teachers who are more likely to remain in the profession. Research on teacher stressors indicates that the management of student misbehavior has been a significant stressor for teachers. It causes teachers to be less committed to the profession and too often burn out quicker (Tsouloupas, Carson, & MacGregor, 2014). The understanding of the key elements of relationships can give insight into the ability of a staff member to be successful.

Conceptual Framework

The use of advisory at the middle school is a practice that has been advocated since the late 60s (Alexandar, 1968), and early 70s (Lounsbury & Vars, 1970). These leaders of the middle school movement knew that the relationship and activities found in an advisory program would be essential to the development of the middle school model (Cole, 1994). The use of advisory models has been publicized and supported by multiple organizations and professional

communities for the middle school including, Association Middle-Level Education, National Middle School Association, and National Association of Secondary School Principals (Cole, 1994).

While the use of advisory in Middle School is touted, the structure and consistency vary. The advisory model is used in several different variations with all having the same goal, a caring relationship with an adult at the school. Advisory programs are structured with a similar goal that all students in the school have an adult with whom they feel a connection, and no students are missed due to oversight (Wilson, 1998; Wall, 2013; Shulkind & Foote, 2013). Due to the opportunity to feel connected to a single adult who will advocate for them, advisories may offer significant benefits to students in grade 6-8 as they navigate through their first experiences with secondary education (Shulkind & Foote, 2013).

Middle School is a time in young adolescents' lives when they are exploring who they are who they will become, and advisory offers a home base during that time of exploration (Wall, 2013). In *Teaching Ten to Fourteen-Year-olds*, Stevenson outlines four purposes for advisory.

- “Ensure that each student is well known at school by at least one adult who is the youngster's advocate
- Guarantee that every student belongs to a peer group
- Help every student find ways of being successful within the academic and social options the school provides
- Promote communication and coordination between home and school”(as cited in Hopkins, 1999, p.2).

All students should be known by at least one caring adult. Advisory provide this adult and the time to ensure that no student lacks a connection with an adult in the school (Wilson, 1998).

When advisories create a connection between a student and teacher, students can have a greater sense of support not only with that advisory but within the building as a whole. This supportive and connected environment is the best place for a student to learn. A single adult can create that sense of support for a student (Wilson, 1998; Hopkins, 1999).

While advisory models focus on the central concept of a connected and caring adult for every student in the building, the actual day to day operation of advisories varies greatly (Hopkins, 1999). Most advisory models are structured in smaller groups of 20 or less and ideally meet for more than 20 minutes a day, every day (Hopkins, 1999). Although that may be ideal, the number of students, length, frequency, and structure can vary greatly (Hopkins, 1999). Shoreham-Wading Middle School in New York State has used advisory since 1971. The model uses ten students that meet daily and spend some lunchtime together. Activities vary significantly from fun activities and light-hearted discussions to more serious discussions about social interactions and community involvement (Wilson, 1998). Gerisch Middle School in Southgate, MI began an advisory program in 1999. The advisory groups consisted of about 15 students who met for 20-25 per day each day. This program also included all certificated staff rather than just classroom teachers. The inclusion of all certificated staff was believed to show the importance of the program and allow educators who were no longer in the classroom to have a secure positive connection with a group of students. This model also focused on a daily discussion around issues of morality (Carlson, Wolsek & Gundick; 2001). Hopkins summarizes these differences in the following list.

- "Most advisories meet on a daily basis. Some meet four times a week. Others might meet for more extended periods of time once a week or once every two weeks.
- Some schools hold advisories first thing in the morning. Other schools might schedule a 20-minute advisory time between the second and third periods of the day. In one school, where the lunch hour comprises three 20-minute lunch periods (one lunch period for each grade 6 through 8), advisories meet for the 40 minutes of the hour when students aren't eating.
- Advisory groups come in all sizes. The prescribed "ideal" format is usually 12 to 15 students. Many advisory programs, however, are successful with larger groups.
- In some schools, advisory groups include students who are all in the same grade. In other schools, each group includes students of mixed grades, and students stay with the same advisor during their years in the school.
- Some advisories are structured, using prescribed commercial programs or programs designed by counselors and teachers in the schools. Others are entirely unstructured, allowing advisors to create their own meaningful activities." (Hopkins, 1999, p. 2)

The advisory model has been used by Middle Schools for over 40 years, and the function and day to day operation of advisories vary greatly. The purpose is clearly defined as the need for every student to establish a caring and connected relationship with an adult in the building. There

are not any clear, identifiable best practices for a program that middle school's see as invaluable (Shulkind & Foote, 2009).

Problem Statement

Teachers are often told that to get the most out of students that they must first work on building a relationship. Students will perform better if they have at least one adult in the building that they know cares about them (Wilson, 1998; Hopkins, 1999) Positive climate benefits both the development of the student and the well-being of the teacher (Jong, et al., 2014). While teachers know all these statements, for many teachers, the development of an authentic caring and connected relationship is an abstract idea and one that can seem daunting. The use of advisory models creates a specific time that is focused on the particular task of fostering a caring relationship without the additional burden of content area curriculum (Ziegler & Mulhall, 1994; Wilson, 1998; Hopkins, 1999; Cole, 1994).

The issue arises that while the purpose of the advisory is clearly defined, there are currently no clearly identifiable best practices that are supported by empirical evidence (Shulkind & Foot, 2009; Hopkins, 1999; Balkus, 2006). There is merely a lack of research on the effectiveness of building relationships using the advisory model. Shulkind and Foote in 2009 presented an article that gave four Los Angeles students an opportunity to describe how advisory makes them feel more connected to their middle school. The students collectively make a point about school connectedness being linked to greater student success in a variety of areas. The four students feel connected via advisory. Those four students represent a need for research and the need greater empirical evidence (Shulkind, 2009).

Much of the research around advisory has consisted of why programs are perceived to be failing. This knowledge is valuable as it creates an image and background of the advisory model.

One insight is that advisory programs may be negatively perceived by teachers due to a perception that they have a lack of preparation and understanding of the program. Many middle school teachers have not had formal development to serve as an advisor. This may in part be due to the fact that in the late 90s and early 2000s, there were very few training programs specific to the middle school at all. Many teachers found themselves at middle schools as they waited for a job at a high school (Wilson, 1998). This lack of training leads to a lack of understanding of the middle level and furthermore a lack of knowledge of the goals of the advisory (Cole, 1994). Moreover, some teachers do not feel like it is part of their job (Balkus, 2006; Cole, 1994). Some teachers believe that they are expected to be counselors, and do not feel that they are adequately trained nor is it their role. Teachers may also not want to engage in a program that requires them to participate in personal sharing (Wilson, 1998; Cole, 1994). This central concept in unsuccessful programs have also been due to lack of buy-in and lack of goals, visions, and values (Cole, 1994; Balkus, 2006). "Many teachers not trained in an understanding of adolescent needs and not seeing their roles as anything but a content provider will take the easiest route—give the kids a study hall" (Wilson, 1998, p. 2). Secondary teachers often see the value in content and believe that their role is to deliver that content knowledge rather than teaching the whole student. (Wilson, 1998; Cole, 1994, Balkus, 2006).

An additional perception that teachers possess is that a lack of training leads to the implementation feeling mandated creating a shortage of authentic implementation (Cole, 1998; Hopkins, 1999). Advisory programs that have had positive outcomes have demonstrated that they have included staff in development, training, and implementation.

“A top-down mandate, with little or no input from, or training for, teachers -- even with the best-designed curriculum -- is almost

certainly doomed to fail. On the other hand, a successful advisory program -- one that teachers buy into -- can yield measurable results, including improved grades and test scores, fewer behavior-related referrals, and better attendance.” (Hopkins, 1999, p. 3)

Teacher advisories that are started without staff development and leadership lead to teachers not receiving positive feedback from students which negates the core purpose of the advisory model which is making a connection with an adult in the building (Cole, 1994). Hopkins in his 1999 article, “Advice About Middle School Advisories,” “In the past 23 years, I have been involved in too many different [advisory] programs,” said one recent poster to a middle-school listserv. “To date, they have all failed. The primary reason for failure is the fact that they were mandated top-down.”(p.3). Fern Public Schools in Canada completed a study on years one and three of their advisory program at their K-8 building. The study only included the upper “middle” levels at the school 6th through 8th grade. In this advisory program, teachers helped create programs and goals. The data indicated that staff was taking the roles as advisors seriously. It also suggested that the staff felt that the program created a positive change in the school (Ziegler & Mulhall, 1994). Teacher perception of training, purpose, and their role in advisory is vital to the success of the program.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide empirical evidence of the level of connection and conflict teachers perceive in their relationship with advisees using Pianta's Student-Teacher Relationship Scale-Short Form (STRS-SF). It will also investigate teacher perceptions in regard to the goal of advisory at the middle school, and if adequate training was received to reach that goal, and the avenues through which teachers felt they were trained

Research Questions

This qualitative survey research study seeks to understand the levels of closeness and conflict as determined by The Student-Teacher Relationship Scale in comparison with the teacher perception in regard to the advisement model specifically related to purpose and teacher preparation.

1. Is the current advisory model working effectively to build caring and close relationships between teachers and students from a staff perspective?
2. How prepared do staff feel to build caring relationships?
3. What are factors that influence their preparation?

Definition of Terms:

Student-Teacher Relationship Student-teacher relationship is defined by the degrees of closeness and conflict that comprise the relationship between teacher and student. To measure student-teacher relationship quality, this studies items from the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS-SF) (Pianta, 2001; Buhl, 2012 p.8).

Closeness “Closeness is defined as the amount of warmth, support, and open communication in the relationship as perceived by the teacher (Pianta, 2001). The scale used to measure closeness included four items rated on a Likert-type scale. For example, “I share a caring, warm relationship with this child.”(Buhl, 2012 p.8).

Conflict “Conflict is defined by teacher perceptions of negativity and volatility in the relationship (Pianta, 2001). The scale used to assess conflict included four items rated on a Likert-type scale. For example: “This child and I always seem to be struggling with each other.”(Buhl, 2012 p.8).

Advisory/Advisement: A group of students, ideally less than 20, who meets with a certificated staff member in the building with the purpose of developing and maintaining a relationship (Cole, 1994, Hopkins, 1999; Wilson, 1998).

Assumptions

It is being assumed that teachers will be honest when completing the survey in regard to the level of connection and conflict felt with students. It is also assumed that teacher will be honest when reporting about their perceptions in regard to advisement.

Study participants will complete the survey voluntarily. There will be no identifying data other than basic demographics including years of teaching, gender, and age which staff may all choose not to report. The assumption is that the staff members are honest on the survey.

Limitations

Due to participation being voluntary, the results may not offer an accurate representation of the building.

Delimitations

This study is delimited to teachers who are currently working with an advisory group at Russell Middle School in the Millard Public Schools.

Significance of Study

This study will contribute to research and practice of educators and educator training. The need for a student to have one close positive student-teacher relationships in education has been thoroughly documented. It has also been thoroughly documented that the purpose of advisory at the middle level is to develop that type of student-teacher relationship. By gathering empirical evidence on whether or not teachers are developing close or conflicted relationships with students, we can evaluate the effectiveness of the current program. Furthermore, when compared

with factors of teacher preparation and understanding of purpose, it may become clear if those pieces are valuable for the development of caring student-teacher relationships. Through the examination of these factors, it may become apparent whether the middle school advisory has been valuable as well as possible factors that have led to the success or failure of the advisement model being a conduit for the development of student-teacher relationships.

Outline of the Study

The literature review relevant to this research study is presented in Chapter 2. The chapter reviews the literature related (1) Caring behaviors in teacher-student relationships, (2) the importance of teacher-student relationships, and (3) teachers' perceptions in regard to student relationships. Chapter 3 presents the research design, methodology, independent variables, dependent variables, and procedures used. Chapter 4 present the results of the surveys as well as the analysis of the data. Chapter 5 presents discussion and conclusions related to the findings concerning the research questions and literature review. Chapter 6 will include the implications of the findings in regard to practice and research.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This study builds upon and adds to the existing knowledge base in regard to these primary areas of research- the definition of caring in regard to a student and teacher relationship, the importance of positive student-teacher relationships, and teachers' perceptions related to student-teacher relationships. This literature review describes literature on the topics that are pertinent to the research topic. The organization consists of four headings (1) Caring behaviors in teacher-student relationships, (2) the importance of teacher-student relationships, and (3) Engagement and Academics (4) Teachers Ability to Develop Caring Relationships.

Caring behaviors in teacher-student relationships

A myriad of definitions exists in describing relationships and caring between students and teachers due to the intricacies involved in the development and maintenance of relationships. Nell Noddings who in 1984, stated, "Caring describes a certain kind of relationship with others (p. 91). The concept of caring lies both in the perception of the teacher delivering the care and the student is receiving the care. The care that Noddings refers to is the understanding between both parties. She describes caring as a personal interaction rather than a specific set of behaviors, and she says there is no program or strategy to caring it is the way we relate to our stakeholders. While this may be true as interactions will vary between each student and teacher, some behaviors attribute to a sense of care between a teacher and student (Shiller, 2009; Bulach, 2001). While caring may not be a word that can be globally described, it can be quantified by though observable behaviors.

There are quantifiable portions of caring. Teachers can quantify statements whether they are in a state of closeness or conflict with their teacher. "Closeness represents the warmth and

positive affect between the teacher and the child and the child's comfort in approaching the teacher, whereas Conflict refers to the negativity or lack of dyadic rapport" (Mason, et al., 2017). This is done by using Pianta's 15 statement 1992 *Student-Teacher Relationship Scale*. This scale has been used a measure of the teacher and student relationships through several studies in multiple countries. The teacher can complete the survey using the Likert scale, and a level of closeness and conflict can be determined. This gives a clear image of the level of care felt by the teacher (Mason, et al., 2017). If the teacher is not projecting care, then it can be surmised that the student is not manifesting a sense of care that is not there, and therefore the relationships are not viewed as positive. This scale relates to two defined categories of care based relationships are aesthetic care and authentic care (Shiller, 2009). This basis of two types of care is similar to the work of Noddings, and it gives a clear description of care from teachers to students. Aesthetic care is demonstrated when a teacher cares about the student's success and academic achievement, and the teachers want to see students be successful in education (Shiller, 2009). While aesthetic care is not conflict is does not lead one to believe that the highest level of closeness has been created with teacher and student, and it is often the first step toward authentic care. Aesthetic care can include behaviors that reduce anxiety, listening behaviors, rewarding behaviors, recognition behaviors. Some of the behaviors that reduce anxiety are considered aesthetic may involve enforcing the same rules for all students, maintaining an orderly classroom, cueing them when they do not understand, and calling students by name. A listening behavior is making time for students to work on assignments before and after school. By informing students and parents of academic progress, incentive work with prizes, and display work that is well done, teachers can also exhibit aesthetic care through rewards and recognition (Bulach, 2001). While these four definable areas of care can be associated with aesthetic care, they also possess characteristics that

can be affiliated with authentic care, and depending on the execution of the traits above, could be the groundwork for authentic care.

Authentic care is a genuine interest in a person's life including the events that have helped to shape the type of student that sits in the class. The second type of care is the type of care that teachers may associate with friends rather than with students (Shiller, 2009). Bulach categorizes these as friendship behaviors. These types of behaviors are the fifth level and highest level of care. This specific type of caring behavior may include anxiety-reducing behaviors, listening behaviors, rewarding behaviors, and recognition behaviors. While teachers being friends with students is still a disputed area, this is a level of caring that can be defined and displayed appropriately, and when married to authentic care because it does not possess any characteristics that are solely related to academic success. This level of care can be difficult as teachers need to be able to maintain some authority which is not often associated with friendship. It is appropriate to let students know that the teacher is someone who would go above and beyond for that student by intervening if they are being picked on, allowing students have fun at the expense of the teacher, and making time to return work promptly or each lunch with a student (Bulach, 2001). Teachers can also still demonstrate authentic caring using behaviors that reduce anxiety by creating an environment where all feel safe. This also includes creating an environment that is positive and engaging in listening behaviors. There is a multitude of ways to achieve this. This may include: asking for student opinion, letting them make decisions, and listening to the student's interest outside of the classroom, rewarding behaviors by going beyond what is required in regard to praise, and recognition behaviors by being able to use constructive criticism and sarcasm in a joking manner (Bulach, 2001). It is possibly the ability to convey

compassion, understanding, respect, and interest in interactions with students. “Acts done out of love and natural inclination” (Noddings, 1988; Noddings, 1992).

Authentic care is also describable using Maslow’s Hierarchy as a framework of needs that must be met for students to have positive interactions and do well in the classroom. These needs are also similar to those in self-determination and attachment theories (Verschueren & Koomen, 2012; Hosan & Hoglund, 2017). Beginning with our most significant need to feel cared for is a need for security. A student must first feel safe before a more in-depth relationship associated with caring to be developed. This does not mean just physically safe, but also emotionally safe. A student must then feel like he or she belongs which is then followed by a need for his or her self-esteem to be built up. When a teacher can reach a level of care and closeness through connections with a student that meets his or her needs, then a student's motivations to participate and be actively engaged may improve (Hosan & Hoglund, 2017).

Caring while not always globally definable is quantifiable with characteristics that can be measured and categorized based on a teacher’s thoughts or actions. These thoughts or actions can then become more definable through categorization Teachers who care for their students in an academic sense have an aesthetic level of care that still may maintain a sense of conflict. The more profound sense of care that convey compassion, understanding, respect and a genuine interest in interactions with students may develop a closeness through authentic care. A sense of caring is vital in an effective teacher and student relationship. (Shiller, 2009; Mason, et al., 2017).

Importance of Caring Relationships

The teacher and student relationship have in more recent years become the focus of research as in regard to student's performance in engagement, achievement behavior, and

building values. It has been indicated that in these areas students seem to perform better when a positive relationship with a teacher has been formed (Roorda, et al., 2017; Hosan & Hoglund, 2017; Raufelder, et al., 2016; Mason, et al., 2017). This may be due to the fact that positive teacher-student relationships have shown to be a factor in student success that can be manipulated by the professionals in the career while other elements are less able to be altered by those in education (Mason et al., 2017). There is also a focus on student and teacher relationships because they may have a greater impact than other relationships as shown in a meta-analysis in 2009 by Hattie "... that teachers have the greatest social impact on students' motivation and learning processes, even above their peer relationships, their class environment, and parental influences" (Raufelder et al., 2016). A caring and supportive teacher can make similar, meaningful impacts in shaping youth outcomes to that of a parent (Mason et al., 2017; Bretherton, 1992; Hughes, et al., 2001; Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Because the relationship between student and teacher can have such an impact, it creates multiple positive outcomes of a caring teacher and student relationship. Students are more successful in engagement and academics as well as in behavior and development of values. These outcomes all intertwine within in the classroom and may be reciprocal. Students may behave better and have a stronger relationship with a teacher because they have a strong sense of academics and social expectations thus making it easier for the teacher to form the relationship (Mason et al., 2017).

During the time that the sense of caring in student-teacher relationships have shown to be decreasing, their value is also rising. Teacher and student relationships are often easier to maintain at the elementary level as teacher-student relationships also begin to wane as students enter the secondary level (Mason et al., 2017). From ages 12 to 18, the quality of teacher and student relationships decreases. (Raufelder, et al., 2016). This may be due to the loss of a sense of

caring between teacher and students. Students may see their teachers as less supportive, warm, and friendly and generally less caring than their elementary counterparts. The loss of caring may be attributed to the fact that teachers at the secondary level often have less direct contact time with students and seem more distant. (Eccles et al., 1993; Harter, 1996; Hawkins & Berndt, 1985; Raufelder, et al., 2016). It may also be attributed to the fact that students are becoming more independent and developing stronger relationships with their peers thus causing them to shift their focus from relationships with adults to relationships with peers. (e.g., Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Hargreaves, 2000; Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997; Roorda, et al., 2017). Social norms also begin to alter at this age, and appropriate displays of physical affection become viewed are no longer socially acceptable (Mason, et al., 2017).

Along with social norms, teacher and student relationships are bound to a hierarchy that is involuntary thus creating a barrier in relationship development (Raufelder, et al., 2016; Hosan & Hoglund, 2017). Also, the structure of secondary schools affects the number of contacts that are made with a student and teacher. This may result in students having a heightened sense of awareness of the teachers' levels of care, therefore, making the interactions and relationship more important (Roorda, et al., 2017). Many researchers have found, and emphasis needed on the forming of caring emotionally connected relationships along with teacher knowledge and presentation of content and that teaching should have positive emotion attached (Raufelder, et al., 2016). That caring relationship's impact can be further examined in the effect it has on engagement and academics as well as behavior and value building.

Engagement and Academics

A caring teacher and student relationships can positively affect engagement and academic success of students (Raufelder, et al., 2016; Roorda, et al., 2017; Mason, et al., 2017). A caring

teacher and student relationship may be overlooked though as schools focus on what they believe to their primary mission, academic success through the engagement of students in the curriculum. The caring relationship between teacher and student can help schools to be successful in obtaining the goals of academic achievement. The caring relationship has shown to be a crucial tool for teachers in assisting students to be more engaged and reach higher levels of academic success (Raufelder, et al., 2016). Schools may focus on curricular resources, programs, and other conduits to increase engagement and academic achievement, but the caring relationship between and teacher and student has demonstrated the ability to affect students and their motivation. Student motivation within in the academic context is affected positively by the effective components of interpersonal teacher-student relationships. (Raufelder, et al., 2016).

A student teacher relationship in which a student feels cared for can increase engagement because it meets a basic level need of students. Students need to feel a sense of connectedness with others to become more engaged in the classroom. In a caring teacher and student relationship, the teacher can meet that need, and the student can focus more intensely on his or her class. Due to this heightened engagement, the students' academic achievement is influenced. (Roorda, et al., 2017; Hosan & Hoglund, 2017). The caring teacher and student relationship also facilitate an opportunity for stress regulation which can lead to higher engagement. A relationship in which a student feels cared for is significant as it can be a conduit for stress regulation which can lead to higher engagement with peers, other teachers, and classroom tasks (Hughes, 2012).

Much of the current research explores the quality of the relationship between a teacher and student and the influential process of engagement in school. These caring relationships with teachers can bolster and hinder a student's engagement in school (Hosan & Hoglund, 2017).

“These relationships can be characterized by positive qualities such as closeness or negative qualities such as conflict” (Parker & Asher, 1993; Hosan & Hoglund, 2017). In a Meta-Analysis completed by Roodra et al. in 2011, students who experienced a close relationship with their teacher were positively affected both in their current and ongoing engagement in school. While students who experienced a relationship with a teacher that was conflicted showed to have lower levels of engagement in school (Hosan & Hoglund, 2017). The theoretical work on creating caring school communities demonstrates that the level of care in a relationship between a teacher and student can predict academic achievement. (Battistich, et al., 1997; Mason, et al., 2017). Longitudinal survey data from multiple sites focused on the teacher-student relationship quality (TSRQ), and academic achievement has indicated that when a student's need to feel cared is met, then the student is more engaged in classroom and learning. Roodra et al., found in 2011 that “...a meta-analysis including 92 peer-reviewed articles and over 129,000 students supported the TSRQ predicts achievement pathways, particularly for lower achieving students and students in higher grades (Mason, et al., 2017 p. 178).

Teacher-student relationship quality has shown to have an even more vital role in the engagement, and academic success of student's in the secondary setting (Roorda, et al., 2017). Bolstering rigor and curricular resources to increase engagement and therefore achievement may be a focus of many schools. There also needs to be a focus on building caring relationships as students go through periods of academic adjustment. Teachers at the secondary level could benefit from developing caring relationships with individual students by seeing increased engagement and achievement (Roorda, et al., 2017). This focus may become more important at the secondary level as students naturally become less engaged as they mature and grow older which will put secondary students in a position to possibly perform lower academically as their

natural engagement depletes as well as their sense of a caring relationship with teachers. (e.g., McDermott, Mordell, & Stoltzfus, 2001; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Roorda, et al., 2017). Due to this need for students to have a relationship that is based in connection and not conflict at the secondary level, it is necessary for a teacher to be cognizant of their relationships with students and to monitor the standard of care and connectedness.

In both primary and secondary grades, students who feel a connectedness with teachers through caring relationships can strengthen engagement and development of the academic skills necessary to be successful (Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; Hosan & Hoglund, 2017). Students who do well academically and are more engaged in the classroom, demonstrate a higher level of participation in activities and develop a greater sense of intrinsic motivation as they have more success (Hosan & Hoglund, 2017). The impact that a caring teacher can have on a student's engagement and academic success is meaningful, and it can also significantly impact the whole child through behavior and development of values. Developing a relationship has demonstrated a connection to academic achievement; it has shown an even stronger link to diminishing problem behaviors in students. The lack of problem behaviors may be a critical factor in higher student achievement as increased engagement and achievement, and enhanced interpersonal skills become a cycle for success (Stemler, et al., 2011).

Behavior/ Whole student

While academic achievement is frequently the primary mission in schools, many schools have incorporated a focus on being a value-rich person who can contribute to society post-secondary. (Stemler, et al., 2011). For a student to learn values and behaviors that will transfer to the world outside of school and the classroom, they need to feel a have a connected relationship with the teacher. This relationship is crucial because it has also been found to be a critical piece

in developing student's values. "Only when you build a relationship can you transmit values" (Berreth & Scherer, 1993). A classroom that is structured on an intrinsic set of values is one that has a greater opportunity to create intrinsic motivation and personal values. This ability to develop intrinsic motivation is affected by both teaching style implemented by their teacher and a sense of connectedness and security with the teacher (Katz & Assor, 2007; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Raufelder, et al., 2016). If the relationship is one based in conflict where the teacher seems to be uncaring, the intrinsic motivation that is demonstrated is lacking in comparison to a teacher with whom the student feels they have a caring relationship (Ryan & Grolnick 1986; Urda & Schoenfelder, 2006; Raufelder, et al., 2016). Secondary school's face the challenge of the students not having as much direct contact with teachers as well as student's having multiple teachers in a year. However, student's intrinsic motivation increases when they have at least one relationship with a specific teacher that they feel motivates them and that they like (Raufelder, et al., 2016). Furthermore, teachers and schools may focus so heavily on the academics and curriculum that they do not focus on an important facet of developing interpersonal skills and behaviors through positive emotions tied to a teacher and student relationship (Raufelder, et al., 2016)

A student's positive emotions towards a relationship with a teacher also referred to as emotional engagement in the relationship, can translate to the higher level of behavioral engagement in class. This emotional engagement is created by sharing a close relationship that is focused on connectedness rather than conflict (Hosan & Hoglund, 2017). A student and teacher relationship of conflict may have a greater and longer lasting effect than a relationship of connection. This may be because students expect to share a caring and close relationship with adults. Negative interactions may have a stronger impact as it creates an environment where

students do not enjoy school and are at a higher risk of emotional and behavioral disengagement (Hosan & Hoglund, 2017). Students who characterize their relationships as close have the potential for higher emotional engagement throughout the school year (Hosan & Hoglund, 2017). Supportive teacher-student relationships are a critical factor in creating and maintaining a sense of school belonging that encourages positive academic and behavioral outcomes (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Gest, Welsh, & Domitrovich, 2005; Wentzel, 1997; Mason, et al., 2017). Emotional engagement is often not as tangible to students, and therefore behavioral engagement holds more value to them as it can affect how their peers respond to them. "...conflict with teachers and friends appears to perpetuate a cycling between friendship conflict and behavioral disengagement" (Hosan & Hoglund, 2017). Furthermore, the caring relationship with a teacher enables students to invest emotionally and behaviorally in school (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Hoglund et al., 2015; Hosan & Hoglund, 2017).

Teachers, and secondary teachers in particular, often feel that their role as instructor and delivering course content outweighs their role as emotional support for students (e.g., Hargreaves, 2000; Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997; Roorda, et al., 2017). Teachers, however, have the rare opportunity to mold students' emotional and behavioral skills through being a role model to students as they mature. A teacher has a significant stake and influence in the development of behaviors and values in the lives of students (Raufelder, et al., 2016). Stewart and Suldo, 2011 found that student who experienced a close relationship with teachers reported higher life satisfaction and fewer externalizing behaviors associated with psychopathology. Students who have caring and supportive relationships with teachers also reported less victimization from peers (Raufelder, et al., 2016). This may be due to the cycle of behavioral disengagement and conflict with peers (Hosan & Hoglund, 2017). While teachers provide instruction and feedback in regard

to academics, they are also serving the role as an adult role model. This mixture of connections with students by providing feedback academically and providing feedback through the relationships helps students to form a sense of self. The approval and disapproval of the teacher play a role in the student's identity development (Raufelder, et al., 2016).

Teachers Ability to Develop Caring Relationships

“Individuals who do not care about students probably would not have chosen education as their field” (Bulach, 2001). Building relationships with students are vital, but teachers may not be equipped with the skills needed to build effective relationships. A variety of different studies have yielded results that demonstrate that different types of relationships may be formed using different methods. Amitai Etzioni discussed with Berreth and Scherer in 1993 that by having teachers stay with students through multiple grade levels in value-rich classes, they were able to form a stronger bond, and have a value based classroom management system. The three classes were civics, geography, and history. This model is centered on "communitarianism." Developing the community became the central concept of the curriculum (Berreth & Scherer, 1993). The development of a community is often confused with the concept of creating a smaller community. A smaller school does not always indicate that the school will have staff who can effectively build better relationships (Shiller 2009). A method that proved to be effective is the teacher reflection and review. "Their reflection-focused intervention is based on the assumption that teachers' opportunities to reflect on their behaviors, intentions, and feelings in respect to specific students will increase their capacity for sensitive responding, thereby increasing students' attachment security and reducing relational conflict " (Hughes 2012). Teachers who evaluate their behavior are more effective. Not only can they develop relationships with their students but also in developing relationships among students. "Review of videotape and

mentoring proved to increase teacher effectiveness in helping students with problem behaviors. It also increased teacher effectiveness in helping students to build peer relationships" (Mikami, et al., 2011). Students who felt connected to adults can create better relationships with peers and can more effectively navigate life situations, therefore, reducing problem behaviors (Bird, et al., 2013; Mikami, et al., 2011)

A major roadblock that occurs in the development of relationships between students and staff is the opinion of staff about students or their perceived role in students' lives. Staff feel that it is not their role to provide general care and concern, but to only educate children in regard to the curriculum. A study completed in regard to creating smaller schools with the purpose of building relationships between staff and students. Teachers had the opportunity to collaborate and discuss, and the opportunity often turned in a chance for students to complain. Teachers in one study chose to vent rather than come up with solutions which caused the advisors to be ineffective. One commented that a kid, "needed to have his ass kicked" in 1/05/06 field notes" (Shiller, 2009).

Specific programs that are rooted in a curriculum that first train staff on a particular method have proven to be more effective. The FRIENDS for Life program is one example of a specific program. In a study completed by Iizuka, et al., (2014), a low socioeconomic, geographic region of Australia was examined to determine students' abilities to increase social and emotional outcomes before a teacher intervention and after teacher intervention. The teacher intervention was a professional development training using the FRIENDS program that consisted of ten sessions that focused on decreasing anxiety in students and increasing social and emotional health in students. The teachers also received training through The Adult Resilience Program (ARP). Students then participated in the FRIENDS program. The study indicated that

the participation in a whole school FRIENDS program created a positive impact on students' emotional outcomes and anxiety. This study demonstrated a full school initiative, such as FRIENDS, created a positive effect on students' perception of their social/emotional health and anxiety.

These results may be because as adults our belief system is already defined by our prior experience. A study of classrooms found that at the high school level there is a significant difference with engagement when there is continued structured professional development. The same high school teachers received socioemotional professional development, and no significant difference was achieved. The insignificant difference may demonstrate that the teachers' ability to develop socially and emotionally is less malleable than their ability to develop in instruction (Gregory et al. 2014).

Conclusion

Students need to have a caring and supportive environment in their school to be able to perform at the highest level (Roorda, et al., 2017; Raufelder, et al., 2016; Mason, et al., 2017). The relationships that students have with teacher impact the environment significantly (Raufelder, et al., 2016). A caring relationship that has a greater sense of closeness than conflict will support students to be more engaged in classroom content which leads to higher academic success (e.g., Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Hughes, 2011; Roorda, et al., 2017). It also facilitates opportunities for students to build values and be engaged emotionally and behaviorally (Hosan & Hoglund, 2017; Raufelder, et al., 2016; Mason, et al., 2017). Furthermore, students at the secondary level seem to experience less caring and close relationships with their teachers. Making it even more important for teachers to be aware of their personality traits and interpersonal relationship building with students (Raufelder, et al., 2016). Students who feel that

they share a positive connection through a caring relationship with a teacher will find greater success than those who do not have a positive or caring relationship.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The purpose of the study is to determine teacher's perceptions of teacher-student relationships in regard to closeness and conflict within the middle school advisory model as compared with teacher perceptions on training and purpose of advisory. Teacher's will complete the survey using a perception of two students. One whom they perceive to have exemplary behavior, and one whom they perceive to have challenging behavior. These two surveys will then be used to determine levels of closeness and conflict. This will be compared to the teacher's perception of the purpose of the advisory and their level and type of training received to build relationships with students in advisory.

Design

This qualitative study, collecting descriptive data, will consist of a self-administered survey to determine the perception of levels of closeness, conflict in regard to teacher dispositions of specific students in a Middle School Advisement class. The dispositions will include a student that the teacher considers exemplary, and a student that the teacher feels is challenging. These results will be used to categorize teachers into sub-groups. Teachers will also include the following demographical information, age, gender, years of service in education, years of service at the current school, and education level. Teachers will then answer the following four open-ended questions.

1. What do you feel is the current purpose of advisory at the middle level?
2. What types of relationships are you able to build in the current advisory model?
3. What type of training did you receive to build positive/caring relationships with students in the advisory model, and how was it helpful?

4. What training do you feel you did not receive that would have been or would be helpful?

The survey will be conducted during scheduled staff development work time between September and October 2018. The survey being completed is Pianta's Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS)—Short Form. The STRS-SF is a 15 item self-report rating scale using a five-point Likert format to determine levels of closeness and conflict with a specific student. The five-point Likert is used to measure the level each statement "Definitely Applies" or "Definitely Does Not Apply" in a range. There are seven Conflict items (2, 8, and 10-14) and eight Closeness items (1, 3-7, 9, 15). The demographic information and training questions will be collected during the same event.

Research Questions

- Is the current advisory model working effectively to build caring and close relationships between teachers and students from a staff perspective?
- How prepared do staff build to build caring relationships?
- What are factors that influence their preparation?

Subjects

The study will consist of 48 teachers in a middle school model in a suburban district. Each teacher is currently teaching an 18-minute advisory course each day. The sample consists of all Caucasian males and females. The staff will each select two students from their current advisory classes in grade 6 through 8. Each teacher only has students from a single grade level in each class because advisory courses are structured by grade level. Students are assigned an advisory teacher when they enroll. The assignment of an advisory teacher is random and done using the scheduling software in Infinite Campus. Students ideally will remain with the advisor for their tenure at Russell Middle School. Advisor changes may occur due to changes in staffing or based

on individual student needs such as separation from a peer following a behavior incident. The only data related to students that will be collected is the perception of the teacher of whether he or she considers a student easy to work with and a student that is challenging. These students will not be identified in the survey, and no specific information or student data will be collected.

The participants were chosen due to my knowledge of the purpose and goals of the current advisory model in the building, and access to staff. The 48 teachers are currently working at the middle school in which I am in my second year as an assistant principal.

Data Collection

Permission from the appropriate research personnel at the school district will be obtained before any data being collected. Non-coded numbers will be used to collect data in order to maintain the anonymity of the participants. Participant data will include conflict and closeness results from two of Pianta's Student-Teacher Relationship Survey- Short Form (STRS-SF) surveys in regard to a student perceived to have exemplary behavior and a student perceived to have challenging behavior. The STRS-SF is an instrument created and altered by Pianta. (See Appendix A) Pianta's Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS)—Short Form has shown test-retest reliability. In a study completed throughout four weeks, 24 kindergarten teachers completed the survey twice in regard to 72 children. The test-retest reliability results were ($r =$ Closeness, .88; Conflict, .92; Total, .89; significance at $p < .05$) (Pianta, 2001). "The STRS has also demonstrated moderate concurrent validity with teacher-reported classroom behavior problems and student 32 competence as measured by the Teacher-Child Rating Scale (Hightower et al., 1986; Pianta, 2001). "The alpha coefficient for the short form of the STRS (composed of the Conflict and Closeness subscales) is .91 (Pianta, 1994). Preliminary analyses were conducted to provide information about the reliability of the scale for the sample of interest. Reliability

estimates, for the current sample, were calculated for the STRS Closeness scale ($\alpha = .88$) and Conflict scale ($\alpha = .87$), indicating relatively high internal consistency” (Buhl, 2012, p.46-47).

The Equal sample sizes for a student who is perceived to be exemplary, and a student who is perceived to be difficult will maintain the validity of the open-ended questions. The various concepts of conflict and closeness and advisory perceptions may yield results that are difficult to compare (Creswell, 2014).

Participant data will also include a single questionnaire with the five questions and possible answers that will be completed by staff after the STRS-SF is completed on both students. (See Appendix B) Staff will also answer four questions related to the purpose of advisory, level, and type of training they have received, and feel they still need. (Appendix C) The creation of the questionnaire and open-ended survey questions and re-creation of The STRS-SF will be completed by utilizing the Qualtrics system through the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The Qualtrics system is being used to digitize the data which will reduce the possibility of human error with data entry.

Demographic:

The demographic data that will be used to categorize sub-groups in this study are the scores of closeness and conflict as rated through Pianta’s Student-Teacher Relationship Scale-Short Form. The Closeness Score consists of 8 items scored on a Likert scale from 1-5 with a total possible score of 40. The Conflict Score consists of 7 items scored on a Likert scale from 1-5 with a total possible score of 35. Each teacher will have four scores that rely on their perception of a student they consider to have exemplary behavior and a student they consider to have challenging behavior.

Dependent Variable:

The dependent variables will consist of teachers' answers to following the open-ended questions. These will be analyzed using coding and categorization of responses.

1. What do you feel is the current purpose of advisory at the middle level?
2. What types of relationships are you able to build in the current advisory model?
3. What type of training did you receive to build positive/caring relationships with students in the advisory model, and how was it helpful?
4. What training do you feel you did not receive that would have been or would be helpful?

Data Analysis

Data will be analyzed using a concurrent triangulation design in which qualitative and demographic data will be gathered concurrently. The demographic data will be used to create the following sub-groups:

1. Exemplary: High Connection
2. Exemplary: High Conflict
3. Difficult: High Connection
4. Difficult: High Conflict

The data collected will allow me to draw conclusions about the current status of closeness and conflict of a student who has challenging behavior, and a student who has exemplary behavior in an advisory as perceived by a teacher as compared with their perceptions about the purpose of advisory and the training they received. The results will contribute to the expansion of the quantitative relationship data to the specific perceptions about advisory.

(https://cirt.gcu.edu/research/developmentresources/research_ready/mixed_methods/analyzing_data).

The qualitative data gathered through the open-ended questions will be analyzed through coding and categorizing of responses to open-ended questions based on grounded theory and open coding to interpret responses. Grounded theory using open-coding will create the opportunity to generate categorical comparisons through the analysis of the gathered responses (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin. 1990).

Computer Assisted Data Analysis

Computer-assisted data analysis will be used to analyze the open-ended questions. This will be completed using the MAXQDA program. The program allows for a careful analysis of both word and phrase frequency. Each of the responses will be loaded in the MAXQDA system to analyze both the frequency among subgroups as well individuals. Computer-assisted data analysis will ensure an accurate examination of the answers and categorization of words and phrases.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Presentation of Findings

Chapter 4 presents the analysis of teacher's answers to Pianta's Teacher-Relationship Short Form survey coupled with four questions concerning the current advisory used at the middle school. The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of the current advisory model in building caring and close teacher-student relationships, and the level of preparation staff felt they had or needed to be successful in building those relationships. For this study, the researcher's current place of employment was used to gather responses using a survey due to accessibility to staff. The results are presented for the entire sample size of the research. The four subcategories of teachers who fell in each range are presented. The categories included the range of high conflict with a student who has exemplary behavior, high conflict with a student who has challenging behavior, high closeness with a student who has exemplary behavior and high closeness with a student who has challenging behavior. These categories were determined using Pianta's Teacher-Relationship Short Form survey, and an explanation for the qualification range for each category presented in the sub-heading.

This study examined the current practices and training in regard to an advisory at the middle school level. The advisory program is one of the critical components to a middle school model, and for it to be successful, it needs to fulfill the purpose of creating a relationship between teachers and students that make students feel authentic care. The type of relationship formed as well as the teachers' preparedness to develop that relationship was examined based on the following research questions:

1. Is the current advisory model working effectively to build caring and close relationships between teachers and students from a staff perspective?
2. How prepared do staff feel to build caring relationships?
3. What are the factors that influence their preparation?

Whole Sample Analysis:

The first step in analyzing the full sample was to evaluate common themes among the open-ended questions. The analysis process was aided by uploading the responses into MAXQDA which is a text analysis software program. The responses consisted of 47 lines of texts with five variables, of which one was the random code identification number, and the remainder were questions asked. Each variable was given its code to sort data, collective response and the responses were then analyzed for collective responses. Both phrases and single words were considered when categorizing responses. If an individual answered with a single letter or did not complete the survey, the response was not included. There was one individual who merely put an X in for each response, so that survey is not included in the data.

Demographic Data:

The participants in the survey consisted of 48 teachers at the researcher's current school who teach grades six through eight. Of these teachers, 35 are female, and 13 are male. Teachers were given a range for age, years of service at the current building, years of service, and current level of education. (See Appendix B) The mean age of teachers was 41-45 while the mode was 36-40. The mean and mode of years in the building were seven to ten years, and the mean and mode of years in education were 16-20 years. The mean level of education for teachers was a Master's Degree and the mode a Master's Degree plus.

Categorical Determination

Each question garnered three to four codes that were used to categorize responses. Responses may have fallen in more than one category, but all completed responses were given a code and categorized. The coding was completed by initially looking at word frequency. With the questions being open-ended, the word frequency proved to have a high variance. The context surrounding the words also proved to be valuable in determining the respondent's purpose. Due to this high frequency, all of the responses were read, and common themes were discovered using coding in MAXQDA rather than just word frequency analysis. The answers were reviewed for commonalities, and the codes were created.

Table 1
Question/Variables and Codes

| Question | Code 1 | Code 2 | Code 3 | Code 4 |
|---|---------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| What do you feel is the current purpose of advisory at the middle level? | Curriculum delivery | Counseling | Relationship /Community | |
| What types of relationships are you able to build in the current advisory model? | General | Difficult/ Superficial | Positive/ Close | |
| What type of training did you receive to build positive/caring relationships with students in the advisory model, and how was it helpful? | Not sure | None | Experience | Professional Development |
| What training do you feel you did not receive that would have been or would be helpful? | Not Sure | None | Purpose | Professional Development |

Codes were examined for frequency. Answers were able to have multiple codes attached. Overwhelmingly the current purpose for advisory yielded responses that centered on the relationship and community building. Of the 46 usable responses, 40 respondents indicated this as one of the purposes, and the additional purposes were counseling and curriculum delivery. At

this particular, the counseling curriculum is delivered during advisory time, so that may factor in to the reason that respondents indicated that as the sole purpose.

Teachers then responded about the type of relationship they feel they can form with students who are in their advisory. While 40 teachers indicated that the purpose of advisory was to build relationships or community, only 28 indicated that they were able to form a positive or close relationship with students in the current advisory model. Eight staff members responded that they were able to develop the same general relationships that they build with all students, and 12 indicated that the relationships were difficult or superficial.

In concern to training teachers, 21 teachers responded that they had not received training specific to building positive/caring relationships. Thirteen indicated that they had received some professional development, and eight were not sure of any training they had received. Three teachers reported that experience was the training that they had received. Experience was not limited to experience as a teacher, but also included experience as a parent. In the answers provided, the second part of the question of how was it helpful was not answered.

Teachers were then asked about what future training would be helpful. The largest group of teachers, 20, again answered that no training would be helpful. Eleven teachers were not sure of the training that would be helpful, if any. Eleven teachers responded that building professional development of some kind would be beneficial. The suggestions for professional development included instructional strategies and just a general answer of some professional development. Four teachers indicated that training specific to the purpose of advisory would be helpful.

Table 2
Whole Sample Responses

| Question | Code 1 | Code 2 | Code 3 | Code 4 |
|---|---------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| What do you feel is the current purpose of advisory at the middle level? | Curriculum delivery | Counseling | Relationship /Community | |
| # and % of coded responses | 5 11% | 9 20% | 40 87% | |
| What types of relationships are you able to build in the current advisory model? | General | Difficult/ Superficial | Positive/ Close | |
| # and % of coded responses | 8 17% | 12 26% | 28 61% | |
| What type of training did you receive to build positive/caring relationships with students in the advisory model, and how was it helpful? | Not sure | None | Experience | Professional Development |
| # and % of coded responses | 8 17% | 21 46% | 3 7% | 13 28% |
| What training do you feel you did not receive that would have been or would be helpful? | Not Sure | None | Purpose | Professional Development |
| # and % of coded responses | 11 24% | 20 43% | 4 9% | 11 24% |

Closeness and Conflict Determination

Categorical groups for high closeness and high conflict were determined using Pianta's Teacher-Relationship Short Form survey. Staff completed the survey twice before answering the open-ended questions. Each survey was completed with a different student in mind. The first survey was completed while the staff considered a student in his or her advisory who had exemplary behavior and then a second time with a student in his or her advisory who had challenging behavior.

Scores were evaluated using Microsoft Excel. Pianta's survey contains eight questions that are used to determine a teacher's level of conflict and seven questions that are used to determine a teacher's level of closeness. These questions are not mutually exclusive, and teachers may be both high conflict and high closeness. The questions are answered on a Likert Scale from

"definitely does not apply" to "definitely applies" (see appendix). The questions are worded so that a score of 5 represents a high score for either closeness or conflict. The scale is never inverted meaning a one on a conflict indicator is a low score and a one on a closeness indicator is a low score.

The data was analyzed by determining each teacher's mean score for each survey that he or she completed. Each teacher had four mean scores based on closeness or conflict and exemplary or challenging behavior. Each mean score was used to find the overall mean for all staff and the standard deviation. Staff were determined to be in high closeness or conflict if they fell one standard deviation above the mean for that survey. Each category had a unique measure for the standard deviation. The score that qualified of teacher to fall in the high range for each category varied. Also, the number of teachers who fell within the high range for each category varied from six to nine teachers. That information is presented in each categorical subheading.

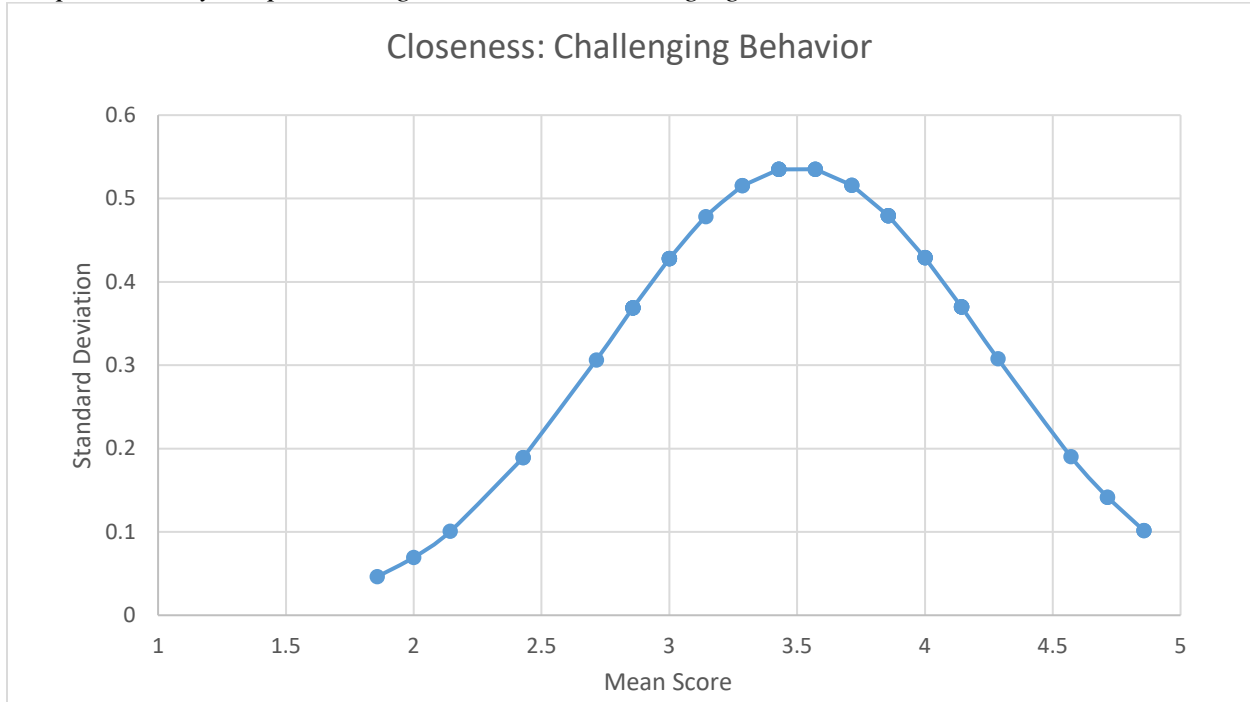
High Closeness: Challenging Behavior

The analysis of this survey yielded six teachers that fell one standard deviation above the mean. The mean score for all staff was 3.50, and the standard deviation was .74. The scores ranged from 1.86 to 4.86. One standard above the mean was 4.24. As demonstrated in Figure 1, teachers fell on a more traditional bell curve of responses which varies from that of the student with exemplary behavior. The score range does not include any scores of five and represents that teachers find it more challenging to develop a state of closeness with students whom they perceive to have challenging behavior.

In analyzing the open-ended survey responses, one teacher who fell one standard deviation above the mean did not complete any of the open-ended responses. This was determined through the respondent's unique coded identification number, and the fact that

respondents completed both the surveys and open-ended responses in a single session. By not completing the responses, the data that was usable consisted of five viable responses to examine. In reviewing these responses, 100% of the teachers in this category indicated that relationship and community was the purpose for the advisory model and that they were able to form positive or close relationships in the current advisory model. Answers varied slightly when looking at the type of training that teachers indicated they had received and the type of training that would be helpful in the future. Sixty percent of these responses indicated that no training had been received and 40% reported that some professional development had taken place. No teacher who fell in the high closeness with a student with challenging behavior category indicated that they were unsure or that experience had been the training. Teachers in the high closeness with a student with challenging behavior category answers varied even more with 40% stating that no training would be helpful and 20% each indicating they were not sure, training on purpose, or building professional development would be helpful. Twenty percent represents a single answer as the high closeness with a student with challenging behavior category had a smaller number of viable responses. The use of percentages makes the comparison among categories more clear.

Figure 1:
Graphed Survey Responses High Closeness: Challenging Behavior



Each data point represents a unique score, and may represent more than one respondent.

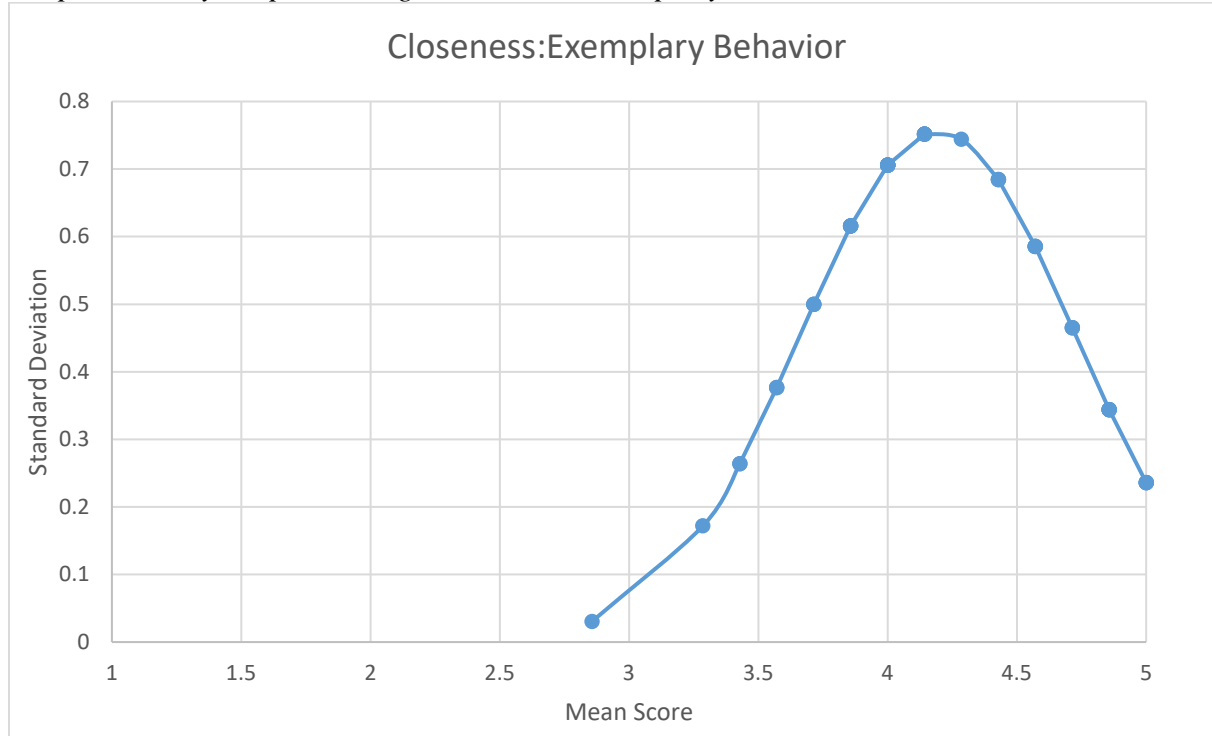
High Closeness: Exemplary Behavior

The analysis of this survey yielded eight teachers that fell one standard deviation above the mean. The mean score for all staff was 4.19, and the standard deviation was .53. The scores ranged from 2.86 to 5. One standard above the mean was 4.72. As demonstrated in Figure 2, teacher responses skewed toward the higher side of the scores, with multiple respondents with a mean score of 5. These results show that teachers believe they can develop a state of closeness more efficiently with a student whom they perceive to have exemplary behavior.

All the teachers who fell one standard deviation above the mean answered the open-ended questions, and all nine participants' responses were included. In reviewing responses, most teachers in the high closeness with a student with exemplary behavior category 89% stated the purpose of advisory was to build relationships and community. Responses also indicated that the purpose was curriculum delivery with 33% of respondents including that as part of their answer and counseling with 22% of respondents including that as part of their answer. In this category, some respondents answered the open-ended question, so that two or more codes were applied to their response. This indicates that even if the relationship or community is a purpose that they see additional purposes to the advisory model, and one respondent did not see a relationship or community as a purpose. Unlike teachers who demonstrated high closeness with students with challenging behavior, 22% of teachers in in the high closeness with a student with exemplary behavior category indicated that the relationships they were able to form in the advisory model were difficult or superficial. The remaining 78% indicated that the relationships were positive or close. Respondents in the category showed similar results in regard to professional development as those who fell within the category of high closeness with a student with challenging behavior. Seventy-eight percent indicated that no training was received and 22% indicated that some

professional development had been received. A similar response occurred in the type of training that would be helpful with 44% of respondents indicating that no training would be helpful while 44% indicated that some training would be helpful. The purpose of this training was divided. Twenty-two percent indicated that training on the purpose of advisory would be helpful, and 22% indicated that building professional development would be helpful. Eleven percent indicated that they were unsure of what type of training would be helpful.

Figure 2:
Graphed Survey Responses High Closeness: Exemplary Behavior



Each data point represents a unique score, and may represent more than one respondent.

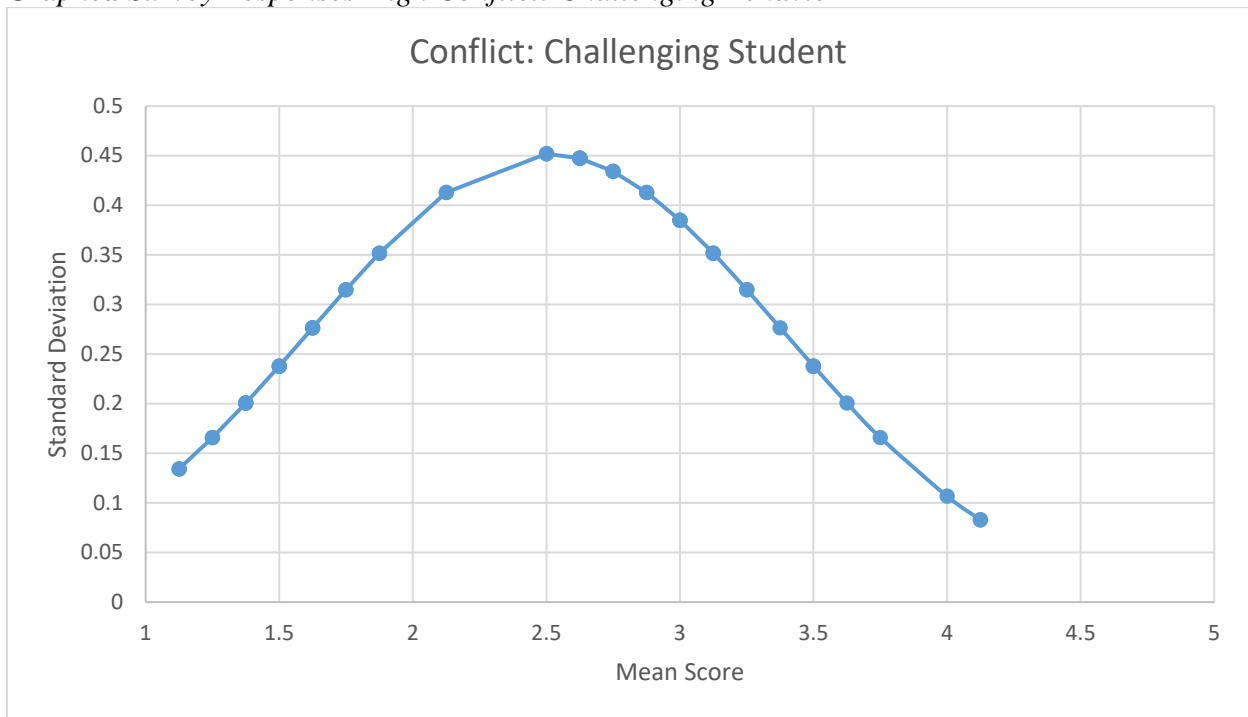
High Conflict: Challenging Behavior

The analysis of this survey yielded eight teachers that fell one standard deviation above the mean. The mean score for all staff was 2.15, and the standard deviation was .88. The scores ranged from 1.13 to 4.12. One standard above the mean was 3.38. Similar to the high closeness survey with students who have challenging behavior, this survey yielded a more traditional bell curve. The curve skewed a little further to the low scores but did not include any scores of a five or a one. A mean score of a one would be the result of the teacher indicating that all the statements in regard to conflict, "definitely does not apply." These results varied when looking at conflict scores of a student who was perceived to have exemplary behavior. These results demonstrate that teachers have higher levels of conflict with students that they perceive to have challenging behavior.

In analyzing the open-ended survey responses, one teacher who fell one standard deviation above the mean completed all of the open-ended responses with the letter X. This left seven viable responses to examine. Teachers in this category were able to designate a single purpose to advisory of either relationship and community or curriculum delivery. Seventy-one percent responded that the purpose was relationship and community, and 29% responded that it was curriculum delivery. The curriculum delivery respondents in this category may have more substantial meaning as they designated that as the sole purpose of the advisory model. Much like respondents in the category of high closeness with a student with exemplary behavior, 71% of teachers who were high in conflict with students with challenging behavior responded that they were able to form a close or positive relationship with students in the current advisory model while 29% answered the relationship was difficult or superficial. Analysis of the type of training received and the kind of training received, most teachers indicated that either none was received,

71% of respondents in this category, or that they were not sure if any was received, 14% of respondents in this category. Twenty-nine percent indicated that professional development had been received. Similar to the respondents in the high closeness category, 42% of teachers in the high conflict with challenging behavior category answered that no training would be helpful. Twenty-nine percent were not sure if there is a training that would be helpful, and an additional 29% responded that they believe building professional development would be helpful. One respondent, 14%, believed that training in regard to the purpose of advisory would be helpful.

Figure 3:
Graphed Survey Responses High Conflict: Challenging Behavior



Each data point represents a unique score, and may represent more than one respondent.

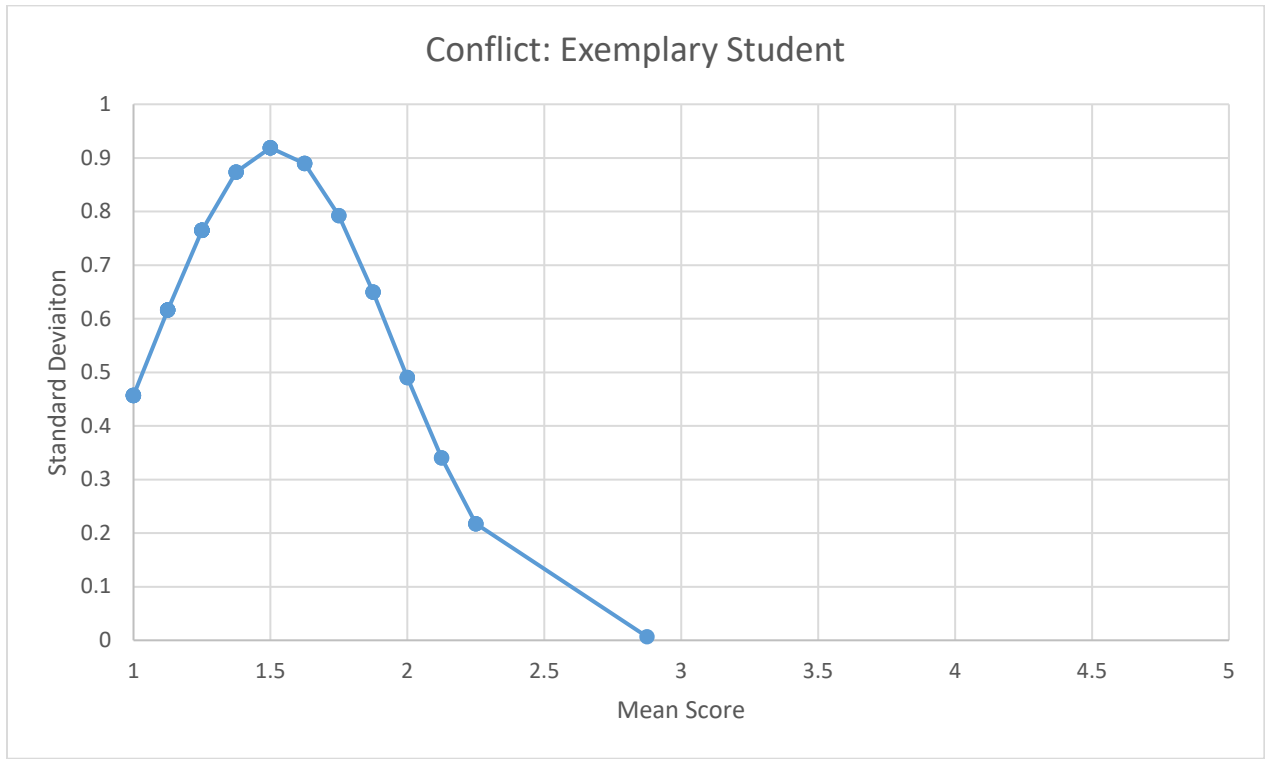
High Conflict: Exemplary Behavior

The analysis of this survey yielded that nine teachers fell one standard deviation above the mean. The mean score for all staff was 1.51, and the standard deviation was .43. The scores ranged from 1 to 2.86. One standard above the mean was 1.93. This curve had a greater skew than the surveys. It had the smallest range, and all staff had a mean score below a three indicating that the level of conflict with an exemplary student fell below the answer of neutral for all indicators. This graph demonstrates a low level of conflict for all staff with students that they perceive to be exemplary. Therefore, the high conflict with exemplary behavior is less indicative than the other categories as the relevant results did not include anyone with a score above a three.

When analyzing the results of the open-ended questions for this category of teachers, all the teachers indicated a clear understanding of purpose, and 100% answered that the purpose of advisory is to build relationships or community. The respondents in this category differed from all other categories with 44% of them stating that the relationships they were able to create were the same general relationships that they can build with all students, and 56% indicated that they were able to form positive or close relationships. One respondent, 11%, reported that while they are capable of developing the same general relationships with students, the relationships may be difficult to establish. Unlike the other categories when asking about the type of training received, the most frequent response was not that none was received. The most frequent response with 44% of respondents in this category was that they were not sure if training was received, followed by 33% responding that professional development was received. Twenty-two percent indicated that none was received, and one respondent, 11% indicated experience as part of the training that he or she received. The participant that indicated experience was also one that indicated professional development was received and experience included being both a teacher

and a parent. This category was similar to all the other categories with the highest frequency response at 66% being that no training would be helpful. These responses are the highest percentage of all categories. 33% were not sure. Twenty-two percent responded that purpose training would be helpful and 22% that building professional development would be beneficial. These results indicate that respondents answered in multiple ways to this question.

Figure 4:
Graphed Survey Responses High Conflict: Exemplary Behavior



Each data point represents a unique score, and may represent more than one respondent.

Table 3

Coded Responses by Category

| Question | Code 1 | Code 2 | Code 3 | Code 4 |
|---|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>What do you feel is the current purpose of advisory at the middle level?</i> | <i>Curriculum delivery</i> | <i>Counseling</i> | <i>Relationship /Community</i> | |
| # and % of coded responses | 0 | 0 | 5 | |
| High Closeness: Challenging Behavior | 0% | 0% | 100% | |
| # and % of coded responses | 3 | 2 | 8 | |
| High Closeness: Exemplary Behavior | 33% | 22% | 89% | |
| # and % of coded responses | 2 | 0 | 5 | |
| High Conflict: Challenging Behavior | 29% | 0% | 71% | |
| # and % of coded responses | 0 | 0 | 9 | |
| High Conflict: Exemplary Behavior | 0% | 0% | 100% | |
| <i>What types of relationships are you able to build in the current advisory model?</i> | <i>General</i> | <i>Difficult/ Superficial</i> | <i>Positive/ Close</i> | |
| # and % of coded responses | 0 | 0 | 5 | |
| High Closeness: Challenging Behavior | 0% | 0% | 100% | |
| # and % of coded responses | 0 | 2 | 7 | |
| High Closeness: Exemplary Behavior | 0% | 22% | 78% | |
| # and % of coded responses | 0 | 2 | 5 | |
| High Conflict: Challenging Behavior | 0% | 29% | 71% | |
| # and % of coded responses | 4 | 1 | 5 | |
| High Conflict: Exemplary Behavior | 44% | 11% | 56% | |
| <i>What type of training did you receive to build positive/caring relationships with students in the advisory model, and how was it helpful?</i> | <i>Not sure</i> | <i>None</i> | <i>Experience</i> | <i>Professional Development</i> |
| # and % of coded responses | 0 | 3 | 0 | 2 |
| High Closeness: Challenging Behavior | 0% | 60% | 0% | 40% |
| # and % of coded responses | 0 | 7 | 0 | 2 |
| High Closeness: Exemplary Behavior | 0% | 78% | 0% | 22% |
| # and % of coded responses | 1 | 5 | 0 | 2 |
| High Conflict: Challenging Behavior | 14% | 71% | 0% | 29% |

| | | | | |
|---|-----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| # and % of coded responses High Conflict: Exemplary Behavior | 4 44% | 2 22% | 1 11% | 3 33% |
| <i>What training do you feel you did not receive that would have been or would be helpful?</i> | <i>Not Sure</i> | <i>None</i> | <i>Purpose</i> | <i>Professional Development</i> |
| # and % of coded responses High Closeness: Challenging Behavior | 1 20% | 2 40% | 1 20% | 1 20% |
| # and % of coded responses High Closeness: Exemplary Behavior | 2 22% | 0 0% | 1 11% | 4 44% |
| # and % of coded responses High Conflict: Challenging Behavior | 2 29% | 3 42% | 1 14% | 2 29% |
| # and % of coded responses High Conflict: Exemplary Behavior | 3 33% | 6 66% | 2 22% | 2 22% |

*Respondents were not restricted to a single category or coded responses. Percentages may equal greater than 100%

Respondents in multiple categories.

Five respondents fell into multiple categories. Respondent 2, Respondent 11, and Respondent 19 were at least one standard deviation above the mean for high closeness with both students. These three teachers that were high closeness for both students with exemplary behavior and challenging behavior may serve as exemplars in relationship building. They represent staff that demonstrate ability to build a close relationships with all students. Respondent 2 fell in the high conflict category for a student with exemplary behavior, and that may exhibit a concern that he or she is not an exemplar. The high conflict with a student with exemplary behavior category was skewed when looking at total results, however, and may not be as indicative as the qualification on both surveys in an analysis of the questions that indicated closeness. Respondent 17 was both high closeness and high conflict with a student with challenging behaviors. These results may indicate volatility in relationships with students who have challenging behaviors for this particular teacher. The final respondent who was in multiple categories was respondent 32 whose survey data indicated high closeness with a student with exemplary behavior and high conflict with a student with challenging behavior.

Conclusion

When examining the data from both the surveys and the responses to the open-ended questions, some trends became apparent. Teachers clearly understand the purpose for advisory. They also do not have any memorable training, and frequently do not want any training.

The clear understanding that the purpose of advisory is to build relationships or community was evident in both the whole staff sample as well as each of the categories. The disparity that then becomes apparent is purpose and fulfillment. The purpose is understood, but fulfillment is inconsistent. Teachers who can form close relationships with challenging behavior was the only category with a 100% understanding of the purpose, and 100% felt they had

positive or close relationships with students. Teachers who are high in conflict with students with exemplary behavior have a 100% understanding, but the lowest fulfillment of that purpose with only 56% answering that they were able to form positive or close relationships with students.

Teachers also indicated most frequently that they did not receive training or are unsure if any training was received. The answer of unsure is indicative that the training was not memorable and possibly not effective. When these responses are combined, 63% of the whole staff does not have any memorable training, and of those remaining, 7% stated that the training that he or she received was partly or wholly from experience. When comparing this with categorical respondents, this is mimicked with all four categories falling in the 60% or above range. Although teachers most frequently responded that they do not have any memorable training, they also do not want training or are unsure if or what type of training would be helpful. 67% of the whole staff answered in a way that indicated they were unsure or that no training would be helpful. These results are mimicked in all four categories with the lowest percentage of respondents at 60%. Of the staff sample that answered that training would be helpful, there was only one specific code that was able to determine that delineated a specific type of training. This code was training in regards to the purpose of advisory with 9% of the total number of respondents indicating that as a need. The purpose of advisory being the only specific indicated type of training needed is contradictory to the results in regards to purpose. The purpose of advisory being to develop relationships and community was the clearest understanding and most frequent of any of the responses. This finding was even more prevalent in the responses in each of the categories with 14-22% believing that training on purpose would be helpful. Also, there was a range 20-29% in both the whole staff and all four categories that indicated that professional development would be helpful.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Conclusion

This research study was devised to examine the current effectiveness of the advisory model at the middle school level as well teacher's disposition towards previous training and additional training. This study was completed including a lens of connection and conflict to differentiate staff responses. The differentiation created categorical analysis that represented staff using their own perceptions. The results represented both teachers that perceive themselves to be able to form connected relationships and those that have a higher level of conflict. The data gathered by the study demonstrated a clear understanding of purpose but not a clear fulfillment of purpose as indicated by the open-ended survey questions. It indicated that while staff may have an understanding of purpose that they do not contribute it to a specific training nor do they know what type of training they would need moving forward, and some feel that training is unnecessary.

Purpose and Effectiveness

A fundamental understanding that advisory's purpose is to develop a relationship is the foundation of developing an effective advisory model. One concern in examining the research is the relationship in some cases may not be a focus as curriculum and counseling may take the focus rather than the authentic and purposeful relationship. The advisory model should create a specific time that is focused on the particular task of fostering a caring relationship without the additional burden of content area curriculum (Ziegler & Mulhall, 1994; Wilson, 1998; Hopkins, 1999; Cole, 1994). While the curriculum is not necessarily tied to an academic content area, it does bring forth the question of whether the curriculum being used is supporting the fostering of the relationship which staff indicated is the purpose of the advisory model. With the advisory

model being central to middle school and a time to develop relationships, the staff indicated that there were other purposes for the 18-minute block of time. These indications are concerning as teachers and schools may focus so heavily on the academics and curriculum that they do not focus on an essential facet of developing interpersonal skills and behaviors through positive emotions tied to a teacher and student relationship (Raufelder, et al., 2016). Advisory should offer every student a positive, caring adult in the building as its purpose. The activities should all be supporting that purpose. If the teachers are not always clear that the relationship is the objective, then the relationship may be lost.

In reviewing the type of relationship that staff can form with students, it becomes apparent that while staff in some instances may feel that the current purpose is to build relationships and community, that the current practices are not supporting that relationship. Only 28 of the 46 respondents thought that they were able to form positive and close relationships with students in the current advisory model. The remaining staff felt that the relationships were the same general relationships that they have with all students, or that the relationships were difficult to form or superficial. These results thus mimicked the current research that while the purpose of the advisory is clearly defined, there are currently no identifiable best practices that are supported by empirical evidence (Shulkind & Foot, 2009; Hopkins, 1999; Balkus, 2006). Most teachers know what they should be using the time for, but not necessarily how to execute that task. This disparity in an understanding of purpose and execution of purpose demonstrates a need for support.

When examining teacher responses for those that are a high connection or high conflict, it became apparent that staff is more able to form relationships with students they perceive to have exemplary behavior. Our students who are challenging are often the ones who need the

relationship and may be seeking the relationship through challenging behavior. The most obvious example of this is the skew in the curve for students who are perceived to have exemplary behavior and the teacher conflict results. All the teachers answered that they are neutral or that the indicator "not really" or "definitely does not apply." These results demonstrate that with students who are perceived to have exemplary behavior that teachers do not perceive a level of conflict neutral. While not as prevalent, the data also skews to "definitely applies" or "applies somewhat" when reviewing teachers answers to questions that were used to indicate closeness. Supportive teacher-student relationships are a critical factor in creating and maintaining a sense of school belonging that encourages positive academic and behavioral outcomes (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Gest, Welsh, & Domitrovich, 2005; Wentzel, 1997; Mason, et al., 2017). Overall, the results indicate that students who exhibit behavior teachers perceive as challenging are less likely to have a close less conflicted relationships with that teacher as perceived by the teacher. If the purpose of advisory is to develop a close relationship with each student in that teacher's advisory, ideally the scores would be similar. These results indicate a disparity between the purpose of advisory and the effectiveness of the current model.

Preparation and Training

Teachers may feel prepared to build relationships although they are indicating that they are not able to do so in the current advisory model. The highest frequency response from staff was no training was received, and no training was needed. The concern then becomes how teachers will improve the relationships in the advisory model. Through reviewing whole sample responses to the survey, the data indicated teachers could more easily form relationships with students as indicated through those that they had high closeness indicators with rather than those with whom they had high conflict indicators. The conflict indicator scores were lower for both a

student with challenging behavior and a student with exemplary behavior. The most prevalent example being students with exemplary behavior. All the teachers except for one scored a three or higher on closeness as a mean score, and all teachers scored below a three for conflict with an exemplary student. These findings demonstrate that staff perceive their relationships with students with exemplary behavior to be high in closeness and low in conflict.

Further research would need to be completed with staff to define exemplary behavior. Even when reviewing students with challenging behavior, the majority of staff scored themselves a three or higher in connection and lower than three in conflict. The scores from these indicators suggest that many staff are forming the relationships intended. This data is in a direct juxtaposition to the Hope Indicator collected that states that students feel they have a mentor in the building. This indicator for students has been the lowest indicator in the building the last two years, and the score from 2017-2018 to 2018-2019. These data points may demonstrate a disparity between student and staff perception.

Teachers indication that the purpose may not always be fulfilled coupled with a possible disparity in student perceptions would indicate a need for some training or professional development. Teacher's survey responses did not support a need for professional as most teachers indicated that they do not believe any training would be helpful, or they do not know if training would be helpful. The very nature of building relationships is personal, and many teachers feel that it is a trait that they inherently possess. Some teachers even indicated on the survey that the training they have received is through experience or being a parent. They may not believe that skills needed are able to be developed through a type of training.

One theme that never appeared in regard to training was an indication of any formal education. No teachers indicated that they had received training through his or her education, nor

did they suggest that formal education would be a possible way for them to be better prepared to fulfill the purpose. The fact that formal education is not mentioned may be the reason that previous research indicated that teachers do not necessarily feel it is their job to create personal relationships with students. Much of the formal education teachers at the secondary level receive is centered on curriculum, pedagogy, and behavior management. Also, it is important to note that most teachers either received a certification in 7-12 or K-6, so there is not a focus on the middle school specifically.

Teachers may have also indicated that they do not have nor need training because it is the current practices, not the training. Previous research has suggested that when advisory models feel mandated that they are not as successful. Teachers are not able to develop authentic relationships because they are not given the time and space to do so. For teachers to build an authentic connection with a student, teachers need to be able to have the opportunity to have more in-depth conversations and be willing to share personal items. On the survey, some staff indicated that they had received training in building relationships, but nothing specific to the advisory model. Staff also reported that some of it is just best practice in education. One teacher responded, "I'm not sure training would build authentic relationships." Teachers also indicated that they did not feel training was needed because there are not consistent practices already in place. If practices are consistent, then training may be more effective.

Future Implications and Research

This study demonstrates that more research needs to be completed and there is a need for developing best practices. One specific need is targeting students with challenging behaviors through the advisory model. Ideally, teachers would be able to form the same types of relationships with students regardless of student behavior. One of the established purposes of

advisory is that every student has an advocate in the building. If teachers have more connected relationships with students with exemplary behavior, it will create a disparity in advocacy.

The research completed demonstrated that teachers have a clear understanding of the purpose of advisory model at the middle school level, but there are not currently any specific trainings or preparations to facilitate the advisory model to fulfill that purpose. One field of research that was not investigated was student perception of the current advisory model. Student perceptions would be valuable in determining if the model was creating authentic relationships. Further research needs to be completed on the specific activities that students believe assist in facilitating relationships. The results in regard to student beliefs may drive particular programming that could be developed and create an advisory model that teachers could then receive training to engage in with students.

Additional research could also be completed to compare student achievement with teachers who have a high connection and high conflict. These results could begin to substantiate whether the type of relationship developed in the advisory model was creating an environment for students to be more successful academically.

References

~V. *Advisory lessons*

Beth Balkus. (2006). An advocate for every student at millard central middle school. *Middle School Journal*, 38(2), 4-12. doi:10.1080/00940771.2006.11461568

Birch, S. H., & Ladd, G. W. (1997). The teacher-child relationship and children's early school adjustment. *Journal of School Psychology*, 35(1), 61-79. doi:10.1016/S0022-4405(96)00029-5

Bird, W., Martin, M., Tummons, J., & Ball, A. (2013). Engaging students in constructive youth-adult relationships: A case study of urban school-based agriculture students and positive adult mentors. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 54(2), 29-43. doi:10.5032/jae.2013.02029

Bretherton, I. (1992). The origins of attachment theory: John bowlby and mary ainsworth. *Developmental Psychology*, 28(5), 759-775. doi:10.1037//0012-1649.28.5.759

Bridget K. Hamre, Robert C. Pianta, Margaret Burchinal, Samuel Field, Jennifer LoCasale-Crouch, Jason T. Downer, . . . Catherine Scott-Little. (2012). A course on effective teacher-child interactions: Effects on teacher beliefs, knowledge, and observed practice. *American Educational Research Journal*, 49(1), 88-123. doi:10.3102/0002831211434596

Buhl, S. J. (2012). *Teachers' ratings of relationships with students: Links to student and teacher characteristics* Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text: The Humanities and Social Sciences Collection. Retrieved from <http://www.riss.kr/pdu/ddodLink.do?id=T13049712>

Caring school communities

Claire G. Cole. (1994). Teachers' attitudes before beginning a teacher advisory program. *Middle School Journal*, 25(5), 3-7. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23023609>

Create a home base online. (2013, Aug 1.). *Administrative Professional Today*

Creswell research book

Differential effects of support providers on adolescents' mental health

Federici, R. A., & Skaalvik, E. M. (2013). Students' perceptions of emotional and instrumental teacher support: Relations with motivational and emotional responses. *International Education Studies*, 7(1) doi:10.5539/ies.v7n1p21

Furman University of Denver. *Duane buhrmester*

Gest, S. D., Welsh, J. A., & Domitrovich, C. E. (2005). Behavioral predictors of changes in social relatedness and liking school in elementary school. *Journal of School Psychology*, 43(4), 281-301. doi:10.1016/j.jsp.2005.06.002

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.*

Gregory, A., Allen, J. P., Mikami, A. Y., Hafen, C. A., & Pianta, R. C. (2014). Effects of a professional development program on behavioral engagement of students in middle and high school. *Psychology in the Schools*, 51(2), 143-163. doi:10.1002/pits.21741

Hargreaves, A. (2000). Mixed emotions: Teachers' perceptions of their interactions with students. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 16(8), 811-826. doi:10.1016/S0742-051X(00)00028-7

- Hoglund, W. L. G., Klinge, K. E., & Hosan, N. E. (2015). Classroom risks and resources: Teacher burnout, classroom quality and children's adjustment in high needs elementary schools. *Journal of School Psychology, 53*(5), 337-357. doi:10.1016/j.jsp.2015.06.002
- Hosan, N. E., & Hoglund, W. (2017). Do teacher-child relationship and friendship quality matter for children's school engagement and academic skills? *School Psychology Review, 46*(2), 201. doi:10.17105/SPR-2017-0043.V46-2
- Hopkins, G. (1999, December 07). Advice About Middle School Advisories. Retrieved April 18, 2018, from https://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/curr127.shtml
- Hughes, J. N. (2012). Teacher-student relationships and school adjustment: Progress and remaining challenges. *Attachment & Human Development, 14*(3), 319-327. doi:10.1080/14616734.2012.672288
- Hughes, J. N., Cavell, T. A., & Willson, V. (2001). Further support for the developmental significance of the quality of the Teacher–Student relationship. *Journal of School Psychology, 39*(4), 289-301. doi:10.1016/S0022-4405(01)00074-7
- Idit Katz, & Avi Assor. (2007). When choice motivates and when it does not. *Educational Psychology Review, 19*(4), 429-442. doi:10.1007/s10648-006-9027-y
- Instruments. *Documentation of MoBa*
- Jamil, F. M., Sabol, T. J., Hamre, B. K., & Pianta, R. C. (2015). Assessing teachers' skills in detecting and identifying effective interactions in the classroom. *The Elementary School Journal, 115*(3), 407-432. doi:10.1086/680353

- John P. Galassi, Suzanne A. Gullede, & Nancy D. Cox. (1997). Planning and maintaining sound advisory programs. *Middle School Journal*, 28(5), 35-41. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23023346>
- Jong, R., Mainhard, T., Tartwijk, J., Veldman, I., Verloop, N., & Wubbels, T. (2014). How pre-service teachers' personality traits, self-efficacy, and discipline strategies contribute to the teacher-student relationship. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 84(2), 294–310. <https://doi-org.leo.lib.unomaha.edu/10.1111/bjep.12025>
- Lynch, M., & Cicchetti, D. (1997). Children's relationships with adults and peers: An examination of elementary and junior high school students. *Journal of School Psychology*, 35(1), 81-99. doi:10.1016/S0022-4405(96)00031-3
- Mason, B. A., Hajovsky, D. B., McCune, L. A., & Turek, J. J. (2017). Conflict, closeness, and academic skills: A longitudinal examination of the teacher-student relationship. *School Psychology Review*, 46(2), 177. doi:10.17105/SPR-2017-0020.V46-2
- Maurice J. Elias, & Leslie R. Branden-Muller. (1994). Social and life skills development during the middle school years: An emerging perspective. *Middle School Journal*, 25(3), 3-7. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23024699>
- McDermott, P. A., Mordell, M., & Stoltzfus, J. C. (2001). The organization of student performance in american schools. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 93(1), 65-76. doi:10.1037/0022-0663.93.1.65
- Mikami, A. Y., Gregory, A., Allen, J. P., Pianta, R. C., & Lun, J. (2011). Effects of a teacher professional development intervention on peer relationships in secondary

classrooms. *School Psychology Review*, 40(3), 367. Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/901146330>

Motivation and education the self determination perspective

Niemiec, C. P., & Ryan, R. M. (2009). Autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the classroom. *Theory and Research in Education*, 7(2), 133-144.

doi:10.1177/1477878509104318

On transmitting values

Parker, J. G., & Asher, S. R. (1993). Friendship and friendship quality in middle childhood. *Developmental Psychology*, 29(4), 611-621. doi:10.1037/0012-1649.29.4.611

Patrício, J. N., Barata, M. C., Calheiros, M. M., & Graça, J. (2015). A portuguese version of the student-teacher relationship scale - short form. *The Spanish Journal of Psychology*, 18, E30.

doi:10.1017/sjp.2015.29

Pianta, R. C., & Stuhlman, M. W. (2004). Teacher-child relationships and children's success in the first years of school. *School Psychology Review*, 33(3), 444. Retrieved

from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/219653812>

Raufelder, D., Scherber, S., & Wood, M. A. (2016). The interplay between adolescents' perceptions of teacher-student relationships and their academic self-regulation: Does liking a specific teacher matter? *Psychology in the Schools*, 53(7), 736-750.

doi:10.1002/pits.21937

Roorda, D. L., Koomen, H. M. Y., Spilt, J. L., & Oort, F. J. (2011). The influence of affective teacher-student relationships on students' school engagement and achievement: A meta-

- analytic approach. *Review of Educational Research*, 81, 493-529. Retrieved from <http://www.narcis.nl/publication/RecordID/oai:research.vu.nl:publications%2Ffe1a8863-7d8c-47b0-8098-b7205d2df183>
- Ryan, R. M., & Grolnick, W. S. (1986). Origins and pawns in the classroom. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 50(3), 550-558. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.50.3.550
- Sabol, T. J., & Pianta, R. C. (2012). Recent trends in research on teacher-child relationships. *Attachment & Human Development*, 14(3), 213-231. doi:10.1080/14616734.2012.672262
- Shiller, J. T. (2009). "These are our children!" an examination of relationship-building practices in urban high schools. *The Urban Review*, 41(5), 461-485. doi:10.1007/s11256-008-0110-1
- Shulkind, S. B., & Foote, J. (2009). Creating a culture of connectedness through middle school advisory programs. *Middle School Journal*, 41(1), 20-27. doi:10.1080/00940771.2009.11461700
- Stewart, T., & Suldo, S. (2011). Relationships between social support sources and early adolescents' mental health: The moderating effect of student achievement level. *Psychology in the Schools*, 48(10), 1016-1033. doi:10.1002/pits.20607
- Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, Calif: Sage Publications.
- STRS professional manual*

Suzanne Ziegler, & Linda Mulhall. (1994). Establishing and evaluating a successful advisory program in a middle school. *Middle School Journal*, 25(4), 42-46. Retrieved

from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23023229>

Tsouloupas, C. N., Carson, R. L., & MacGregor, S. K. (2014). The development of high school teachers' efficacy in handling student misbehavior (TEHSM). *The Journal of Educational Research*, 107(3), 230-240. doi:10.1080/00220671.2013.788992

Urduan, T., & Schoenfelder, E. (2006). Classroom effects on student motivation: Goal structures, social relationships, and competence beliefs. *Journal of School Psychology*, 44(5), 331-349. doi:10.1016/j.jsp.2006.04.003

Verschueren, K. (2015). Middle childhood Teacher-Child relationships: Insights from an attachment perspective and remaining challenges. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 2015(148), 77-91. doi:10.1002/cad.20097

Wells, L. M. *Associations between student-teacher relationships and kindergarten students' outcomes* Available from Masters Abstracts International. Retrieved from <http://pqdt.calis.edu.cn/detail.aspx?id=gIC19O%2fRqkM%3d>

Wentzel, K. R. (1997). Student motivation in middle school. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 89(3), 411-419. doi:10.1037/0022-0663.89.3.411

Wilson, C. (1998, January). The real meaning of middle school advisory programs. *Contemporary Education*. p. 100.

Appendix A

STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP SCALE – SHORT FORM**Robert C. Pianta**

Please reflect on the degree to which each of the following statements currently applies to your relationship with this child. Using the scale below, circle the appropriate number for each item.

| Definitely does not apply 1 | Not really 2 | Neutral, not sure 3 | Applies somewhat 4 | Definitely applies 5 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
|--------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I share an affectionate, warm relationship with this child. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. This child and I always seem to be struggling with each other. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. If upset, this child will seek comfort from me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. This child is uncomfortable with physical affection or touch from me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. This child values his/her relationship with me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. When I praise this child, he/she beams with pride. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. This child spontaneously shares information about himself/herself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. This child easily becomes angry with me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. It is easy to be in tune with what this child is feeling. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. This child remains angry or is resistant after being disciplined. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Dealing with this child drains my energy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. When this child is in a bad mood, I know we're in for a long and difficult day. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. This child's feelings toward me can be unpredictable or can change suddenly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. This child is sneaky or manipulative with me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. This child openly shares his/her feelings and experiences with me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Appendix B: Questionnaire

1. What is your age? (20-25; 26-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41-45, 46-50, 51-55, 56-60, 61-65, 66+, prefer not answer)
2. How do you identify yourself in regard to gender? (Male, female, prefer not answer)
3. How many years of service do you have in education? (1-3, 4-6, 7-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-25, 26-30, 31+)
4. How many years of service at your current school? (1-3, 4-6, 7-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-25, 26-30, 31+)
5. What is your current education level? (Bachelors, Masters, Masters+, Doctorate, Doctorate+)