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The Effectivness Of Advisory Pograms With Teachers And Learning Disabled African-American Students In Urban High Schools

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**THE EFFECTIVNESS OF ADVISORY POGRAMS WITH TEACHERS AND LEARNING
DISABLED AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS IN URBAN HIGH SCHOOLS**

by

CAMELIA RAMONA GLIGOR

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

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for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

2017

MAJOR: SPECIAL EDUCATION

Approved By:

Advisor

Date

DEDICATION

To Maria and Dan

The best daughter and husband in the world

I couldn't do this journey without your love and support at every step on the way. You are my source of happiness, power, and motivation to go on.

I love you!

It is also the moment to disclose my best-kept secret: Maria, you were the role model that I tried to become; you were the one who set the high expectations for me. Your confidence in me is the engine that drives my academic life. I loved being a student again, at your side in your college adventure.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

At the release of America's Promise Alliance Report "Building a Grad Nation" the secretary Arne Duncan (2010) said:

"In 2002, the nation had 2,000 high schools that were dropout factories, about 15percent of all high schools. These "dropout factories," where 60 percent or less of ninth graders graduated four years later, produced half of all the nation's dropouts, and almost three-fourths of our African-American and Latino boys and girls who dropped out."

The majority of these high schools are concentrated in high-poverty urban areas. (America's Promise Alliance Report, 2013; The Education Week, 2007)

Many researchers and political leaders consider that America is suffering from a High School "dropout epidemic" (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Gui,G et al., 2009) that harms not just the students, but the urban communities as well. The majority of high school dropouts are more prone to end up in jail or be involved in illicit activities. It is also expensive for a community to support the cost associated with their subsidized health care, social assistance such as health-care. There is a sense of urgency at the national level to address the "dropout epidemic" and to remediate urban education (Duncan, A. 2010; Gui, G. et al., 2009).

Foundational reforms around the country were implemented to transform High Poverty schools to High Performance schools (HPHP model). (Mass Insight Education and Research Institute, 2007) The small school movement started in the 1980s and early 1990s, most of them being located in New York, California and Illinois. These small high schools had a few common characteristics besides the small size: college-going culture, multiple systems of support for students at risk, and increased attention on students' social/emotional development. According

to Mass Insight Education and Research Institute (2007), a successful turnaround reform includes “the 3 C’s”: changing conditions; building internal and external capacity; creating clusters for support. However, as Michelle Fine (2012) stated in the introduction of the “Critical Small Schools” book: “Lifting only the numerical essence of small school out from deep community moorings, the move to scale ripped the idea of small school from the roots of participation, mistaking size as the point rather than just a vehicle.” (Handzopoulos & Tyner-Mullings, 2012, p.X). The New Century Schools Initiative (NCSI), funded by Gates Foundation, opened hundreds of small schools in New York. Between 2002 and 2010, NCSI opened approximately 300 schools just in New York’s poor communities (Fine in Handzopoulos & Tyner-Mullings, 2012). However, over time, just a few of them became successful high schools.

Research shows that many founders of small schools from all over the country failed to recognize the common elements of successful high-schools in urban, high poverty communities such as: teacher-student relationships, inquiry instruction, and multiple support systems for students. Instead, they were lured by the idea that the size is the most critical factor. (Freedom, 2004; Hantzopoulos & Tyner-Mullings, 2012; Ancess, 2008; Shiller, 2012)

Several researchers concluded that a key strategy for creating “clusters of support” is implementing an “advisory” program. (Carnegie Council for Adolescent Development, 1989; Poliner, A. & Miller Lieber, C. 2004; Hantzopoulos, M. & Tyner-Mullings, A. R., 2012). The advisory program in HPHP successful high schools enhances not just the academic development but is, in fact, the main mechanism for providing social and emotional support to students.

Defining an advisory program, Turning Points Report (1989) states that:

“Every student should be well known by at least one adult. Students should be able to rely on that adult to help learn from their experiences, comprehend physical changes and changing relations with family and peers, act on their behalf to marshal every school and

community resource needed for the student to succeed, and help to fashion a promising vision for the future.” (p. 40).

Based on the local needs of each school and the implementation possibilities, sometimes Advisory is a program that can be facilitated by any adult in the building (including non-instructional staff), or is a scheduled credit class facilitated only by teachers. Therefore, the structure of this advisory and its implementation as a program or as a scheduled class can differ from school to school.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the effects of an advisory program/class on Specific Learning Disabled (SLD) students in urban high schools. Specifically, this research focused on the social and emotional development of students with SLD through an Advisory program, as seen by teachers and students. Therefore, the following research questions guided the study:

1. How do secondary school teachers perceive inclusive advisory in urban schools?
2. How do African-American SLD students value their experiences in advisory?
3. What are the secondary teachers’ critical views on social-emotional development of African American SLD students in advisory?

This research investigated the benefits and challenges of SLD students in a non-academic class such as advisory. This is an important study because: (a) more research is needed that focuses on advisory programs, as the advisory class is a new concept; (b) very few studies specifically addressed the LD African-American high-school students from high poverty, urban areas. This population represents the majority of SLD students and the majority of dropout teenagers. In addition, this population faces cultural and socio-economic challenges in a school system that is created by the mainstream population; (c) there is a need for additional research

that focuses on school related, non-academic classroom solutions for SLD students. Teachers' perspectives will offer answers to "How to do it".

In addition, this study investigated the challenges of teaching an inclusive advisory class or program. In small schools, advisory stands as the main support for students which helps in lowering the dropout rate and improving a college going culture in urban schools (Shiller, 2012; Hantzopoulos & Tyner-Mullings, 2012; ISA, 2008; Poliner, & Miller Lieber, 2004). It also addressed all the collateral needs of SLD students such as improving social skills and self-concept, as summed up in the literature review (Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2001; Lerner & Kline, 2006; Wehman, 2006; Bryan, 1997; Wagner et al, 2003). However, the majority of teachers preparation programs don't have specific courses for urban education, or courses designed to focus on building relationships and support/remediate students' development in the social and emotional domain (Carter et al, 2008; Putbrese cited in Welbacher & Lanier, 2012, p.18). Traditionally, these are considered the parents' job. However, the growing problem of urban education in U.S. forces us to reconsider the segmented intervention that we offer to our students. Currently, educators have to recognize that we cannot separate the social and emotional development from the academic performance of our students. It is not new idea for special education teachers to help SLD students in the affective/social domain, but it is a new job facet for regular education, high school teachers. While mainstreaming the SLD students in regular classes is on the agenda of the majority of the public schools in the country and is supported by research and legislation (Lerner & Kline, 2006; Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2001; OSEP's Annual Reports to Congress, 2008 & 2002), it does not make sense that advisory is a segregated class in small schools. From this point of view, it is crucial to understand whether or not it is beneficial to introduce a class/program designed to focus on the nonacademic goals stipulated in

Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) and whether or not this should be a seclusive class for students with IEP's at the high school level. The next chapter reviews the research on different attributes of SLD students' self-concepts.

Setting of the Study

Wikipedia has posted the following information regarding this urban setting:

“Following suburbanization, industrial restructuring, and loss of jobs (...), by the 2010 census, the city had less than 40 percent of that number, with just over 700,000 residents. (...) High unemployment was compounded by middle-class flight to the suburbs, and some residents leaving the state to find work. The city was left with a higher proportion of poor in its population, reduced tax base, depressed property values, abandoned buildings, abandoned neighborhoods, high crime rates, and a pronounced demographic imbalance.”(excerpt from Wikipedia, Detroit. (2016, June 25). In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 21:19, June 26, 2016, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Detroit&oldid=726989241>)

The 2010 census also determined that 82.7% of the population in this Mid-East Metropolitan Area (M.E.M.A.) is Black or African-American, 10.6% Whites, 6.8% Hispanic or Latino, and 1.1% Asian. These percentages only suggest that the M.E.M.A. school population has around 90% students at risk (Black and Hispanic). In addition, Wikipedia posts the following analysis of families:

“Of the 269,445 households, 34.4% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 21.5% were married couples living together, 31.4% had a female householder with no husband present, 39.5% were non-families, 34.0% were made up of individuals, and 3.9% had someone living alone who is 65 years of age or older. Average household size was 2.59, and average family size was 3.36.” (Detroit. (2016, June 25). In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 21:19, June 26, 2016, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Detroit&oldid=726989241>)

In this Mid-East Metropolitan Area (M.E.M.A.) a few small high schools opened in the 1990s as charter schools, majority of them were located in downtown M.E.M.A. , in safe and high-income areas. Since all these high schools were schools of choice, it deepened the tracking students' process in M.E.M.A. public schools. Some of these high schools don't have a special

education programs at all, and some of them have only resource program services for a reduced number of students with mild disabilities. Consequently, there is a striking difference in the number of special education students served by public and charter schools.

In 2013 a new school district was created in M.E.M.A. in order to turn around the state's lower achieving schools. Several schools from M.E.M.A. public schools were transferred into the newly created school district. The public high schools that were transferred into the new district as well as the small/self-governing schools from the traditional M.E.M.A. schools recognized the need to work on social and emotional development of all challenged students as children learn "best within a context that involves supportive relationships, challenging and innovative learning environments, and settings that promote good citizenship and work habits". (America's Promise Alliance Report, 2013)

In conclusion, the settings of this study were two high schools in M.E.M.A. : public high schools and charter schools. M.E.M.A. has a public educational system formed by two types of schools: public schools and charter schools. At the high school level, majority of charter high schools are located in/ or close to the center of M.E.M.A. while the public schools are mostly neighborhood schools.

The Charter School is situated in the midtown area of the city, in an affluent area that holds the medical and cultural center as well as the largest university in the city. This area also has the largest number of schools per square mile. The Public School is a neighborhood school situated in one of the extremities of the city, a neighborhood with abandoned houses and post-fire wrecks intercalated with newly developed streets.

Study Participants

A. Current Students or Recent Graduates. African American students or recent graduates with SLD from any M.E.M.A. high school (charter or public) that have an advisory program represented the target population of this study. The volunteer students sampling was generated through the distribution of flyers in research-approved high schools. Another method of gathering volunteers was through recommendations from special education teachers in the approved schools. The interview and journal prompts were administered to a total of 4 African-American students with SLD. The selection criteria of student participants from the volunteer sample were:

- a. African American students or recent graduates with Specific Learning Disabilities
- b. Students have/had at least 2 consecutive years of experience in advisory
- c. Students volunteer to participate in this study
- d. Teacher's recommendation for reliability, and a minimum of 4th grade writing skills

Once the purposeful sample had been established, a random selection of participants to determine the final pull through a lottery type process was not necessary. Gender and age were not considered for the purpose of this study. The researcher compelled a final students' sample that included a recent graduate, a student from Charter, and two students from Public school.

B. Teachers. A total of four teachers participated in this study: two regular education teachers and two special education teachers from both types of high schools. This was a purposeful sample; therefore, teachers were selected to represent special/regular education teachers with at least two years of experience in facilitating an Advisory class in M.E.M.A. Small high schools have a reduced number of staff, with a majority of teachers in transition (young teachers leave after one year of teaching in these schools). This study was based on

volunteer participation. The main strategy of recruiting teachers was through personal connections and professional e-mail network. An advertising email was emailed to the principal investigator's contact list of professional network. After first two respondents were chosen on a first come/first serve basis, the other two were selected to complete the gaps of the final sample. For example, if the first 2 teachers were both from public schools, the investigator had to look next for charter school respondents, and so on till the final sample had representatives from charter and public school, special education as well as regular education teachers.

Table 1 shows the initial organization of study participants and indicates the relevant criteria of their selection. "T" stands for teacher and "Name" for student. These terms were replaced with pseudonyms when the final sampling was completed.

Table 1. Study Participants

Participant Pseudonyms	Role	Grade	No. of Years' Experience in Advisory	Type of advisory	High school
T1	Regular teacher	9-12	2 years	Inclusive	Charter
T2	Regular teacher	9-12	2 years	Inclusive Seclusive	Charter
T3	Special ed. teacher	9-12	2 years	Seclusive	Public
T4	Special ed. teacher	9-12	2 years	Seclusive/ Inclusive	Public
Name 1	Student/graduate	NA	Minim 2	Inclusive/ seclusive	Charter
Name 2	Student	NA	Minim 2	Inclusive	Charter
Name 3	Student/graduate	NA	Minim 2	Seclusiv/ Inclusive	Public
Name 4	Student	NA	Minim 2	Seclusive	Public

Overview of the Methodology

This was a qualitative research that emancipated from an interpretivist theoretical perspective and followed a constructivist epistemology. The research design was based on Grounded Theory methodology, as outlined by Strauss & Corbin (1990), Charmaz (chapter in Hesser-Biber & Leavy, 2004), Crotty (1998), Ljungberg, Yendoll-Hoppey, Smith, & Hayes (2009), Pidgeon and Hendwood (2004), and Allan (2003). The purpose of the research was to

describe “individual’s perspectives, experiences and meaning making processes “ of students and teachers involved in the advisory seminar, and to describe individual beliefs (Ljungberg, Yendoll-Hoppey, Smith, & Hayes, 2009, p.689). Grounded Theory was applied to (1) semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, (2) 4/5 journal entries on written prompts, and (3) survey of students participants in the study. The text data was analyzed through coding, discovering themes, and discussion of findings. NVivo software was to be used for qualitative data analysis. The field notes from direct observations of advisory programs in both schools were used for a better understanding of the natural context, and as a proof of validity since the role of the researcher in this type of study is to describe the practice as a detached participant. Validity and reliability were addressed through triangulation and member check methods, as described in chapter 3.

Definitions of Terms

Adolescence

Adolescence is the developmental period from childhood to early adulthood, or between 10-13 years of age until 18-22 years of age. The transition time is divided into two distinct sub-periods: early adolescence or puberty and late adolescence. This period of development involves biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional changes that intertwine continuously in an integrated process.

Advisory

Advisory is “A structure in which an adult and a small group of students meet regularly for academic guidance, to coordinate between home and school, and to connect to as peer group” (Poliner& Miller Lieber, 2004 p.11).

“Critical small schools emphasize the importance of the relationships shared by the individuals within the school. The teachers and administrators of these schools strive to

create a community that students often refer to us as "family" and breaking down the walls between teachers and students. Much of this happens through the use of an advisory system. Each advisor is responsible to and for their advisee and can act as an early warning system for any problems the student may face." (Hantzopoulos & Tyner-Mullings, 2012 p. XXXiii)

It is important that this "small group" meets regularly. However, some schools have a successful advisory program that meets once a month, in other schools advisory occurs once per week, while many schools prefer to introduce advisory as a credit class that is part of the master schedule. If only certified teachers can facilitate advisory as a credit class, any adult in the building would coordinate advisory as a school related program. Therefore, some schools have an advisory program and in other schools it is an advisory class. The number of students assigned to an advisor also differs between the two form of advisory: from 2-3 students in the advisory program to 15-20 students in the advisory class.

Inclusive environment

There are different technical terminologies that that are used to indicate an inclusive environment such as: inclusive setting, inclusive placement, inclusive environment, inclusion. These terms are used when students with disabilities are placed in general education classes with students without disabilities.

Learned helplessness

It is a style of learning that appears as a consequence of repeated academic failure of students who can't manage their own learning. This is typical for children with learning disabilities in higher grades.

Resource program

Resource Room is a special education program for a student with a disability who is registered in either a special class or regular education while in need of specialized

supplementary instruction in an individual or small group setting for part of the day (retrieved from American Academy of Special Education -ppt. – www.aasep.org)

Seclusive environment

Seclusion is the act of placing or keeping someone away from other people; the state of being away from other people (Free Merriam-Webster Dictionary). In the educational context, seclusive environment is a class / program that targets a certain category of students such as special education vs. regular education students.

Small schools

The term “small schools” refer to high schools with a maximum of 800 students.

Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)

SLD, as defined in the federal law IDEA-2004 (Public Law 108-446), means:

“ a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. Such term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Such term does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; of mental retardation; of emotional disturbance; or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.”

Self-concept

Self-concept is an evaluation of a specific domain. There are a multitude of domains in which the adolescents evaluate themselves, such as: determination, motivation, athletics, academics, body image, etc.

Socio-emotional development

This term describes the changes in an individual's personality, emotions, and relationships with others that occur throughout the life span. However, the peak of social emotional development is considered adolescence. "Socio-emotional processes shape cognitive processes; cognitive processes advance or restrict socio-emotional processes" (Santrock, 2007 p.16). The term social-emotional development in this study does not refer and is not similar to the term emotional intelligence. This study does not take in account the emotional intelligence.

Target population

In this study, the target population is represented by the at risk or dropout students from an urban high school neighborhood: urban African American students with SLD.

Conclusion

The high-school dropout phenomenon has become a main issue in American Urban Education. Students with specific learning disabilities represent the largest sub-category of students who dropout from high school. Similarly, by race, African American and Hispanic minorities have the highest percentage of dropouts in the last decades. As a solution, many small schools were opened in urban high schools in order to improve secondary education. Social and emotional support system, habits of mind, and habits of work are part of the problem; therefore, these schools were able to open specific programs that require a small ratio students/teacher to address the issue. Details on students with SLD social and emotional issues are analyzed in Chapter 2.

Advisory is the most popular program that focuses on remediation of the social and emotional development of high school students. Yet, in many schools advisory is the only seclusive class, students with SLD being taught in a different class than regular education

students. In addition, the advisory program is a new concept developed and implemented in the last decade in the largest American metropolitan areas. Hence, there is a need for more research on advisory in general as proved in the next chapter. Narrowing the research path, more specific study is required on developmental prints of the advisory program on SLD, high school students in high poverty, urban areas.

Research on this topic is important for practitioners and educational specialists who work in creating sustainable and comprehensive educational programs in urban, inclusive high schools. Teachers and students represent the human component of these programs. Therefore, their perspective on advisory helps in customizing the program to a specific school population, in a determined geographic area. The next chapter presents current and classic theories and researches done on the adolescence stage of development, on social and emotional development during teen years, and on the advisory program.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

According to Boote and Beile (2005) “a sophisticated literature review is the foundation and inspiration for substantial, useful research”. They also argue that “a sophisticated review of literature is even more important in education research, with its messy, complex problems, than in most other fields and discipline”. The literature review of this study directed the research process and tried to accomplish the six objectives recommended by Boote and Bailey (2005): to set the context of the study, to state the scope of the investigation, to integrate the study in a broader scholarly and historically context, to summarize what has been done in the field and what needs to be done, to synthesize research from a new perspective, and to critically examine the research methods used. The first subchapter describes the adolescence developmental period from a psychological and biological point of view, from classical, yet actual theories to the most advanced, current theories in psychology. The second subchapter presents the specifics of psychological development in adolescents with SLD. The third subchapter is a critical review of the existing literature on advisory program. The forth subchapter examines the literature criticism of teachers’ perspective of instructing a non-traditional class. The last subchapter concludes this section

1. Adolescence

Characteristics. Adolescence is the stage of life that is filled with turmoil and mood swings due to biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional developmental processes. As human development is a continuous process, adolescence is influenced by all experiences and feelings encountered in childhood, and will determine the adulthood path. Historically, adolescence is a

controversy period, and many psychologists do not consider it as a period of development. (Epstein, 2007)

Structure. The first part of adolescence, puberty, is characterized by bodily changes and hormonal imbalances while the second part, late adolescence, is characterized by the improvement and expansion of more complex psychological processes such as identity formation, self-esteem, and relationships. The hormonal changes influence the emotional development and are correlated with an increase in negative emotions such as depression and anxiety. In addition, the intensity of their emotional response contrasts with the event that triggers them in a way that seems to be out of proportion for an adult. Furthermore, hormonal changes determine fast and unmotivated changes of mood, known as moodiness. During this time, the physical aspect predominates their social thinking. (Snowman, J. & Biehler, R., 2006) Santrock (2007) summarizes researches done on adolescents' individual images of their body. Girls are dissatisfied with their body while boys become happier with their physical appearance as they move through puberty. The brain also continues to develop under hormonal changes. MRI images show that adolescents process the emotional stimuli in the amygdala, while the adults process the emotional stimuli in the frontal lobe. That explain why teenagers' responses are not always in rational, reasoned, ways.

Identity Formation; Self-s. The most important process that occurs in late adolescence is considered to be the identity formation. Based on Erickson's theory of psychosocial development (1968), adolescents have to explore and combine several roles and statuses in order to determine who they really are, and where they want to go in life. The new roles of a major importance at this age are the vocational and romantic roles. If the adolescent successfully goes through the exploration process he/she reaches the identity status with a "new sense of self" (Marcia, J.,

1993). Teenagers who do not solve this “crisis” go through “Identity Confusion”. Adolescents who experience identity confusion might isolate themselves from peers and family or they can lose their identity and follow “the crowd”. (Santrock, J.W., 2007) The period between childhood and early adulthood was labeled by Erikson (as cited in Marcia, J., 1993) as a “psychosocial moratorium” in which the parental style and involvement has a crucial role.

James Marcia (1993) deepened the study of the fifth stage of Erickson’s developmental scale, Identity vs. Identity Confusion, and concluded that there are four statuses of identity formation: Identity Diffusion, Identity Foreclosure, Identity Moratorium, and Identity Achievement. In Marcia’s theory, there are 2 criteria that differentiate the four statuses: crisis and commitment. Similar to Erickson, the crisis is seen more as the “exploration of alternatives” roles (Marcia, J., 1993) such as student, teen, son/daughter, friend, worker, etc. During this period, teenagers question and prioritize the value of their plans for early adulthood and evaluate their plans from childhood. Commitment represents a personal investment in someone’s decision. Individuals that are in the Identity achievement went through a process of exploring several career options, parental roles, and romantic roles establishing his/her priorities. There is a clear long-term goal and plans to achieve it. However, being in this stage is not a guarantee of achieving the final goal, nor is it an unchangeable process during the lifespan. A study done by Wallace-Brosious, Serafica, and Osipow (as cited in Snowman, J. & Biehler, R., 2006) concludes that high-school students in identity achievement status score higher on career planning and career certainty than those in Identity Moratorium or Identity Diffusion.

Marcia (1993) sees Identity diffusion more as a form of apathy. Individuals in this status do not sense the conflict between different roles, or they put the issue aside.

Identity Foreclosure is the status in which individuals make a personal commitment towards a career path avoiding the exploration of different roles, or resolving the conflict between different roles, such as vocational and romantic roles. Usually these individuals are very dependent on their parents and make a commitment towards a career chosen by parents or other authoritarians. They tend to have difficulties in solving problems and need step-by-step guidance and approval. The classic example of a role conflict used by Marcia (1993) is the conflict between career and parenting role. This conflict is highly influenced by culture, gender, and parents.

Identity Moratorium is the status of intense exploration of different roles. Individuals in this stage did not make a commitment but are currently trying to solve the conflict between different roles and are investigating different roles.

According to Marcia et. all (1993) the major variables that influence the whole process of identity formation when adolescence begins are:

- a) The extent of identification with the parents prior and during adolescence
- b) The parenting style
- c) The availability of model figures perceived as successful
- d) Social expectations about identity choices arising within the family, the school, and the peer group
- e) The extent to which the person is exposed to a variety of identity alternatives
- f) The extent to which the preadolescent personality provides an appropriate foundation for coping with identity concerns. (p. 46)

Family has a major role in identity formation. In his book, *Ego Identity*, Marcia summarized many studies that researched the family influence on identity formation during high-

school years. Individuals in the foreclosure status reported closed and loving family relationship with expectations that in the future they will follow and adopt the family standards. Individuals in the diffusion status perceived their family as neglecting and distant. Those in the moratorium status were balancing the likes and dislikes of their family. Finally, individuals in the achievement status belonged to families that encouraged their originality and individuality. Marcia also cited several studies that focused on the importance of the father's role on identity formation. All these studies concluded that the father figure has an important part on identity formation, for both, girls and boys.

Adolescents explore who they really are and develop a self-understanding that determines their self-esteem and self-concept. This is a tumultuous process that assumes contradictions between the real and ideal-self, as well as within self. Therefore, there is a fluctuating self during the exploration period. Self-esteem is an evaluation of the self. In contrast with general opinion, research demonstrates that self-esteem is only moderately correlated with academic performance. Only a few domains or self-concepts such as self-determination are more linked with school success. Nevertheless, self-esteem is highly correlated with social behavior and successful relationships with peers. (Snowman, J. & Biehler, R., 2006) This is a very important aspect since adolescents spend more time interacting with peers than with parents. Social cognition and emotional skills are key factors in peer relationships. Social cognition skills are the way one processes the social knowledge and interacts in a social context. Emotional skills are combinations of the ability to self-regulate emotions and the ability to interpret others' emotions through a multitude of channels. Yet, adolescents experience emotional swings in the same way they experience mood swings. Consequently, the peer relations are more complicated and difficult in adolescence than in childhood.

Developmental Theories. Sigmund Freud (1917) considered that human personality has a triarchic structure that developed in 3 periods. The basic one that occurs in early childhood is the *id* that consists of instincts and is totally unconscious. The second structure that develops in childhood, as children have to conform to rules, is the *ego*. The third structure, the *superego*, develops in youth years and deals with morality, Freud considered that all adolescents' conflicts are buried in unconsciousness by the defense mechanisms of the brain, but they are reflected in their behavior. His developmental theory is constructed in five stages. Whereas the first four stages are limited to a few years, the last stage, *genital stage*, starts at puberty and comprises the rest of life. In this stage, people focus their sexual pleasure on someone else. (Snowman, J. & Biehler, R., 2006; Santrock, J.W. 2007) While this theory still presents values in the psychotherapy domain, it has few, if any, practical considerations in the educational field. Freud doesn't differentiate between adolescents and adults, and he sees both stages as being dominated by sexual pleasure. It is interesting to take into account that the majority of his studies were done in a qualitative manner, on a reduced number of individual case studies, and then generalized to the larger population. Yet, the generalization of qualitative studies is a contradictory issue in educational research. (Yin, 2003; Barbour, 2007).

One of the most important developmental theories is Erickson's theory. His scale expands into eight stages, covering the whole lifespan. Each stage is described as a psychological "crisis" around an issue.

All the psychoanalytical theories indicate that there is an unconscious part of the mind that also influences our thinking and our behavior. In addition, they point out the importance that family and relationship has during developmental changes that occur in adolescence. The

relevance of psychoanalytical theories for this study is that they made clear that there are variables out of teachers' control that influence a student learning and behavior in school.

Cognitive theories. Piaget's theory (1954) is focused on cognitive development. It is based on four basic concepts: schema, assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration. In Piaget's theory, schema is similar to a mini structure of a mental concept. During the assimilation process, new information is added to an existed schema, and through accommodation the new information becomes workable in the framework of that schema. The cognitive development evolves between states of equilibrium and disequilibrium. The differences between stages are not necessarily quantitative but qualitative. It is an advanced way of thinking. For example, a child of seven years old (Preoperational stage) will not continue to develop to the next stage (concrete operational) by knowing more words, but rather by being able to make logical connections and inferences between concrete events and experiences. Piaget considered that human cognitive development happens in four stages: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational. While the first three stages occur between birth and eleven years of age, the fourth one was initially considered between eleven and fifteen years of age. Piaget revised the last stage into a time frame that starts at age eleven without a certain end point. In fact the timing of the stages is one of the strongest points of criticism against Piaget's theory (Snowman, J & Biehlen, R., 2006).

The formal operational stage occurs during high-school years. In this stage, individuals are able to think behind the concrete thinking. This is the period of developing: abstract thinking, logical inferences through verbalization - in absence of objects, and metacognition. Piaget also pointed out the way in which adolescents are thinking about ideal and idealism by transporting themselves in a fantastic future that combines realistic and unrealistic elements. However, at this

stage, teenagers are thinking more logically. They are able to create strategies and develop “hypothetical –deductive reasoning” (Piaget- as cited in Santrock, 2007). The formal operational stage can also be subdivided into two distinct sub-periods: early formal operational thought (during puberty), when the assimilation processes are dominant, and the late formal operational thought, when the accommodations processes are dominant. This aspect has an important practice application in planning the curriculum and instruction in middle school and high school. (Snowman, J & Biehlen, R., 2006 ;)

Piaget was also intrigued by moral development in children. Piaget calls the second stage of moral development the “autonomous morality” or “moral relativism” (as cited in Santrock, 2007). In this stage, individuals realize that people make laws and they can be changed to reflect the majority’s opinion. Teenagers have the capacity to balance the antecedents and intentions of someone with consequences of his/her actions. The motive of an action has an impact on teenagers’ moral judgment, while young children can see just the action – consequence relation in an “immanent justice” manner (Piaget – as cited in Snowman, J & Biehlen, R., 2006). Kohlberg developed the moral development theory that is based on the same staccato model of stages, age related. According to his scale, the adolescence period is placed on a conventional level and most adolescents are in stage three. At this level, teenagers accept the standards imposed by school, family, and society. In stage three, their understanding is limited to mutual interpersonal expectations and relationships. That means that the “good child” concept is considered to be whatever the parents and school consider a “good child”. In stage four, this understanding expands to the society level, and teenagers accept the social order, law, and justice system as it is in their particular society (Santrock, 2007). Kohlberg studied the moral development by analyzing individuals’ reasoning to extreme dilemma stories.

While Piaget was mainly focused on the cognitive development of normal children, close collaborator and co- worker, Barbel Inhelder, focused on studying characteristics of cognitive development in special education. Inhelder discovered that students with mental disabilities develop through the same stages but at a much slower pace that leads to a “false equilibrium”. Inhelder called this process “genetic viscosity” (Tryphon, A. & Voneche, J., 2001 p 31).

Lev Vygotsky introduced the social cultural factor into the cognitive development theory. Vygotsky recognized that the cognitive development cannot happen in vacuum, but in a social context. Children use “psychological tools” that are culturally transmitted through generations (Vygotsky – as cited in Snowman, J & Biehlen, R., 2006) Psychological tools can be considered writing, gestures, numbers, mathematical algorithms, etc. They are devices that aid communication. In Vygotsky’s model, the social interaction triggers the cognitive development and learning is considered a social process. He also introduced the term “Zone of Proximal Development” to define the discrepancy between what an individual can achieve without help and what the same individual can achieve through mediation from a more intellectual person (Santrock, J.W., 2007). The mediator can be any person that is more mature or advanced in the respective field, including peers. Vygotsky’s theory is important in highlighting the importance of the social/cultural factor in learning, at any age. Rogoff considers that Vygotsky’s theory should not be applied just to the academic learning but to understanding children’s development beyond the classroom as well. Rogoff did comparative studies on children development in Mexico and in Guatemala (Maya culture). She called “*Learning through Intent Community Participation*” the transmission of psychological tools from family and immediate community through “learning by observing and pitching” (Rogoff, B. retrieved from <http://psychology.ucsc.edu/news-events/profiles/rogoff.html>)

Rogoff studies, seen from a different perspective, demonstrate that the mediator, in transmitting social tools from one generation to another, can be any significant adult from the community, and not necessarily the immediate family. That implies that schools and educators can help urban students not just in academics, but also in developing social devices that trigger cognitive development and academic learning. Figure 1 is a diagram that illustrates the concept of intent community participation.

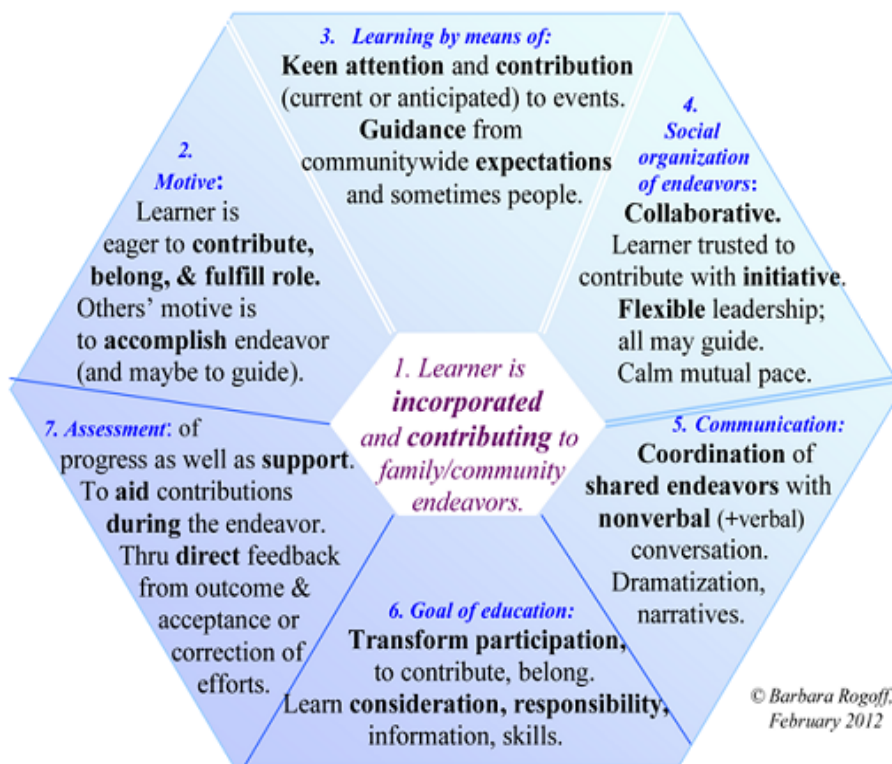


Figure 1. Learning through Intent Community Participation. Rogoff's illustration of the concept of Intent Community Participation. Source: retrieved from <http://psychology.ucsc.edu/news-events/profiles/rogoff.html>)

The Information Processing model of learning is a relatively new theory that approaches the psychological processes of thinking in a high tech manner. Similar to a computer (figure 2),

the information (input) is encoded in a sensory register “store”(SR) . SR is also the first informational filter. From SR, the information is processed into a short-term memory storage (STM) where a decision is made: either to give an output (response) or to send the information to long term memory (LTM). The stimuli enter the sensory register where the information is chunked and encoded in mental representations. The SR store will discard the information that can't be encoded in clear representation. In addition, SR filters the information under the executive center control. The flux of information doesn't flow continuously, but in a staccato pattern. In addition, the capacity of SR is limited to about seven bits of information.

The information that presents interest is then transferred to the second store: STM. STM is the second informational filter. Information can either be discarded in a response, or transmitted to the third store: LTM. The LTM is an active store where the information is classified, categorized, and reorganized continuously in different schemata. Each store has different capacity and processes the information at a different pace as shown in figure 2.

Behavioral learning theory. Behavioral learning theory considers learning as a linear process cause –effect type as illustrated in figure 3. In this theory, the environment represents the cause and the response is the effect that the stimuli have on the brain. The response also has a positive/negative property. The property of the response determines the type of stimulus. If the response has a positive connotation, the stimulus is desirable. If the response has a negative connotation, the stimulus is classified as aversive. The voluntary change in a response based on the positive or negative connotation at a repetitive stimulus is called Operant Conditioning (Snowman & Biehler, 2006)

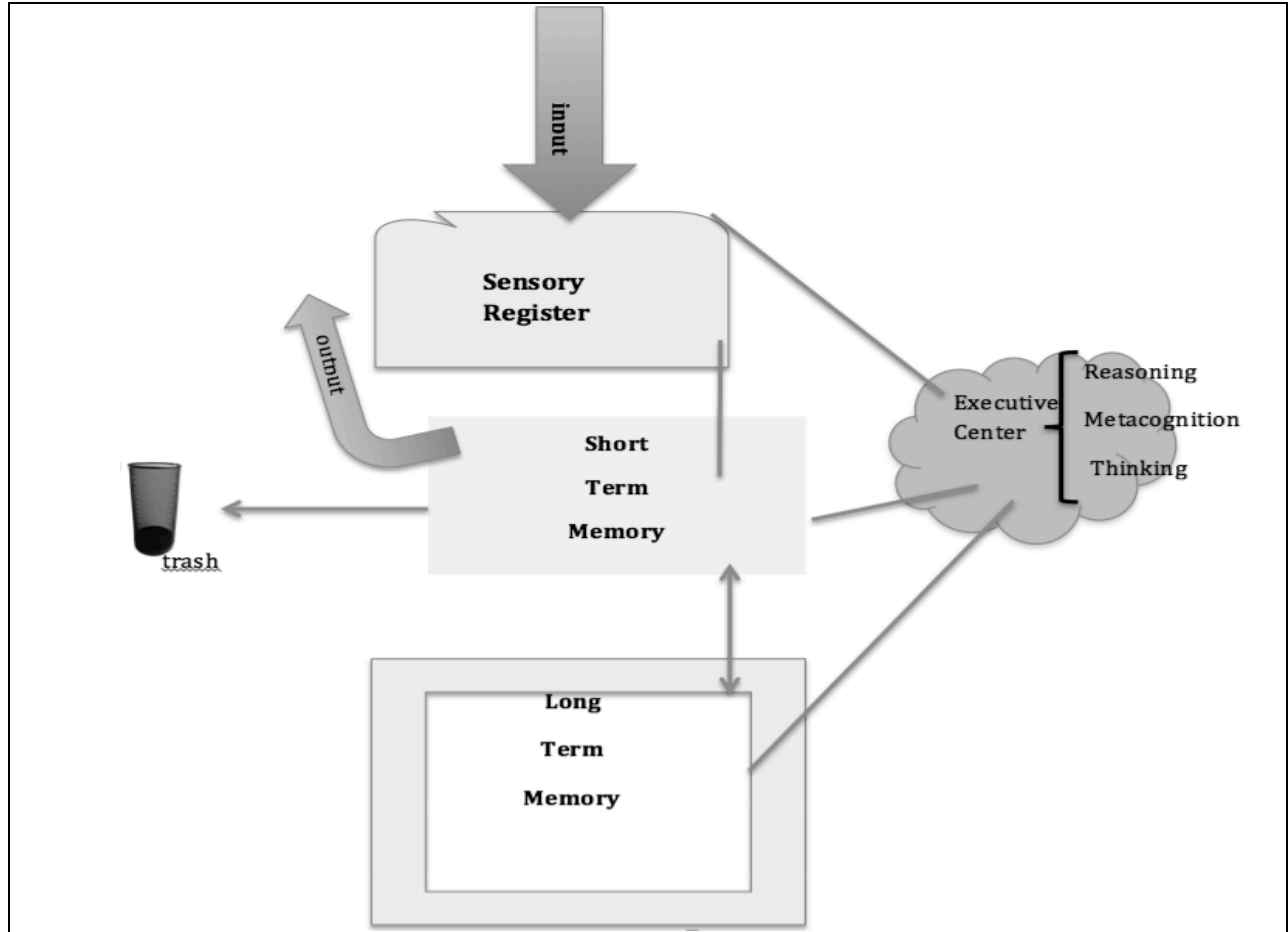


Figure 2. Information Processing Model.

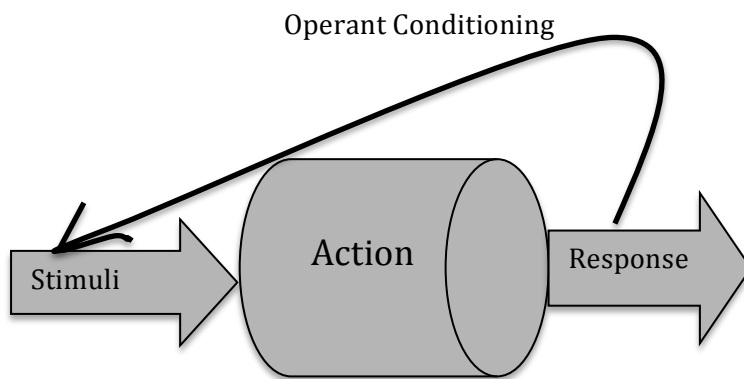


Figure 3 Behavior Model- illustrates how the operant conditioning operates

Skinner, the developer of behaviorism theory in psychology, constructed a special box that isolates the subject from the environment and permits the experimenter to control the stimulus/stimuli. This box is known as Skinner box and is represented in Fig. 4. When the mouse touched the pedal, a food pellet was released into the tray. After a few accidental touches, the mouse learned that the pedal was linked to the release of food; therefore, the mouse has increased the target behavior. In this case the stimulus is considered a "reinforce". When the food stopped being released, the mouse reduced or stopped the target behavior. This stimulus is a punishment or extinction.

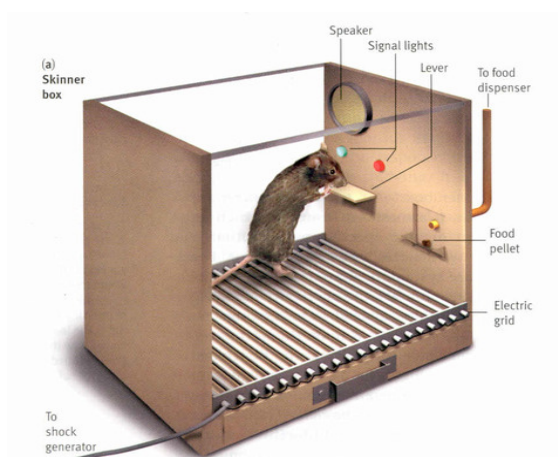


Figure4 Skinner Box. Retrieved from:

<http://blogs.kincorth.aberdeen.sch.uk/national5/files/2013/05/Picture1.png>

From this simple experiment, Skinner introduced more variables to study the human behavior in association with animal behavior. Behaviorism has large applications in behavioral therapy and in education. The classroom management strategies as well as the positive behavior intervention are based on Skinner's behavioral theory. However, his theory doesn't take into account the multiple processes that intervene between stimuli and responses such as motivation, personal experience, and environmental/cultural influences on specific responses. In addition, for

the purpose of my study, it is important to note that Skinner's famous and important theory is based on the generalization of a single human case study –his own daughter.

Bandura and Mischel developed Skinner's theory into a social cognitive learning theory that intertwines the behavior, environment, and personal (cognitive) characteristics (Santrock, J.W., 2007).

Ecological Contextual Theory. The ecological contextual theory of development by Bronfenbrenner is a holistic approach of development as shown in Figure 5.

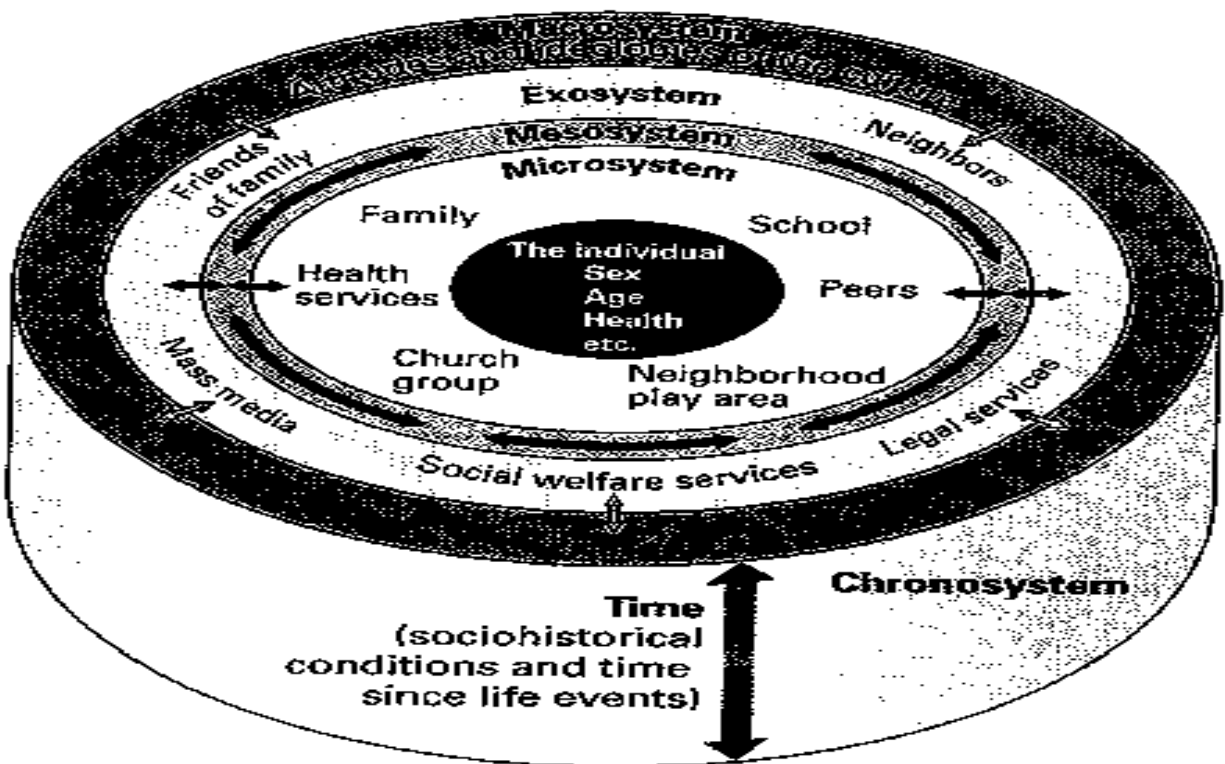


Figure 5 Ecological contextual model. (Retrieved from <http://impactofspecialneeds.weebly.com/bronfenbrennersquos-ecological-systems-theory.html>)

Urie Bronfenbrenner's theory focuses on the relationship between individuals and the environment in which they live. In his opinion, there are five systems that form the living context of an individual and determine his/her development: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and cronosystem. Individuals with his/her biological and psychological

characteristics, as well as the immediate living context such as family, close friends, and school represent the microsystem. Mesosystem is an abstract term that defines the relationships between microsystems. Exosystem defines the society and the way that society functions. The cultural factor is comprised in the macrosystem. The historical development of human civilization is reflected in the cronosystem. (Santrock, J.W., 2007)

Summary. None of the learning theories alone explain the complex developmental processes. These theories have their strengths and their weaknesses, their fans and their critics. It seems to be like a puzzle in which we have to recreate the system and focus on the connectors between segments. For example, Bronfenbrenner's theory has no value by itself because it doesn't explain the processes of development, yet it is the first theory that put all the variables that influence the human development together. It demonstrates that the recent trends in human development have moved from individual case studies toward holistic systemic theories.

2. Social and Emotional Development of Adolescents with Specific Learning Disabilities

The federal law IDEA-2004 (Public Law 108-446) defines specific learning disabilities as:

“a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. Such term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Such term does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; of mental retardation; of emotional disturbance; or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.”

Although the definition clearly mentions dysfunctions as “understanding or in using language” that consequently determines inadequate abilities to “listen, think, speak...”, the social domain of SLD students remains a controversy in special education. Yet, three other older definitions mention the social and emotional factors as a manifestation of SLD.

The Learning Disabilities Association of America (1986): Specific Learning Disabilities is a chronic condition of presumed neurological origin, which selectively interferes with the development, integration, and/or demonstration of verbal and/or nonverbal abilities. Specific Learning Disabilities exist as a distinct handicapping condition and varies in its manifestations and in degree of severity. Throughout life, the condition can affect self-esteem, education, vocation, socialization, and/or daily living activities

The Interagency Committee on Learning Disabilities (1987): Learning disabilities is a generic term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities, or of social skills. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual and presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunctions. Even though a learning disability may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (e.g., sensory impairment, mental retardation, social and emotional disturbance), with socio-environmental influences (e.g., cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction, psychogenic factors), and especially attention deficit disorder, all of which may cause learning problems, a learning disability is not the direct result of those conditions or influences.

Rehabilitation Services Administration (1985): A specific learning disability is a disorder in one or more of the central nervous system processes involved in perceiving, understanding, and/or using concepts through verbal (spoken or written) language or nonverbal means. This disorder manifests itself with a deficit in one or more of the following areas: attention, reasoning, processing, memory, communication, reading, writing, spelling, calculation, coordination, social competence, and emotional maturity.

School-age population with SLD doesn't qualify for special education services, unless the

disabilities negatively affect the academic performance in school. Furthermore, the most popular method to identify SLD is still the discrepancy between achievement and ability. Commonly, there has to be a two-year difference between achievement and IQ score of a student to be eligible for special education services under SLD. Therefore, many psychologists consider that SLD is linked only to academic learning in school and interpret the definition, as one such that the adolescents can't have a SLD unless they have an academic failure (Santrock, 2007; Francis & others, 2005- as cited in Santrock; Liederman, Kantrowitz, & Flanerry, 2005). Moreover, the study done by Liederman, Kantrowitz & Flanerry (2005) explaining why the number of boys identified with SLD is three times greater than the girls classified with SLD, confirmed the results obtained by T. Bryan (2004) and concluded that the class behavior and the academic grade has a huge impact on referring students for special education services. In fact, these results explain why boys, especially African-American males, are more likely to be referred for special education under SLD eligibility than girls and students with good behavior.

Although this review includes the social and emotional development of all students with SLD, special attention must be accredited to a specific category of SLD: the nonverbal learning disorders (NVLD). Neuropsychology defines NVLD as a neurological disorder that involves a dysfunction in the right hemisphere of the brain (Lerner & Kline, 2006). This category of students has severe problems with social interaction. Some of the characteristics of individuals with NVLD are: can't interpret facial expressions, don't understand the concept of "personal space", low cognitive processing skills, visual-spatial difficulties, difficulties in understanding humor or different meanings of a word, lack of interpersonal conversational skills, rigid behavior, and low adaptability to change. Vacca (2001) stresses the importance of identifying these students in school and providing them with a school wide support system. While the

students with a severe form of NVLD have similar manifestation as students with Asperger's syndrome, students with a mild form are at risk of being considered stubborn, oppositional and mean. Vacca (2001) and Lerner & Kline (2006) consider that these students must be directly taught social concepts and interpersonal skills that people naturally grasp through observation.

Social and emotional development of SLD students is still a current issue. At first view, many studies on different aspects of SLD people's social and emotional development found significant differences between students with and without learning disabilities (Lerner, & Kline, 2006; Santrock, 2007; Carter, Asmus, & Moss, 2013), while other studies found no differences between the two categories (Agaliotis, Kalyva, 2008; Santrock¹, 2007). However, these researches focused on different subcomponents of the two domains, mostly on elementary school children with SLD, a few on adults with SLD, and fewer on teenagers with SLD. Therefore, to summarize, the literature review is not meant to draw a final conclusion, but to provide a holistic view of the problem in order to help syntheses customized solutions for SLD subpopulations.

For the last 3 decades, Tanis Bryan conducted research on different aspects of social and emotional behavior of students with disabilities. Bryan (1978) considered that we took for granted the idea that social/emotional behavior problems of SLD students are due to many years of experiences of academic failures that generate a condition known as "learned helplessness" (Lerner, 2006). This trait of students with SLD is obvious in middle school and high school when SLD students become passive learners by giving up on developing metacognition skills. Instead, "they isolate themselves from their peers during school time, looking for opportunities to copy the solved task or to be directed step by step in completing an academic task" (Lerner & Kline, 2006, p 48). In order to eliminate the academic failure experiences as a trigger of social and

emotional problems of SLD students, Bryan focused his research in this field on preschool children with SLD. His studies pointed to interpersonal communication, relationships with peers, social skills and negative emotions. His quantitative research showed that the social and emotional problems of SLD students are part of the disabilities that manifests at an early age. (Bryan, & Pflaum, 1978; Bryan, Burstein, & Ergul, 2004)

Similarly, recent studies emphasized Bryan's results and stressed the necessity of a comprehensive and consistent intervention in schools that addressed social and emotional development of SLD students (Lerner & Kline, 2006; Pierangelo, 2003; Carter, Lane, Pierson & Stang, 2008; Carter, Asmus, & Moss, 2013).

Research shows that social and emotional problems are diverse and vary in intensity at an individual level. These problems are reflected in poor social skills, poor perception of social situations, lack of skills in interpreting the nonverbal behavior (such as facial expressions and gestures), and helplessness in maintaining friendship. They have negative emotions such as depression anxiety, skepticism, and frustration that are converted to impulsive, disrupted, or inept social behavior. Low Self is associated with these characteristics in a variety of forms of low self-esteem and low self-concepts (Lerner & Kline, 2006; Bryan, 1997; Haager & Vaughn, 1995; Pierangelo, 2003). Not all students with SLD have manifesting social and emotional problems. Approximately a third of the students with SLD have problems with social skills that negatively impact their social and academic life (Bryan, 1997; Haager & Vaughn, 1995; Santrock, 2007). Besides, during the adolescence years, social relationships and emotional turmoil, embodies a major developmental benchmark (Santrock, 2007; Snowman & Biehler, 2006).

For instance, “friendship for youth offers emotional and practical support, a sense of belonging, fun, and opportunities to learn/practice social skills” (Carter, Asmus, & Moss, 2013, p14). However, Carter and his collaborators did several studies on different aspects of relationships between youth with and without disabilities and concluded: “relationship between same age students with disabilities and youth without disabilities are the exception rather than the norm”. (Carter, Asmus, & Moss, 2013, p14) The authors recommend and suggest that schools should develop educational programs to increase youth awareness toward disabilities, to guide students on basic interaction strategies, and teachers to act as facilitators rather than support factors. Equally important and explanatory are the results obtained by Siperstein, Parker, Bardon & Widaman (2007) in a national study of 6,000 middle school students and their relationship with students with disabilities. Surprisingly, they found out that regular education students have limited contact with students with disabilities even in an inclusive setting and do not want to socialize with peers with disabilities, particularly outside of school. Although the conclusion of this study is hard to generalize due to the fact that just 10% of the participants reported to have a classmate with special needs, a Canadian study done on 14 elementary schools in Montreal found the same results. Furthermore, analyzing the interviews of high and average achieving students, researchers found out that students without disabilities have little to no interaction during class time with special education students because the special needs students “are usually with another teacher at the far end of the room” (Litvack, Ritchie, & Shore, 2011). From teachers’ perspective, Haagar and Sharon (1995) found similar results: teachers perceive students with SLD as demonstrating poorer social skills than average and high achieving students.

Students with SLD have lower self-concepts than students without disabilities (Chapman, 1988; Lerner & Kline, 2006; Bryan, 1997; Lee et al., 2008). Similar results were obtained in comparative studies on high school graduates with /without SLD in Canada and middle school students in South Korea. Researchers found lower self-esteem and self –concept, yet, higher levels of anxiety (Klassen, Krawchuk, Lynch, & Rajani, 2008; Wehmeyer & Ewha, 2008).

Based on the research, a curriculum augmentation is recommended to address the social and emotional needs of students with disabilities. However, teenagers with SLD are mostly placed in regular classrooms, resource room programs, in full inclusion. Carter et al. (2008) debated two different points of view of including self-determination instruction in inclusive classrooms: researchers and policy makers that are concerned with the challenges of implementing curriculum augmentation in inclusive classroom and those who hoped for deliberate infusion of self-determination instruction into general curriculum. Carter et al. (2008) found that general education teachers were less familiar with the concept of self-determination than special education teachers. While special education teachers rated the instruction of self-awareness, self –advocacy, and leadership high, less than half of regular education teachers rated the instruction of these self-determination subcomponents as being important in their class. Similarly, the study done by Lee et al. (2008) revealed that general education teachers of inclusive classrooms don't allocate planning time and instructional time to teach self-determination skills.

3. Advisory as a Support Mechanism of Academic Achievement

In connection with adolescents, advisory is both an old and a new concept. It is an old concept according to Galassi, Gulludge and Cox (as cited in Weibacher & Lanier, 2012), because these types of programs were present in the American Education in the 1890s as a “feature of

junior high schools” (p 17). It is a new concept, because the advisory concept was not applied in public education in the last decades.

Officially, in 1989 the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (CCAD) published the first document that stresses the importance of creating advisory programs: *Turning Points: Preparing Youth For 21st Century*. The *Turning Points* document was created to offer strategies and solutions to the problems found by Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents in researching the educational crisis in middle schools. This document “estimated 7 million young people- one in four adolescents- who are extremely vulnerable to multi-risk behaviors and school failure. Another 7 million may be at moderate risk, but remain a cause for serious concern.” (p.8) Therefore, the first recommendation of the Task Force was to

“create small communities for learning here stable, close, mutually respectful relationship with adults and peers are considered fundamental for intellectual development and personal growth. The key elements of these communities are schools-within-schools or houses, students and teachers grouped together as teams, and small group advisories that ensure that every students is known well by at least one adult” (CCAD, 1989, p.9).

Almost a decade later, the National Association of Secondary Schools Principals recommended in the *Breaking Ranks: Changing An American Institution* report that: ”Every high school student will have a personal Adult Advocate to help him or her personalize the educational experience” (as cited in Poliner & Miller Lieber, 2004).

In Canada, in 1998, the Ontario Ministry of Education released the *Choice into Action* document, which made a teacher –adviser program mandatory for grades 7-11 and recommended for grade 12 in all Ontario public schools (as cited in Salinitri, 2005).

Similarly, in 2005, the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the European Council on Education was released in Europe. The document explained the key competencies for lifelong learners that must be targeted in schools. Point 7 describes the interpersonal,

intercultural, and social competences, civic competence. In order to achieve these competencies, youth should master “skills to communicate constructively in different environments, express and understand different viewpoints, negotiate with the ability to create confidence, (...) be able to cope with stress and frustration, (...) and distinguish between personal and professional sphere.” (p.11)

In order to implement the recommendations of the European Parliament, the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research reorganized the weekly “advisory” type program called “Dirigentie”, at the high school level, on five theme modules: 1) personal development and growth; 2) social development; 3) metacognition and habits of mind and work; 4) career planning; 5) healthy life style (National Standards for Dirigentie, 2006). Besides the official documents, the research in the field constantly recommends the advisory program, especially as a solution of urban high school education.

A Canadian research done on college students tried to find out if the differences in the quality of secondary schools affect youth access to postsecondary education. Frempong, Ma, & Mensah “identified academic pressure and student-teacher relationship as the most important school level factors. (They) found that youth who attended (high) schools with positive student-teacher relationship (...) are more likely to go to college.” (p. 30) In conclusion, they recommended high school programs that focused on improving student-teacher relationship.

Similar studies were done on middle schools and college students with SLD and like the Canadian research, it was proven that youth with disabilities need more intervention in developing self-confidence, social and self-advocacy skills, and career goals during the high school years (Salinitri, 2005; Walker & Test, 2011; Schaefer & Rivera, 2012). More research on high school students is needed in order to cover the gap.

L.Putbrese found that “advisory programs have historically been regarded as difficult to implement” (as cited in Welbacher & Lanier, 2012, p 18) due to teachers’ attitude and preparation, structural difficulties such as scheduling and extended planning time, and lack of administrative support (Welbacher & Lanier, 2012). On the other hand, the body of research done directly on the advisory program shows the effectiveness of the program measured in the student retention rate, lower dropout rate, and increased attendance (Poliner & Miller Lieber, 2004; Welbacher & Lanier, 2012; Handzopoulos & Tyner-Mullings, 2012). All the researches on high schools advisory programs founded by the proponent of this study are qualitative in nature and focus on the minority of adolescents’ needs in urban schools located in high poverty areas, and not on specific subpopulations such as students with SLD. Student surveys show that advisory is rated as very important or important by teens in small, urban high schools, because of the strong relationship between teachers and students (Handzopoulos & Tyner-Mullings, 2012; Quintet, 2006). The research on advisory at the high-school level has the tendency to be limited to a specific geographic area due to the particularities of the student population in each city. This research was done in three main metropolitan cities on the east side of the U.S. There is no study done on advisory program in the small schools in M.E.M.A.

Conclusion

This chapter is a summary and critiques the literature on the three major components of this study: developmental particularities of high school students (adolescence), social and emotional characteristics of SLD adolescents, and advisory program’s features. From an interpretivist perspective, the gaps found in literature reviews assume to find the personal perspectives of SLD students and teachers on an advisory class. Therefore, research approach is a qualitative research design that synthetizes the perception and interpretation of the same social

event from different participants, knowing that these perspectives are marked by culture and life experiences (Crotty, 1998). The qualitative research was a necessary approach in this study for two reasons: (1) the need to identify the benefits and challenges of SLD students, and (2) students may have different benefits/challenges in their personal social and emotional development that might not be quantifiable.

The methodology used in this study is explained in the next chapter: Research Methodology.

CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter describes the methodological design of this research. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines research as: “careful study that is done to find and report new knowledge about something”. However, there are different ways of understanding and explaining the knowledge, known as epistemology. In constructionism, researchers don’t “discover “the meaning, but construct the meaning of researched phenomena. People can construct different meanings of the same event, yet the personal background, culture, age, etc., individuals way of thinking. (Crotty, 1998). From an interpretivist perspective, the goal of this study presumes “to find the personal perception and interpretation of the same social event from different participants, knowing that these perspectives are marked by culture and life experiences “(Crotty, 1998, p8). Through social interactionism, the grounded theory methodology is suitable for this study. Furthermore, this chapter describes the setting and the participants in this research.

Design of the study

The ground theory methodology is a good approach in this study for three reasons: (1) the purpose of this study is to describe teachers’ and students’ perspective on advisory and to depict their personal experiences; (2) the need to identify the benefits and challenges of an advisory class for SLD students, and (3) students and teachers may have different values and beliefs that influence the meaning making process.

According to Rich (2012), grounded theory method was invented by Glaser and Strauss and published in 1967. At its origins, grounded theory was a response to sociological research theories that were limited to quantitative methodology (Charmaz 1983; Rich, 2012; Pidgeon & Henwood, 1992), while qualitative methods were seen “as only a helpful preliminary to the real

methodologies of quantitative research” (Charmaz, 1983, p.109). Currently, grounded theory is viewed as a set of methods that include “data collection and analytic procedures aimed to develop theory (Charmaz, 2004, p.496), an intersection of a wide range of strategies of naturalistic inquiry (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1992), or “a favorable alternative for those who get close to the data and yet remain objective and apart at the same time” (Rich, 2012, p.2).

Grounded theory is an inductive research process in which all findings emerge from the text and the meaning is grounded and generated directly from the data (Rich, 2012; Charmaz, 2004; Swanson and Holton, 2006). This is a substantive theory that focuses on particular; the categories and the conceptual models that apply just to the phenomenon that is being studied (Glaser and Strauss cited in Rich, 2012; Hodder, 2000). Therefore, the data has to be solid, diverse and rich (Charmaz, 1983; Rich, 2012). Charmaz argues that another important characteristic of grounded theory is that data collection and analysis proceed simultaneously (Charmaz, 2004).

Research Questions

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990) there are three sources of finding a research subject: assigned questions, technical literature, and personal experience. The identification of the subject of this study is a combination of the last two: literature review and personal experience. As a cofounder of a small critical school in M.E.M.A., the researcher/practitioner had to investigate what an efficient advisory program looked like. The problem encountered was the lack of materials on advisory in general and the lack of research articles on special needs students in particular. From a professional perspective, the study subject was determined by a researcher’s motivation to improve a specific area of work and to contribute to the theoretical framework of a new educational urban education model.

The research questions of the study were:

- a) How do secondary teachers perceive inclusive advisory programs in urban schools?
- b) How do African American SLD students value their experiences in advisory class?
- c) What are the secondary teachers' critical views on social-emotional development of African American SLD students in advisory?

The Research Setting

According to United Way for Southeastern website (UWSM) (2012):

“Thirty high schools in southeast (this state) are traditionally low-performing schools, meaning fewer than 60% of their students graduate. (...) The costs of dropping out are borne not just by individuals, but also by the communities in which they live and the rest of society. Dropouts from the class of 2008 will cost (this state) almost \$12 billion in lost wages over their lifetimes” (Fall 2012 –Impact Report).

One of the common elements of successful small high schools in urban, high poverty communities is the teacher-student relationship and support of social/emotional development of students addressed through an advisory type program (Hantzopoulos & Tyner-Mullings, 2012; Aness, 2008; Shiller, 2012). Several high schools in M.E.M.A. implemented an advisory program. In M.E.M.A.'s high schools, the percentage of students with learning disability varies with the type and location of the school. Charter schools tend to control their number of special needs students and to select high functioning students who don't require related services. In contrast, public schools deal with a lot more low functioning special education students. In addition, all schools located in central area of M.E.M.A., where parents support students' transportation, have a lower number of students with disabilities. The neighborhoods of M.E.M.A. are flooded with students with disabilities. Therefore, the percentage of the special education population in M.E.M.A. high schools is about 20-25%, almost double the state

average percentage of students with disabilities from the total student population, and almost quadruple the percentage of special education students in charter schools.

In order to assure a better understanding of how an advisory program works in urban schools, the setting of this study was chosen to be in urban charter and public schools in M.E.M.A. as described in chapter 1. The school district's administration that approved this study, also choose the schools for this research. While the charter school district had only one high school, the criteria used by officials for selecting the school in the public school district was: an existing advisory program that had been running for at least 2 years and a stable administration.

One of the locations of the study was *Public* high school situated in a neighborhood characterized by high poverty and high violence. The Public high school has majority of population African American student population who come from families with low socio-economic status. In addition, this school has a vast special education department that includes a resource room program and self-contain classrooms for students with multiple severe impairments.

The other setting of this study was *Charter* high school. 8.6% of the student population at this charter high school had a current IEP with 5-10 hours of resource room support per week. This was a school of choice located in downtown M.E.M.A. and majority of students coming from families with low or average socio-economic status. Charter high school had a large Hispanic and African American student population. In addition, this school had one special education teacher.

Study Participants

The decision of sampling strategies is aligned and dictated by the juncture of a particular theoretical perspective and epistemology, (Koro-Ljungberg et al, 2009, p 689). From a symbolic interactionism perspective and a constructionist point of view, the sampling strategies were homogeneous and purposeful for both categories: students and teachers. In addition, there were no variety of sampling options, because this study was done in small schools with a small number of students and teachers.

In 2000, 29.4% of students with disabilities age 14 and older dropped out of high- school (OSEP's Annual Reports to Congress on the IDEA, 2002). Students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) represent the largest population of students with disabilities in the U.S. In 2008, the U.S. Department of Education reported that 44.6% of total students of school age served under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) were students with SLD (OSEP's Annual Reports to Congress on the IDEA, 2008).

The National Longitudinal Transition –Study 2 (NLTS2) focuses on social and emotional barriers that youth with disabilities encounter in accomplishing successful careers and community participation. Using the data from NLTS2, Wagner et al. (2003) analyzed the life outside the classroom for youth with disabilities. According to parents' surveys, 30% of adolescents with disabilities spend much of their free time socializing with friends and 50% of them spend their free time in front of the TV. Adolescents with SLD can experience different difficulties in maintaining interpersonal relationships, and some of them experience social isolation. (Lerner & Kline, 2006; Trainor et al. 2011; Santrock 2007)

In addition to the specific social and emotional needs of adolescence years, students with learning disabilities (SLD) have social challenges due to their learning impairments. More and more research shows that SLD affects students' life beyond the school (Lerner & Kline, 2006:

Okolo & Silington, 1998; Bryan, Donahue, & Pearl, 1981; Schifter, 2011). Furthermore, within the last few years there seems to be a new trend in special education on the long-term social and emotional development of youth and adults with SLD. Many authors insist that there are secondary effects of SLD such as: low ability to make friends, poor perception of social context, inappropriate behavior adjustments to different situations, low self-concept, (Lerner & Kline, 2006; Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2001; Bryan, 1997). Other authors describe SLD as “difficulties because of physical, emotional or social problems” (Tileston, 2004).

African American students with SLD from high poverty areas continue to be the most critical student population in the American Public School System. This population is spending time in juvenile detention facilities and correctional institutions at considerably higher rates in comparison with the general population (Boothe, 2007; National Council on Disability, 2003). In addition, this target population graduates from high school and enrolls in colleges or postsecondary education at considerably lower rates in comparison with the general population (National Council on Disabilities, 2003; Boothe, D. 2007; Young, G., & Lee, C., 2005; Gregg, N.2007).

Therefore, the first target population of this study was represented by a sample of three students and one recent graduate that were all African Americans; were eligible for special education services under SLD; had at least two consecutive years of advisory; had reading and writing skills at minimum fourth grade level; were willing to voluntarily participate in this study.

During 2008 to 2009, all teachers in the M.E.M.A. public small schools benefited from intensive professional development on advisory, a mandatory class in the small schools at that time. Teachers took an active role in identifying students’ needs from a holistic point of view, creating feasible solutions, developing mechanisms of support for social, emotional and

academic needs of all students through an advisory class. Later on, many of these teachers transferred to charter high schools. This is the main group of teachers from which the researcher tried to select the purposeful sampling of four teachers through personal and professional web-connections. The final sampling group included regular and special education teachers, teachers who work in a charter schools and teachers who work in M.E.M.A. public small schools.

Data collection Techniques

Contrary to the research methods in advance sciences, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that naturalistic inquiry successfully uses “human as instrument” as data collection which is “as reliable as (data) produced by more objective means” (p.192-193). Scholars in qualitative research agree that the gathering of data is a complex, multiple methods process that allows the researcher to gather solid, rich data, as the qualitative researcher has to construct a theory from the data itself. (Charmaz, 1983; Guba and Lincoln, 1985; Rich, 2012)

According to Koro-Ljungberg et al (2009), the main data collection methods for grounded theory methodology are individual interviews and journals. However, many other scholars such as Lincoln and Guba (1985), Charmaz (1983), and Stake (1995) consider that gathering data through observations is necessary in order to assure a greater understanding of the context and to provide another source of data for data triangulation. Table 2 shows the correlation between the research questions and triangulation of data collection for validity and reliability issues. The data collection of this study included a compilation of interviews, surveys, journal entries and observations. As presented in Table 2, the main source of data was face-to-face individual interviews. The secondary sources were journal entries, students’ survey, and observations.

Table 2. Triangulation of data collection		
<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Primary source of data</i>	<i>Secondary source of data</i>
How do secondary teachers perceive inclusive advisory programs in urban schools?	In person - individual interview	Interviews with students Journals entries
How do African-American SLD students value their experiences in advisory class?	In person- individual interview	Interviews with special education teachers; Survey; Observations Journal Entries
What are the secondary teachers 'critical views on social-emotional development of African-American SLD students in advisory?	Individual interviews Direct observations of advisory class	Interviews with teachers Journal Entries

Table 2. Triangulation of Data Collection. Correlations between questions and data collection

The time frame proposed for data collection was between December 2015 and August 2016. A descriptive timeline of data collection techniques is presented in Table 3. The timeline data collection suggests that at the same time, teachers' interview also represented a secondary, control source for students' interview and vice versa

Table 3 Descriptive timeline for data collection					
Time	Who	Interview	Survey	Journal	Obs.
Start Mid. January 2016 to Mid. March 2016	Public and Charter schools former students or /and current students Teachers	A) By appointment, after school in public places such as Panera, Starbucks, etc. as agreed with parents/ legal guardians that accompanied students B) In school's library, if approved by administration, class teacher, and parent/ legal guardian, during school time Flexible public location	- -	On going with prompt #1 & 2 US mail	- -
Mid. March to Mid. June	Teachers Students	-	- Survey 15 min	prompts #3, 4, 5 US mail Prompts 3,4	2 obs. TBA-

Table 3 Proposed data collection timeline.

A detailed explanation of this study was be provided to students and their families through a flyer followed by an assent/consent-letter, and then a phone call/ meeting.

Interviews. The interviews provided a rich text for analysis that generated patterns and themes in the research. According to Barbour & Ktzinger (cited in Barbour, 2007), interviews

allow researchers to analyze and learn about the different perceptions, feelings and attitudes of the participants in regards to the same event. Face to face interviews were preferred because the information collected through observation, during the interview process might be relevant to the research. The interview protocol format was a compilation of the general interview guide approach and the standardized open-ended interview. According to Patton (2002),

(..) the general interview guide approach involves outlining a set of issues that are to be explored with each respondent before interviewing begins. The guide serves as a basic checklist during the interview to make sure that all relevant topics are covered. In contrast, the standardized open-ended interview consists of a set of questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each respondent through the same sequence and ask each responded the same questions with essentially the same words.” (p. 342)

Each type of interview has its advantages and disadvantages. The researcher in this study preferred the mixed type interview approach. In this case, the guided interview was more suitable for teenagers as an interview method, and allowed the researcher to be flexible in exploring or deepening some ideas more than others. The standardized approach is highly focused, more time efficient than the other approaches, and easier to analyze. (Patton, 2012) Consequently, the first part of the interview protocol (see appendices A & B), contain a guide with probing questions, while the second part is precisely worded with open-ended key-questions.

Survey. According to Jansen (2010), the “qualitative survey does not aim at establishing frequencies, means or other parameters but at determining the *diversity* of some topic of interest within a given population” (Jansen, H., 2010). In other words, the main difference between the quantitative surveys and the qualitative surveys is that the first category focused on distribution while the second category focused on diversity. Fink (as cited in Jensen, 2010) stated that qualitative survey analysis is recommended to explore the meaning and individual experiences,

whereas Wester (as cited in Jensen, 2010) and Jensen (2010) defined the qualitative surveys as an application of grounded theory. In order to correlate the methods of collecting data with grounded theory methodology as an inductive process and to achieve the purpose of this study, the researcher concluded that open-inductive survey form was the most suitable survey method. In open surveys, questions are constructed around topics and categories that emerged from analysis of raw data such as interview transcripts, memoing, and first coding (Jensen, 2010). Therefore, this was a one shot survey in the second empirical cycle of the research, for students only. In that phase, the data collection was blended with data analysis, which is a common practice in qualitative research to assure the saturation of data.

Journal Entries. While the interviews and survey were a one shot event, the journal entries were chosen as a periodical collection data method. Hodder (as cited in Barbour, 2007) considered that written, descriptive text is important because the responses are not timed, usually contain more details of the event, and participants tend to be more reflective in their writing. In addition, journaling allows the researcher to explore different perspectives within a social group. Another reason for choosing journaling as a method of collecting data is its convenience for data analysis. Journals can offer thick description, narratives, and dialogues in a written, format.

There were different prompts for teachers and students. The journaling data had two prompts established and three open entries that allowed the researcher to write prompts in the second cycle of analysis that directed data in the area that needed more detail or explanation. The first two prompts were semi-structured and were deducted from the research questions, whereas the last three prompts were inducted from the answer analysis of the previous two. This way, the last prompts gave the researcher flexibility to focus on certain topics of interest, and explore new

ideas that emerged from the inductive analysis of the previous raw data. Appendices C and D both shows the prompts for students and teachers.

Observations. Shank (as cited in Barbour, 2007) describes observation as a necessary method in the qualitative research field “to find things that make our understanding richer and deeper”. Patton (2002) considers that direct observations help in understanding and capturing the context in which participant interact, and it allows the researcher “to see things that may routinely escape awareness among the people in the setting” or to “learn things that people will be unwilling to talk about in an interview”, (p. 263). Observations are also an important part of validation and triangulation of data sources. Patton’s (2002) five purposes for observational data are: (a) to describe the setting; (b) to describe the activities that took place in that setting; (c) to describe the participants in those activities; (d) to describe the meaning of what was observed from the perspective of those observed; and (e) to describe the nonverbal interaction/communication between participants. (p. 262). From a constructivist epistemology perspective, the qualitative observation represents an etic approach, in which the observer has the outsider perspective. (Patton, 2002; Koro-Ljungberg et all, 2009). Due to the fact that this research approach had teenagers as participants, the overt observation, in which the participants are informed and aware that they are being observed, was the adequate choice, in spite of the traditional concern that people behave differently when they know they are being observed. (Patton, 2002) The time frame of the class observations varied from 15. to 30 minutes.

Pilot Review Group

A pilot group was used to review the data collection instruments. In this case, the fragmented pilot study was used to collect information on the data collection methods employed, the length of time it takes participants to complete each research instrument. This was not a

complete pilot study as the only methods of data collection and the validity of the instruments used were tested. The pilot review group helped the researcher to experience the data collection methods and to have the opportunity to make changes or to solve any problem that might overcome in real practice and was not assumed in the theoretical stage of the study design. In addition, scholars in the research field consider that it is wise for beginner researchers to check if their questions can collect sufficient relevant data, cover all the research questions in depth, and if the wording of questions is clear for participants. It is also helpful to establish the time frame of the data collection process, especially for interviews.

Two former students formed the pilot review group. The focus was on the instruments proposed to be used, therefore, the selection criteria for this group was only based on having at least 2-3 years of experience in an advisory type program. Disability was not a criterion for this group. The researcher asked two former students to take the survey, and meet for an interview. Former students were contacted based on the phone number that they had the previous year. In alphabetical order, the first two former students that accepted to be reviewers of the data collection tools made up the pilot group. The data collected from the pilot group was not analyzed with research methods, but was scanned by the participant and the researcher to check for clarity of the wording of the questions, the reliability of the survey and interview questions in correlation with the research questions, the length of the answers, elements of “thick descriptive data”, and the key information that the question were intended to trigger. After the researcher concluded on questions revisions, the data collected was discarded.

Data Analysis

The data collected in this study was analyzed using grounded theory inductive methods. Scholars' opinions differ in describing the logic of applying the grounded theory method in

data analysis. Charmaz (2004) explains that in time each researcher develops a particular view of applying grounded theory. For a beginner researcher, the stages of data analysis presented by Swanson and Holton (2006), are probably the most explicit strategies, as they mark the importance of pre-coding preparation.

- Stage 1- Data Preparation – assume the work with the text. In this stage the researcher gets the data in an organized form that uses pseudonyms or code numbers for participants which makes it easy to work with.
- Stage 2- Familiarization – Swanson and Holton (2006) describes this stage as an “immersion in the data”. Merriam (1998) describes this stage as a “conversation with data by asking questions of it and making comments on it” (p.181), while Charmaz (2004) suggest a list of questions that can summarize the interplay between the text and researcher such as: what is going on here; what is the person saying; what do these actions and statements take for granted; etc. (p. 507).
- Stage 3- Coding - Researchers agree that grounded theory require data driven codes, line by line text analysis (Hodder, 2000;) or line by line open coding (Rich, 2012; Charmaz 2004). In this stage the text is reduced to a number of codes that label “units of meaning” from the text (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.56). The codes are then categorized. Swanson and Holton (2006) considered that categories should: reflect the purpose of the research, be exhaustive, be mutually exclusive, be sensitizing, and conceptually congruent. (p.242)
- Stage 4 – Generating Meaning - In this stage the researcher generates meaning from the data that was analyzed. This stage is basically the answer to Charmaz, Swanson, and Holland’s question: “what is going on?” The meaning is the relationship between the

themes that emerged from coding, categorization/classification analysis. Hodder as well as Strauss and Corbin as cited in “Handbook of Qualitative Research” consider that memoing is “the principal technique for recording relationships among themes” (p.783), while Charmaz (2004) consider that memoing should parallel each stage of qualitative analysis.

Many critics of the Grounded theory method come from qualitative researches as well. Charmaz (1983) cites Lofland and Lofland (in press) who believe that grounded theory does not stress enough the data collection techniques or the quality of data collected. Katz, as cited in Charmaz (1983) considers that grounded theory is just a preliminary research phase and not a complete, reliable research method. Pidgeon and Henwood (1992) view the writing on grounded theory as isolated from other qualitative methods. Many researchers consider that grounded theory is very time consuming and that line by line coding very often loses the main focus by concentrating on individual words and text segments.

This research used NVivo software in data analysis process.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1989) explained that establishing trustworthiness means that the researcher has to prove to his/her audience that the findings of a research “are worth paying attention to”. They suggest that validity, reliability and neutrality are three important aspects in establishing trustworthiness, (p 290).

Validity. Cho and Trent (2006) define validity in qualitative research as the “degree to which researchers’ claims about knowledge corresponded to reality or research participants’ construction of reality being studied”. Merriam (1998) consider that validity of the researcher’s finding is the data accuracy. There are multiple levels and methods to assure the validity in

qualitative research. Scholars recommend multiple methods at each level of the study: data collection, data analysis, and findings (Patton, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Cho & Trent, 2006). First, the pilot review group was used as the first step in the validation of the methods of collecting data. “Thick description” of data was collected through different sources (teachers, students, and different high schools), in different ways (interview, surveys, internet, and direct observations) to assure the validity through: triangulated, descriptive data and comparison, (Cho & Trent, 2006). Member checking was used next, to increase the validity of the data. Four participants agreed to check the field notes and interview verbatim. To reduce the bias of researcher’s construction of reality, a subjectivity statement explains the researcher’s background as related to the research topic, personal involvement in data collection, levels of familiarity with the settings, and personal relationships with participants, (Barbour, 2007; Cho & Trent, 2006; Patton, 1998). The critical reflexivity of self- statement and member check as reflexive (Cho & Trent, 2006) concluded the validity methods.

Reliability. Lincoln and Guba (1989) prefer the term “consistency” or “dependability” as they are more accurate than reliability. Ruona (as cited in Swanson & Holton, 2006) explain the term as:

“...rather than demanding that other researchers get the same results (as in Quantitative inquiry), the standard in qualitative research is that the research should be judged based on the extent to which other researchers concur that, given the purpose of the study, its methods, analysis, and the information collected , the results are consistent and dependable. In order to address the reliability issue, the researcher will keep a study journal, to document each decision along the timeline of this study.” (p. 247)

In addition to the journal, an audit trail was created for each research phase. The pilot review group was used to establish the reliability and dependability of the instrument used. Furthermore, peer debriefing, the process in which the researcher exposes the study to other

researcher(s) in analytic sessions, was made through proposal defense and will be made through dissertation defense committees.

Neutrality. Lincoln and Guba (1989) explain “neutrality” as an effort to minimize the biases, motivations, interests and perspectives of the researcher, (p. 290). Ruona (as cited in Swanson & Holton, 2006) consider that important strategies to assure the neutrality issue are: personal disclosure statement, memoing, member check and audit trail. The personal disclosure statement or subjective statement is the researcher’s testimony of who he/her is in relation with the research topic, what are researcher’s emotions and feelings in regard to the research problem/topic, and what the inquirer brings to the study in terms of experience with the problem, abilities, cultural and personal history.

Personal Disclosure Statement

In constructionism epistemology, the researcher is a passive participant in the study that observes and record data. Therefore, doing the research study in a familiar settings, gave me more flexibility as a researcher. In addition, seven years ago I was involved in an extensive research of different types of advisory programs in many high schools in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago. At that time, I encountered many problems in finding reliable data and enough literature on the advisory program. Since then, the subject got more interest and more studies were done in the big metropolis on this program. Furthermore, I expanded my interest in this subject, with a particular focus on students with SLD.

I am one of the co-founders of a small high school. My contribution at the small school had continued with my involvement in the implementation stage over four academic years.

I am familiar with Charter school building as I participated in a professional development meeting and other events at that location. However, I don’t know any of the students in that

building. Because we express our perceptions and experiences in words, it is very important that the researcher is familiar with key terminology used by the participants in the program. Patton considered that:

“(...) observers must learn the language of participants in the setting of the program they are observing in order to faithfully represent participants in their own terms and be true to their worldview.” (p. 290)

Due to my experience in the field I was more able to compile the list of key items that needed to be observed. Moreover, I have an “experienced eye” in making observations from different perspectives such as: methodological, pedagogical, and cultural. This is important, as “the skilled observer is able to improve the accuracy, authenticity, and reliability of observations”, (Patton, 2002, p. 261).

Lastly, I was invited in the last two years to several new small high schools to facilitate professional development sessions on advisory program. This experience gave me the possibility of sharing the topic and design of my study with different colleagues in order to collect information on what is needed in this field and to have reviews of the different sources of collecting data. My final design of this study included many new ideas that come out of these conversations.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to present the data collected, the methodological analysis of data, and the findings. This research examined the effectiveness of the advisory programs on African-American students with SLD in the city's urban high schools as seen by students and teachers.

The research questions that guided the study were:

1. How do secondary school teachers perceive inclusive advisory programs in Detroit's metropolitan area high schools?
2. How do African American students with SLD value their experiences in advisory class?
3. What are the secondary school teachers' critical views on social-emotional development of African American students with SLD in advisory.

Information in this chapter is organized into two subchapters: *Description of Participants Sample* – that describe in detail all the participants; and *Presentation of Data and Results*- that describe the data collected and its analysis. The last subchapter, “Presentation of Data and Results”, is also methodically arranged by sets of data: interviews, journaling, survey, and observations.

The study and the role of the researcher. The role of the researcher in this study was as a detached observer who described the practice of advisory (Koro-Ljunberg et al. 2009, pp. 690).

The researcher's interest in the topic of this study was related to the researcher's background, training and experience in both: special education and advisory programs. The investigator had 18 years of experience in urban special education, and 6 years in facilitating

advisory programs. In addition, the researcher had intensive training on designing and implementing customized advisory programs.

Participants in the study

There were two categories of participants in this study: teachers and students. In conforming to the goals of qualitative research, the researcher collected opinions and critical views from diverse areas of education such as general and special education; public and charter school. As mentioned in chapter 1, pseudonyms replaced the real names of participants. Each participant chose his or her own Pen name.

Teachers. Four tenure teachers participated in this study. The table 4 shows the characteristics of teacher participants and the type of advisory they taught at the time of the data collection process. All teachers were state certified, had a B.A. and M.A. in education, and had more than ten years of experience in schools. All teachers also had between 3-5 years of experience in implementing/developing advisory programs in their schools.

At the time of the study (school year 2015-2016), Flo and Bree worked in a school located on the West side of the metropolitan area, Josie worked in a downtown charter high school, and Dora worked on the East side of the metropolitan area. While not a selection criterion, it was the researcher's intension to have teachers represented from all over the city, as the schools have certain characteristics based on their geographic location¹. Furthermore, Josie and Bree were part of their Professional Learning Community team who created and designed advisory programs.

¹ Chapter 1 contains extensive explanations on the differences between different parts of this urban area.

Name	School	Teaching	Type	Advisory
Josie	Charter	Mathematics 9-12 grade	Regular Education	Inclusive
Dora	Public	Categorical 9-12 grade	Special education	Seclusive
Flo	Public	Resource Room 12 grade	Special education	Seclusive
Bree	Public	ELA 9-12 grade	Regular Education	Exclusive

Table 4. Teachers Characteristics

This type of experience is emphasized because this was the only time when a teacher thought about advisory programs by analyzing problems such as the size of the class, the length of the program, the structure of the class in terms of students' gender, grade, and educational program. The other teachers became involved during the implementation phase of the program.

Josie is a secondary, math instructor. She has extensive professional development on creating and implementing a custom made advisory program. She is the co-author of the foundational plan of a new small school that implements advisory. Furthermore, Josie is a specialist in advisory programs as she was part of different teams that designed and implemented advisory programs in different schools. She also is a mentor in advisory and math for new teachers. Josie is the only teacher with consistency in the same type of advisory. Furthermore,

Josie has experience in working in public as well as charter schools. Josie has experience with special education students as she was teaching inclusive programs most of the time. In addition, Josie did co-teaching with a special education teacher. Her knowledge in reading and interpreting the IEP was enhanced by her personal experience as a mom of a special education student.

Bree is also a secondary, general education teacher in English Language Arts (ELA), a core subject area. She also has the experience of being part of the team who created and designed the advisory program in one of her schools. Bree worked in co-teaching with a special education teacher for a few years. However, she was a teacher in a dysfunctional public school district, and had to change the type of advisory program several times. These issues occur when there is a change in administration, and the new administration is implementing a different type of advisory, or when the teacher is moved to a different school. Both situations can be applied in Bree's case.

At the time of this study, Flo was working part time as an administrator in special education in her school. She had minimal hours of resource room – ELA, and an advisory class. However, Flo worked as a secondary special education teacher both in an ELA categorical classroom (departmentalized program) and in resource program. Flo has a B.A. in ELA and an M.A. in Special Education. Flo has only public school experience but she has worked in different types of advisory.

Dora was the only teacher in this study that worked in a departmentalized special education program while teaching ELA and math in a categorical classroom. In addition, Dora was the former advisor of Leonardo (a student participant in this study), so she was able to give more information pertinent to selecting him for the study. She was a secondary –teacher with a B.A. in Social Studies and an M..A in Special Education. It is important to highlight that Dora

worked on both side of this urban area, West and East, so she had a better understanding of socio-economic and cultural problems that are typical to each side. At the time of this research, Dora's assignment was on the East side.

Initially, a special education teacher Donna was recruited to participate in this study. However, Donna moved to a school district out of the urban/metropolitan area, where she didn't have an advisory assignment. Therefore, she no longer met the selection criteria and was eliminated from this research.

Teachers' data was comprised of one interview and five journal entries in a four months' time frame. Three teachers, Josie, Dora, and Flo checked the accuracy of the verbatim record of their interview as part of establishing the validity of the data process through a member checking method. All four teachers worked at some point in the same buildings with the researcher.

Students. There were four students who participated in this study: Leonardo, Emanuel, Candy, and Kelvin. The table 5 shows a few essential characteristics of student participants in this study.

Table 5 Characteristics of Students Participants			
Name	Educational Institution	Grade	Gender
Leonardo	College	Graduate	Male
Emanuel	Charter High School	11 th	Male
Candy	Public High School	11 th	Female
Kelvin	Public High School	11 th	Male

Table 5 Student Participants

Grade was not a selection criterion for recruiting students in this study. By coincidence all three high school volunteers were in the 11th grade. All students selected were African Americans with SLD.

Emanuel attended a downtown, charter school. He was the only African-American student with SLD in his high school. This Charter School had a small number of special education students to begin with, and the majority of the population were Hispanic. Therefore, the researcher made the decision to recruit Emanuel in spite of his writing skills being at the second grade level, as reported by his membership teacher. His disabilities were manifested in reading, writing and math. Emanuel was in a resource program/ full inclusion - with one hour pull out per week. His resource room services focused mostly on reading and assistive technology. He did not have any other related services. Emanuel was shy and quiet. He struggled with school attendance which he attributed to transportation issues. During this study, he was always the one who needed reminders to turn in his journal entries. In fact, the researcher had to meet him at school, during lunchtime, in order to retrieve his journal entries. However, he seemed to have a good grasp of reality around him, as revealed in his input in this study.

Candy was the only girl in this study and the only one with a diagnosed secondary disability: speech impairments. Also, she was being medicated for ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). Candy's SLD were in reading comprehension, and math computation. Her speech impairments were in areas of articulation and language: receptive and expressive vocabulary. Candy's placement was in full inclusion with resource program hours as well as speech and social work therapy twice per month. She was in her third year of advisory; her advisor was also her membership special education teacher. Candy was the most enthusiastic participant in the study. However, due to her speech impairments, her interview was redone two

weeks after the initial one, at a time when she was much more comfortable and familiar with the researcher. The decision to redo the interview was taken in by Candy and the researcher as a result of the failure of verbatim check. (Sample of her first interview is presented in the Interviews Analysis section). Candy and Kelvin were classmates in the same public school on the East side of the metropolitan area. However, they had different advisory classes since advisory was organized by gender and grade in their school. They were both friendly and well known in their school by adults, from security officers to secretaries and teachers. They both had a good attendance.

Kelvin was a special education student with SLD in reading comprehension and math calculation. He was placed in full inclusion with resource room support. According to Kelvin, all special education direct services were provided out of class, in the resource room. Kevin also had as advisor his resource room teacher. He is extremely polite with good social skills. The researcher was impressed about how well Kelvin was able to understand Candy and many times he helped with comprehending Candy's expressive language.

Leonardo was selected as a recent graduate from a public school district in this urban area. The researcher was interested in a graduate that can look back and critically evaluate the outcomes of the high school's advisory program. Dora highly recommended Leonardo as a former student of her, reliable and with experience from both sides: special and regular education. In addition, Leonardo was the only one from the West side of the urban metropolitan area. He is an interesting student-case because he was a special education student with SLD in the area of reading comprehension and math calculation in grades 9-10. His last IEP done at the end of his 10th grade indicated a reading performance at the 5th grade level. He also had only five hours per week of special education – Resource Room services. His special education services

were terminated in the 11th grade because his SLD no longer made a negative impact on his academic performance. However, at the time of this study, Leonardo, a freshman college student, was taking remedial and support classes. According to Dora, his advisor and membership teacher from 9-10th grade, he also had behavioral and emotional problems when he entered high school. However, at the time of the study, Leonardo was a college athlete highly motivated to get good grades in schools.

Students' data was comprised of one initial interview followed by four journal entries, and a survey.

Presentation of the Data and Results of the Analysis

Interviews. A total of 10 interviews were recorded and transcribed. First, the audio files were transcribed. Secondly, the verbatim were checked word for word to the audio file by the researcher. In the third phase, four participants checked their own transcript entirely, and one seldom checked parts of it as part of member check. Three teachers checked their interviews verbatim and approved them: Dora, Josie and Flo. One student, Kelvin, seldom checked parts of his verbatim and agreed with it. One student, Candy tried and failed in checking her verbatim due to her speech articulation problems that made the audio file barely understandable. The researcher had the same issue, so in agreement with the student, Candy's interview was re-done. The figure 6 is a sample of Candy's first interview transcription in which "RE" stands for researcher and "Ca" stands for Candy.

RE 01:04	Are you walking to school, or you take the bus?
CA 01:06	I'm on-- [train?].
RE 01:09	Okay. And you are in the 11th grade. What is your favorite subject?
CA 01:19	[?] [music?], but I don't got it this year. I hope I will because I like to sing. Then my favorite, it will be [?].
RE 01:35	Okay. And I understand that you have a resource program and support in school?
CA 01:44	Yes.
RE 01:44	Okay. Can you describe me your experience with the support that you have here?
CA 01:51	It helped me better my work if I need to [anytime?]. Like my math, I need help with that. And [?] me [?] out a couple.

Figure 6. Sample of Candy's first verbatim

The numbers represent the audio-recorded time, also used as a replacement of line numbering for line identification.

The second interview was recorded two weeks after the initial one. In this interval of two weeks, researcher met with Candy two more times. Therefore, Candy grew more familiar and comfortable with the researcher. Candy also checked and approved her second verbatim.

However, just eight verbatim interviews were used in this study. One teacher, Donna, moved to another school district, out of the research area, so she was dropped from this study for not meeting the selection criteria.

There were two different interview protocols (Appendices A and B) used for each category of participants, students and teachers, adapted to their position in advisory program as advisor or advisee.

A pilot review group method was used for students' interview protocols. Two graduates, former students of the researcher, were asked to answer the interview questions in order to check the clarity of questions' wording as well as the amount of data collected. The review group process concluded that interview questions were clear and broad enough to provide rich data for qualitative ground theory analysis.

Journal Entries. Two journal entries were introduced in the first cycle of this study, as explained in chapter 3 and shown in appendices C and D.

The first two journal entries for students asked them to step out of the student's shoes and take a look at the big picture of advisory program. The first prompt was:

“Imagine that you are a superintendent that has the opportunity to create a brand new high school. At this point, you are required to write the part of the plan that addresses the educational program offered to students with Learning Disabilities. Use the following support questions to write your plan:

- How will your school support students with Learning Disabilities?
- Why would they need an advisory class? What would they learn/experience in that advisory class?

The researcher wanted students to report on their understanding of “Why” an advisory class was needed. The choice of considering a high school without advisory was not adopted because students in small schools don't have the option of selecting this class. Also, this item is recapping a similar interview question (How would you describe the role of an advisory program in your school? *Probe:* In your opinion, what are the teachers trying to accomplish during the advisory time?) as part of triangulation of data collection and analysis. The difference between the two data sets is that the interview captured the inside perspective while the journal entry showed the

outside perspective. The second prompt explores part of “How” to structure an advisory. Similar to the first prompt, this directive is related to the fifth student’s interview question (Imagine that I am a new student in this class and I never heard about an advisory class. What would you tell me about your advisory class?). Figure 7 is an example of a student journal entry on this prompt. This entry directed the students’ response specifically on the structural parts of the program such as schedule and student population.

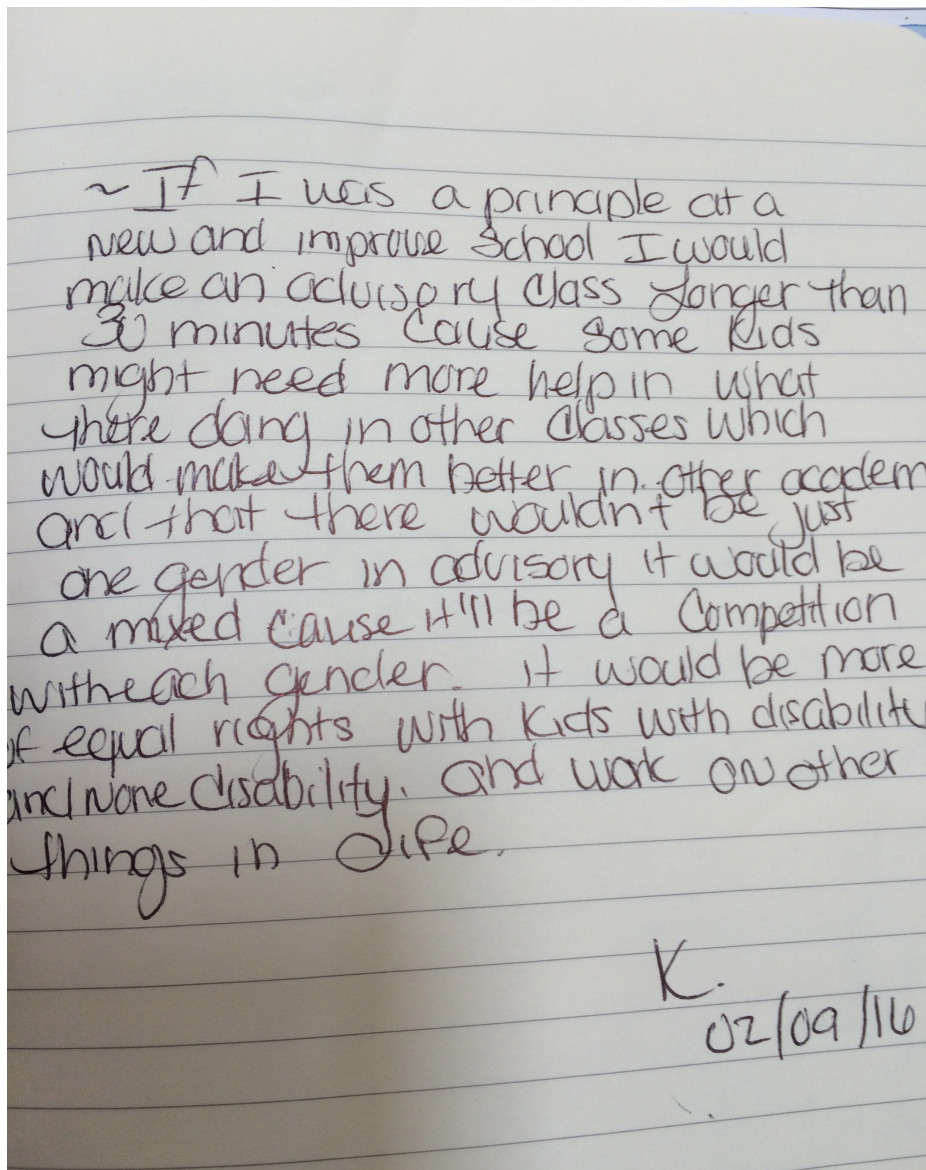


Figure 7 Sample of Student Journal Entry

Based on data analysis and initial coding (detailed in the next subchapter), the researcher clarified the confusion between resource room and advisory programs and identified the misconceptions through the third prompt, as presented in Figure 8. The first two journal entries revealed poor writing skills from all three current students: Candy, Kelvin, and Emanuel. Therefore, the researcher used a modified Venn diagram, color-coded as the third prompt for students, in order to attain a stress-free exposure of their thinking.

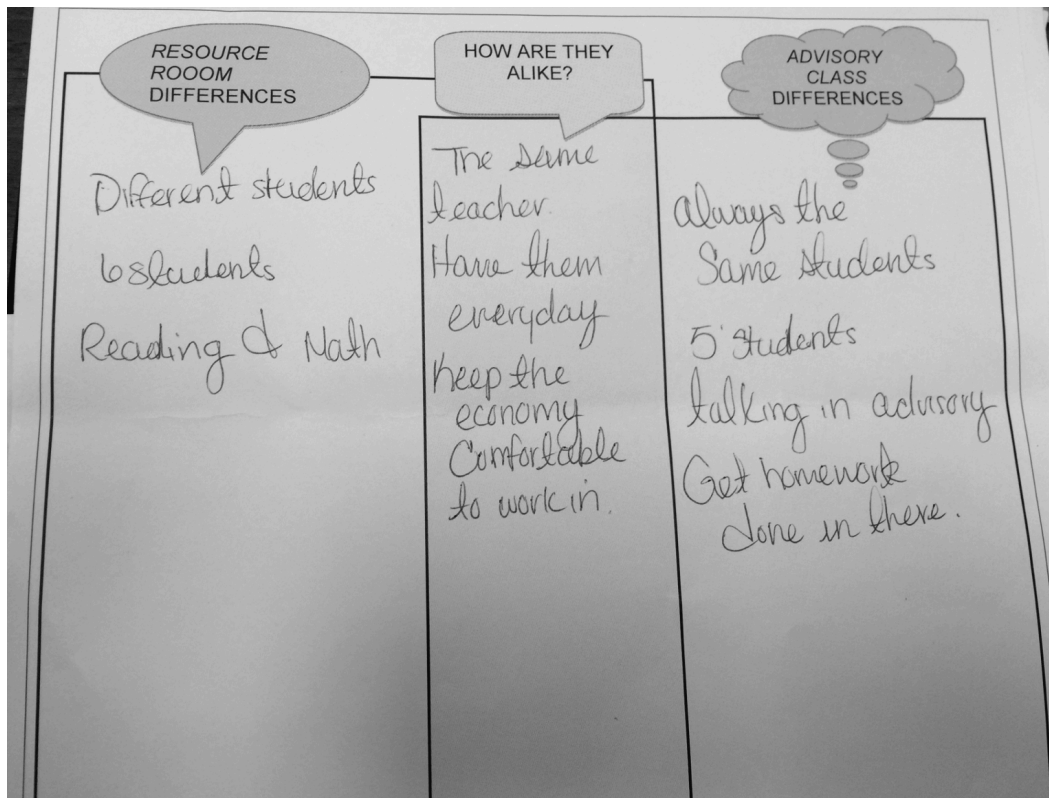


Figure 8. Sample of Student Journal Entry #3 with Modifications

The fourth prompt focused on the comparison between urban and suburban education from participant students' perspective: "Other than material resources, how do you think the education in suburban schools is different than yours and why?"

Researcher gathered enough data from students, so there was no need for a fifth prompt from this group.

Teachers had two prompts in the first research cycle:

1. From your perspectives, what are the outcomes of an advisory class in urban education?
In your answer, please be specific if there are different/ additional outcomes for students with disabilities.
2. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of facilitating an inclusive advisory class, vs. a seclusive advisory class for students with disabilities?

The three prompts added that were in the second research cycle were created based on the following findings of interviews and prompts analysis: (a) confusion between resource program and advisory; (b) not enough data to cover the third research question. Therefore, the following prompts were introduced at two weeks interval:

3. Think of African American students with learning disabilities that you taught during your career! If you compare this particular population with the rest of your students, how would you describe their needs for support in social- emotional development?
4. Compare the Resource Program – special education with advisory program – and regular education.
5. The technical literature of the advisory promotes the program as a way to increase the graduation rate in underserved populations, such as the African American minority. Students with learning disabilities are more prone to drop out than regular education students. How would you criticize these statements based on your direct observation and experience?

Outcomes of Interviews and Journal Analysis. The investigator used the audio records for familiarization with data. The researcher took notes while listening for accuracy of the recordings. Similarly, the transcription of the journal entries in word documents was used for

familiarization with journal entries. Then, the electronic files were imported in NVivo as “sources” and organized in folders. Figure 9-illustrates the organization of data in Sources-Internals with colored stripes for codes tags, a feature that facilitates the coding process applied to the open source. An enlarged, readable image is also presented in appendix F.

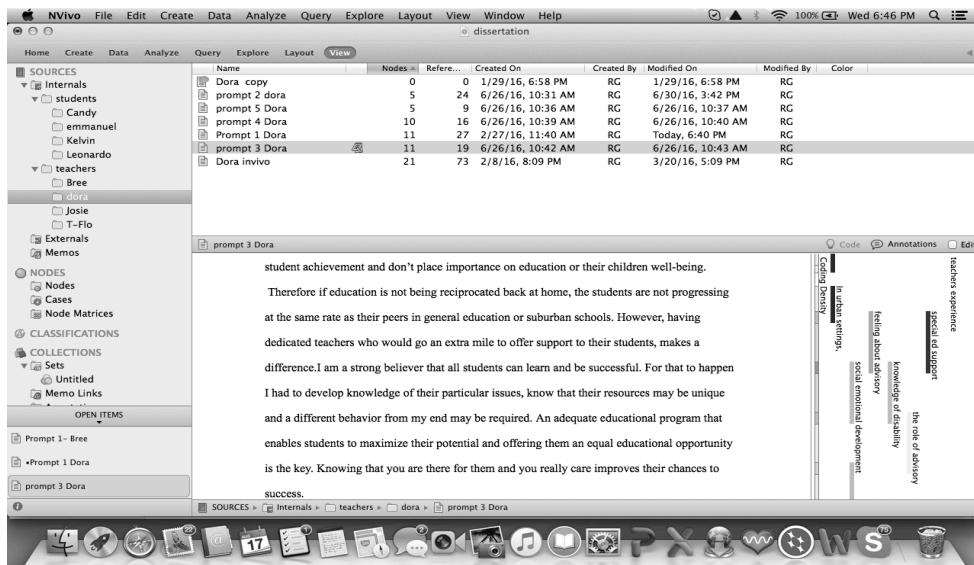


Figure 9 Snapshot of an NVivo page

The researcher used “initial, open coding” in the first cycle because it helped to reflect “deeply on the contents and nuances of the data” and getting “analytic leads for further exploration” (Saldaña, 2013, p.100-101). Figure 10 and Appendix H illustrates a sample of a code and its references: Teachers Experience.

All codes were kept automatically in “Nodes document” that represents the code list in NVivo. The appendices I and J show a sample of the nodes lists from the first and second cycle.

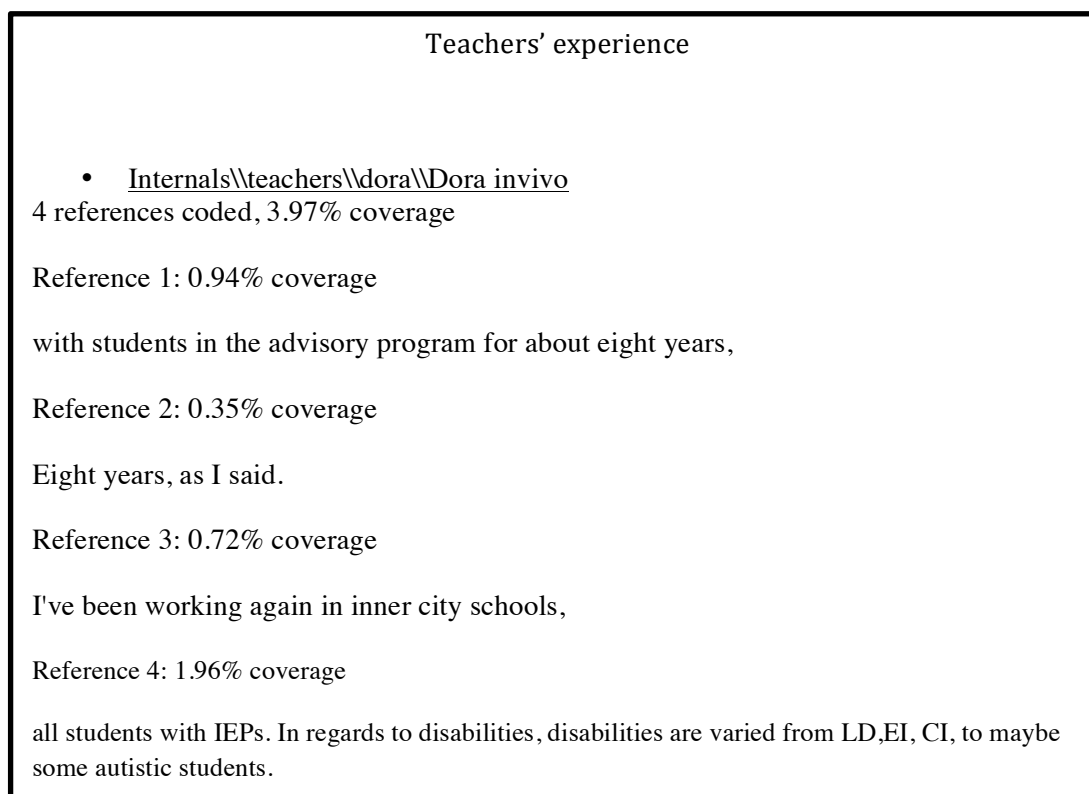


Figure 10. Extract from a code sample (The whole sample is presented in Appendix H)

According to Saldaña (2013), the second cycle coding methods “are advanced ways of reorganizing and reanalyzing data coded through First Cycle methods”. (p. 207) Axial and theoretical coding approaches were used in this phase. Before and during the second research cycle, the researcher adapted what Saldaña (2013) called the “table top” strategy to synthesize and organize the codes in categories. In this transitional process, all codes labels were printed and spread on a sticky material that covered a wall. Then the researcher ordered and reordered them in codes, concepts, categories, and themes.

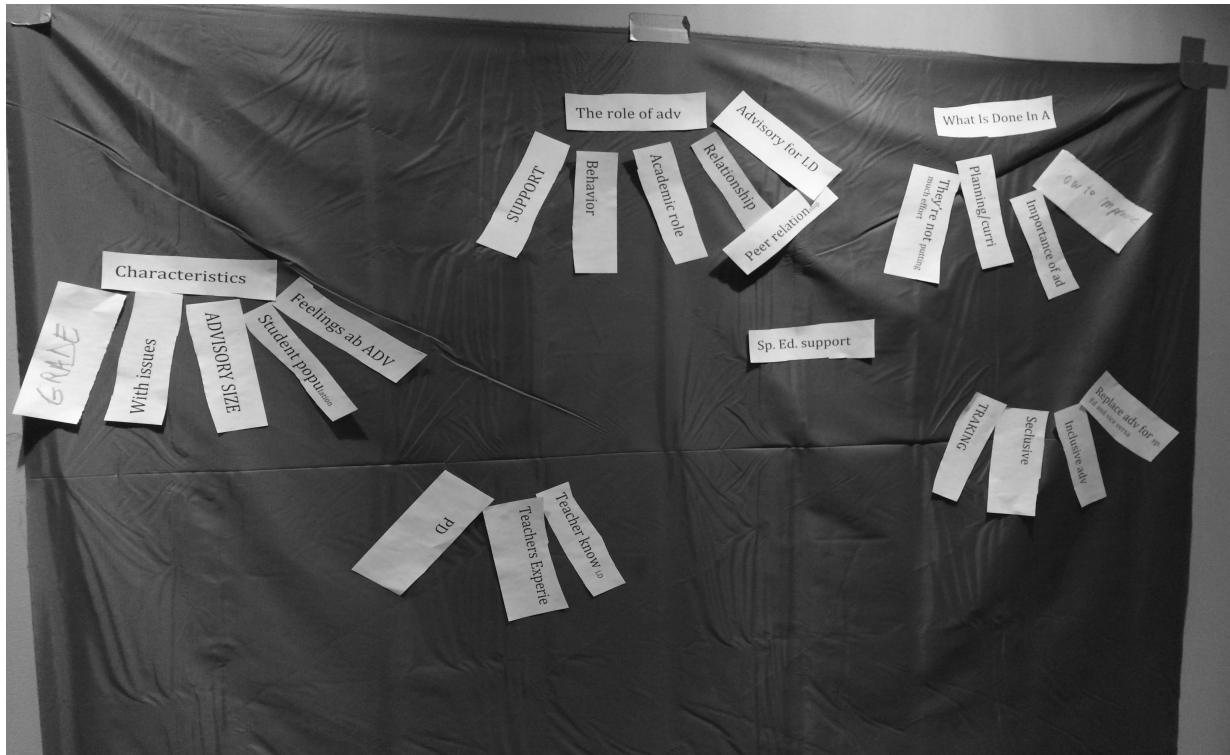


Figure 11. Post – coding transition method- before the second research cycle

This strategy was continuously applied throughout the second cycle and in the prewriting transition phase. Therefore, the wall changed frequently as the labels were also re-worded several times as it is shown in figures 11, 13, and 14. In addition, the number of tags varied during the process as new codes emerged from the data or old codes merged. “The role of advisory” is an example of applied grounded theory coding methods. Initially, as displayed in figure 11, “The role of advisory” was a concept group label. After axial coding was applied to all data, “the role of advisory” became taxonomy with child nodes (subcodes), nodes (codes), concepts, and categories as shown in the diagram from figure 12. Figures 11 and 13 represent photo shots at the beginning and middle stage of the second research cycle and the final stage in the synthesis process from nodes to themes.

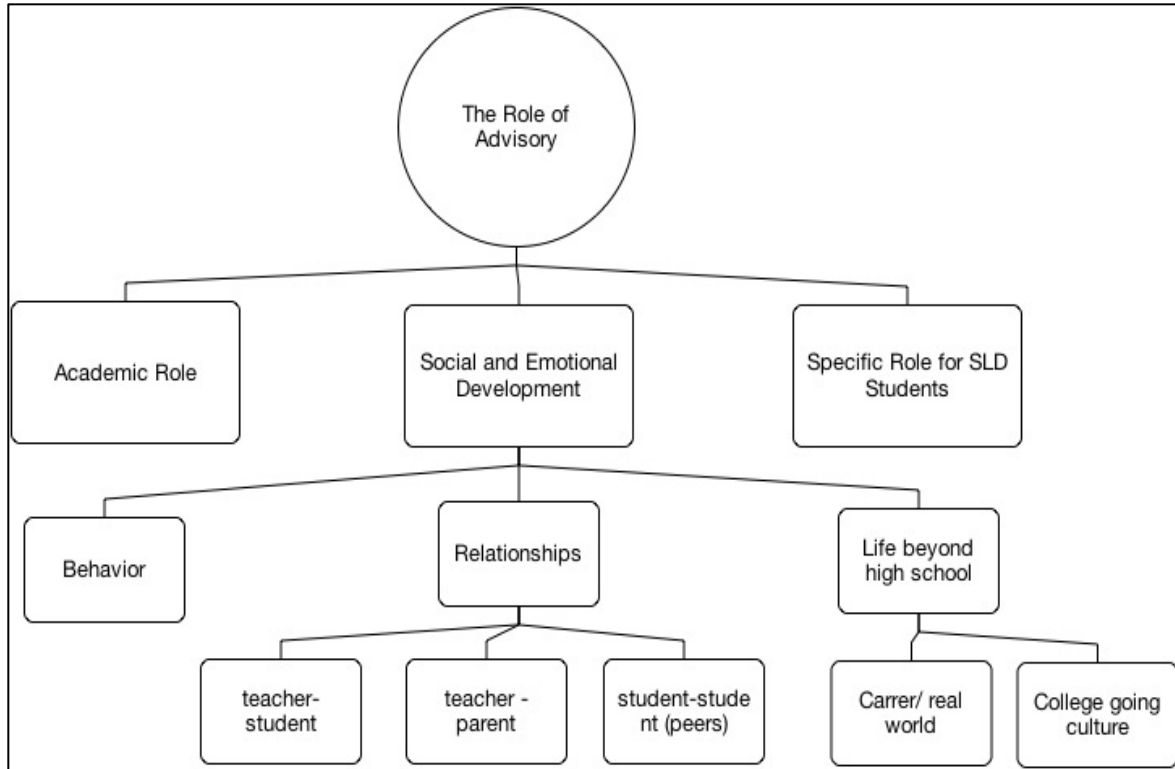


Figure 12. Sample of a category. The role of advisory

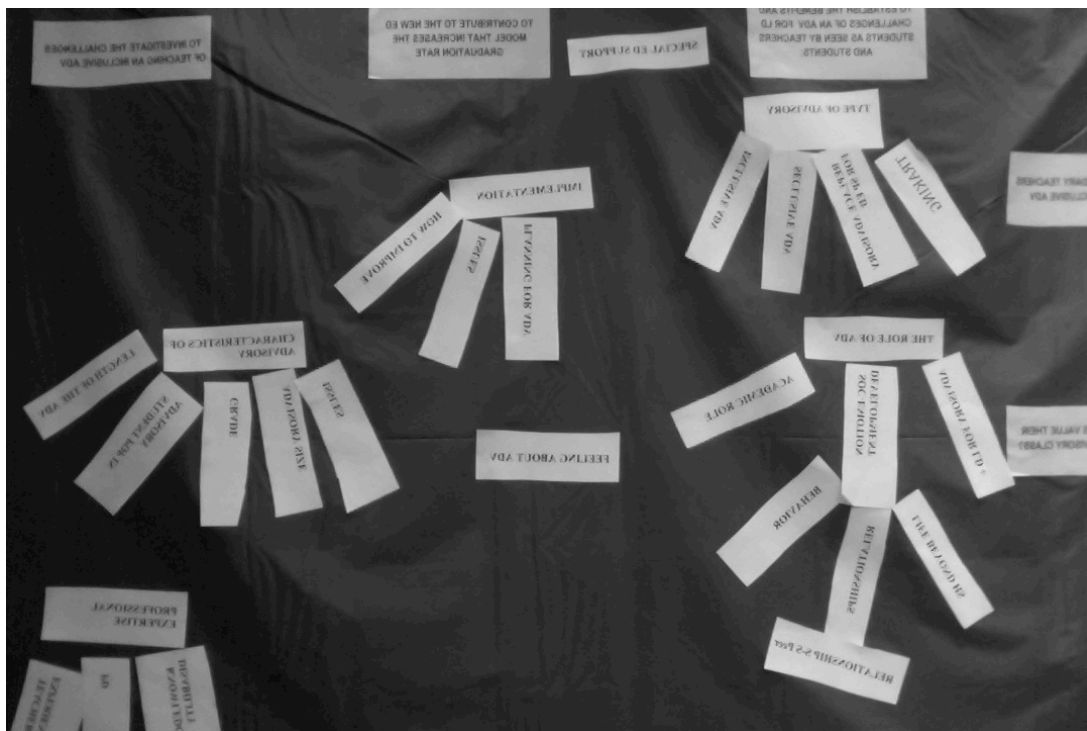


Figure13 Middle stage in grouping nodes on the “wall top” (photo booth)

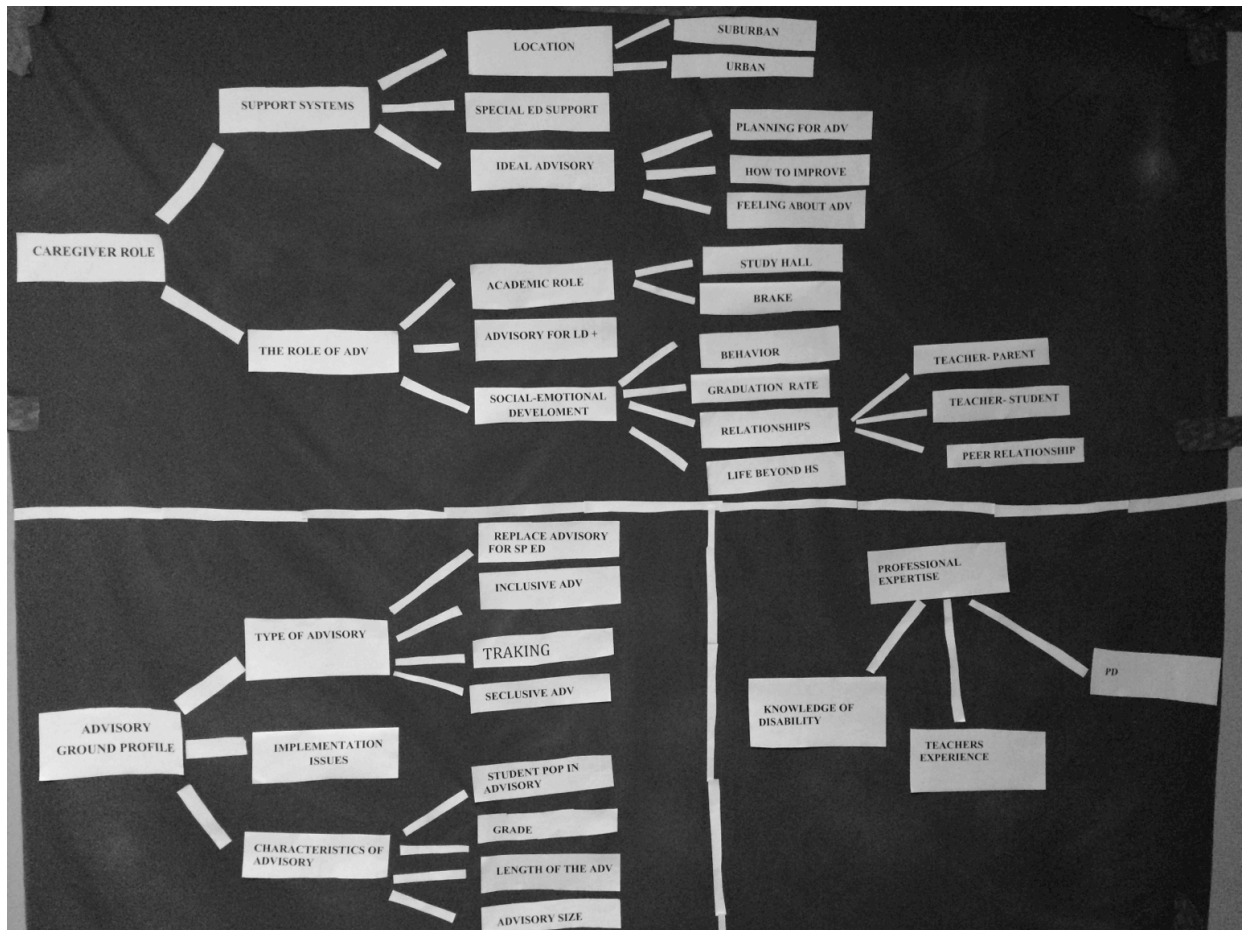


Figure 14. The Final configuration of the “wall top”- expose the emerging themes in a tree diagram.

Two themes emerged from the study: the caregiver role and the ground profile of advisory. The caregiver role, defined in this study as a provider of social, emotional, and moral support, was a common pattern in the two groups, teachers and students as displayed in the diagram figure 15. All word tree diagrams for “care” stemmed words “caring”, “cares”, and “cared” are presented in appendix G.

Urban teachers spoke about the advisor’s role as a caregiver. Dora talked about it directly in the context of SLD African Americans from an urban school – prompt three: “Knowing that you are there for them and you really *care* improves their chances to success.”

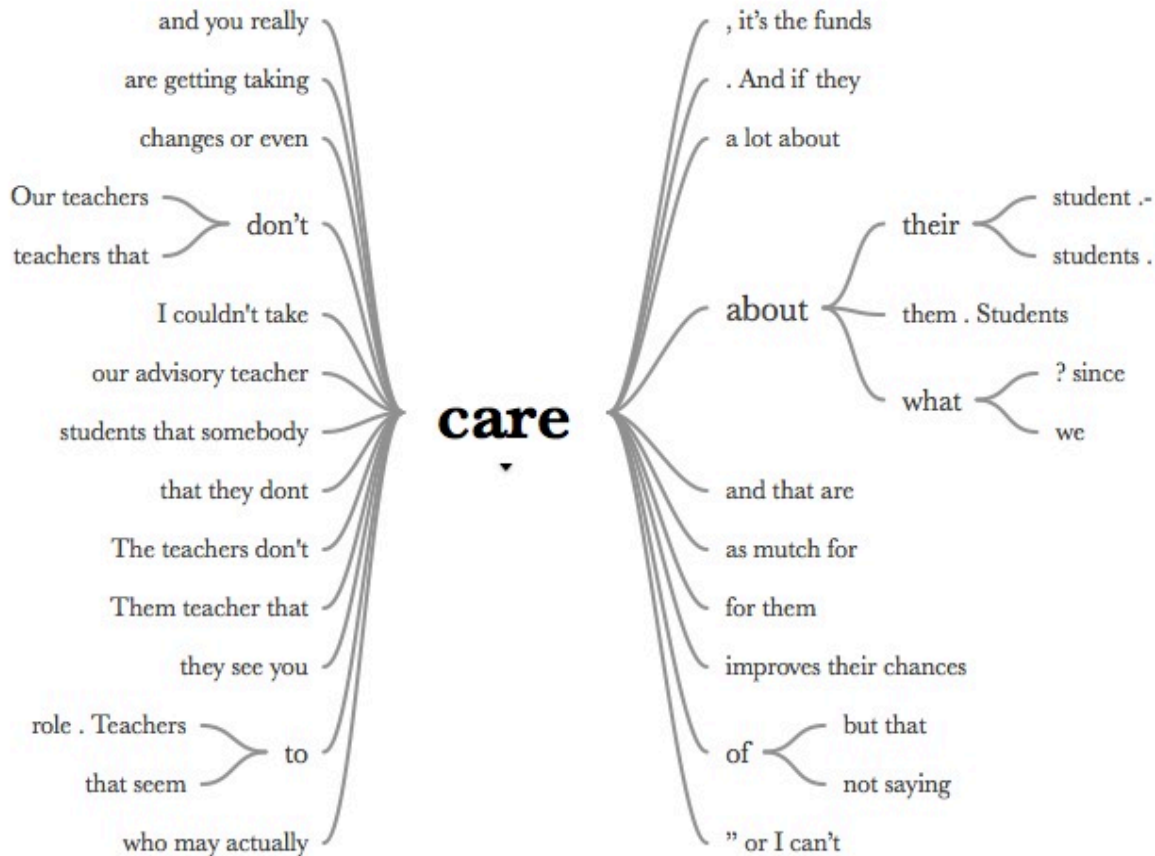


Figure 15. The word “Care” tree diagram that shows the context in which the word was used.

Flo said in her interview:

“The students, once they see you *care* a lot about them, that you're taking out time, then they tend to want to do good for you. It seems like they try to do better if they know there's someone-- because many of our students don't have parents at home that really watch their growth or their changes or even *care*. And if they know someone *cares* and they feel like they have someone to impress or to be proud of them, then they want to make you proud of them. “

Josie also mentions it in her interview: “I want to make sure that they knew somebody cared about them”. Bree described it as part of the advisor’s role in urban education “Students feel that (...) they can trust and someone who may actually *care* about them.”

Students’ opinions about the caregiver’s role were not as cohesive as the teachers’ beliefs.

Emanuel exemplified his understanding of what “caring” teachers meant to him: when he talked about teachers in suburban schools in his fourth journal entry: “The teachers don't care as much for the students. Example: no late passes. They are really strict.” Candy had the opposite thought about the teachers in suburban schools: “they have teacher that seem to care about their student.” (Candy’s fourth entry journal.) However, Leonardo took the concept in a very surprising direction, as explained in the following paragraph, excerpt from his journal entry:

“In my opinion a lot of answers would come upon to “Our teachers don’t care” or “I can’t stand this school”, but what I would say is our schools didn’t have enough funds to do too much for us. Truthfully our teachers didn’t get paid a lot. Suburban schools are getting taking care of, not saying it’s their fault it’s just the obvious. So in my conclusion it’s not our teachers that don’t care, it’s the funds that our school wasn’t getting.”

Besides the parts that specifically named the caregiving task, the idea of taking care of the wellbeing of students was exposed in all data that described the schools’ support systems and the role of advisory. For example, Kelvin’s advice to the advisor was: “That you should always think about the children first and have the children's well-being in mind “ (Kelvin’s interview). The paradigm here is that the school system is all about children’s education. However, according to Microsoft Word’ thesaurus, well-being’s synonyms are: happiness, comfort, welfare, health, and security, so the student well –being is more than just academics. On the same note, Leonardo explained in his interview that the role of advisory

“it's not just academic, it's with everything. Anything that you-- even if you're going through something, it's just for that. You might think it's just there to help you academically, but it's really there to help you all over, all around.”

The second theme, the Ground Profile of Advisory, is a collection of patterns that form a real portrait of the advisory program as seen through the lenses of the eight participants in this study. One example of such a pattern is the type of advisory. While studying about special

education settings, the literature exposed the inclusive classes (contain regular and special education students) or the self-contained classes (contains only special education students). However, two more categories emerged in this study. One category is the tracking class. The tracking concept in school refers to the strategy of leveling students in classes based on their academic performance. The two extremes of tracking classes that surfaced in this research are:

- Inclusive setting in which all the regular education students were actually low functioning students, students at risk, or as Kelvin described it, “Kids that need special attention”.
- High achievement students grouped in one advisory class. An example is what Bree said in her interview:

“I had high achieving students - the valedictorian and the salutatorian were both in my class - in my advisory. Very high achieving, they were all very good students this year. (...) And it was about ten students, and they were all super smart - good class. (...) So they were high achieving as far as their grades. Once again, I did not have any students with IEPs. (...) I had one student who was still super smart, but just wasn't very motivated to go to school. The rest of them, they were all super smart, they were all socially “.

Researcher named the second category: “Replace Advisory for Sp. Ed”. As its name implied, some advisory classes used this time to work on special education items such as transition, or IEPs. Two excerpts from Candy’s interview are relevant examples:

(1) “CANDY : When I need help, I get to go to my advisory teacher who is also a special ed. teacher. She help me with me math, reading, science, social studies. (...)

Researcher : Okay. When is she helping you with all this work?

CANDY: Around advisory time.”

(2) “Researcher: (...)Now, how would you describe the role of an advisory program in your school?

CANDY :It would help me with my missing class work, or missing what I had to get done. “

Moreover, Flo’s two interview’s quotes support this idea:

(1) "I think I personally like a mixed advisory with most of my students being learning disability, but I do like to have some gen. ed students in there if possible, when possible, because I'm able to address the needs of my learning disability students and also encourage them to try to follow the path of the gen. ed students."

(2) "it also gives me time to get test data on them and also try to specifically address their needs to help close the gap in wherever their deficiency is."

Another important aspect of this theme is the contradiction between the two groups of participants, teachers and students, in understanding the purpose of an advisory program. All teachers were cohesive in explaining that advisory is a necessary holistic school support system that focused not only on the academics but on the social-emotional development as well. In contrast, students were confused in their beliefs. Candy thought that she had an advisory class in order to fix a schedule glitch: "Because we only got seven-- we got like six classes, but we're supposed to have seven." Kelvin was convinced that he had an advisory class because:

"They give you a break from doing work. (...) Yeah, because some classes, you might have a test-- maybe have a whole bunch of tests on all your classes. Then you get tired, and then don't want to do it no more. Then you feel like you got to fall asleep in class, and you end up failing the class. So that give you a break to relax, to probably take a little cat nap."

Another issue discovered through the participant teachers' lenses is the wrong implementation of the program. Bree said, "Our present advisory class, the advisory model is not being followed correctly, so I wouldn't even call it an advisory class. It's an English class." Flo explain the cause and disclosed another problem "unfortunately, with all the changes that we're having in schools and in the district all the time, you may have a different advisory every year."

Survey. The survey was designed and addressed to students only. The entire multiple-choice student survey is presented in appendix E. Table 6 presents the findings of the survey. This was not meant to be a rich collection data tool, but more as a clarifying tool for questions that aroused during the analysis of all other data. For example, the researcher noticed confusion in student's thinking about the resource and advisory program. Are resource teachers also the advisors to

students? This question came up during the analysis. This was a yes/no question, so a survey is a convenient tool to find the answer. Other questions, such as questions three and seven, were created out of the teachers' interviews and prompts. There was a pattern in teachers' data that used the word "trust" (trusts, trusting) in describing the relationship between the advisor and his/her advisees. Figures 16 and 17 shows an example of using the "query" tab from NVivo software to check the word "trust" frequency in interviews and prompts collected from teachers and grouped in word tree diagrams.

the opportunity to develop — **trusting** — relationships with their advisors

Figure 16. Image of Word tree diagram – Trusting

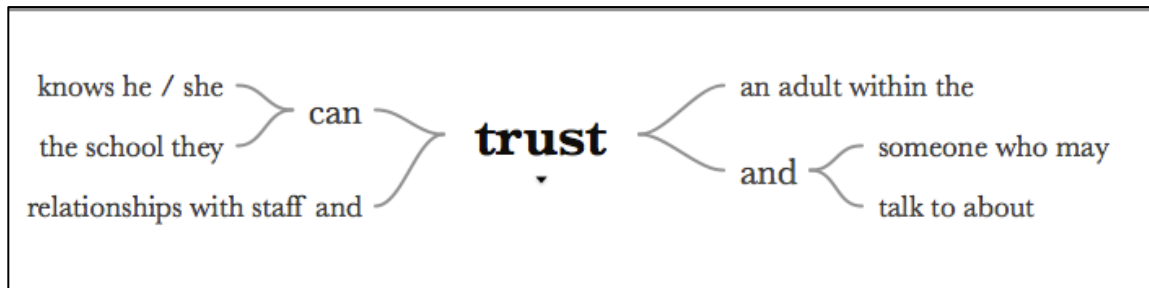


Figure 17. Image of Word Tree Diagram – Trust

Thus, the third question is checking the validity of the trust relationship from the students' perspective. A similar process was used for the "planning" theme, coded in teachers' data.

Other questions, such as question eight, were inspired by the codes and categories from applied grounded theory analysis method to the interviews and prompts from all participants. In this case, the survey worked as a triangulation of data analysis method. Finally, other questions, such as question nine, pointed directly to some of the research questions.

The survey results confirmed that students Kelvin and Candy who were the most confused about the special education and advisory programs, have indeed the same teacher for both programs.

The second question confirmed that all students in this study came from inclusive settings. Three students trusted their advisor, which is a confirmation of the interview/ prompts findings-category “the role of advisory”

- “The rationale behind the advisory programs is that students will have the opportunity to develop trusting relationships with their advisors” (Excerpt from Dora’s prompt #1).
- It helps students form relationships with staff and trust an adult within the school. Students feel like they have a mentor who is always looking out for them and watching over their shoulder (Excerpt from Bree’s prompt #5).

While students’ opinion on the role of advisory vary from a complex role to a variety of roles, all participants students agreed that advisory is a motivating factor for graduation, and it is a good class to be enrolled in, especially for African –Americans students with SLD. However, there is inconsistency in students’ answers when they had to evaluate their teachers’ planning work for this class. All the results of students’ survey are organized in table 6.

Table 6 Part 1 Students' Survey results					
#	Student Question	Kelvin	Emanuel	Candy	Leonardo
1	Is your advisor also your special education Teacher?	yes	no	yes	no
2	In your advisory class, are all students in special education?	no	no	no	no
3	The adult that I trust the most in school is:	my advisory teacher	other	my advisory teacher	my advisory teacher
4	If advisory would be an elective class next year, would you take it?	yes	yes	yes	yes
5	Is your best friend in special education?	no	no	no	no

Table 6. Results of Survey -Part 1

Table 6 Part 2 Student's Survey					
#	Student Question	Kelvin	Emanuel	Candy	Leonardo
6	How important is your advisory class in keeping you motivated to succeed and graduate?	Very important	somehow	somehow	very important
7	How much planning work do you think your advisor puts in your advisory class?	a lot	not too much	minimum	a lot
8	The role of my advisory class is:	to help me with homework and academic work	to prepare me for college	all of the above	all of the above
9	For an African American student with SLD in urban school, the advisory program is:	important	very important	very important	very important

Table 6 Results of Survey – Part 2

Observations. Two observations were conducted during this research, one in Charter school and one in Public school. The observation strategy used was overt, passive participation. Patton (2015) argues “covert observations are more likely to capture what is really happening than are overt observations where the people in the setting are aware they are being studied” (p. 269). However, covert observation raises many ethical and moral issues. Therefore, the advisor teacher informed the class about the researcher’s visit and introduced the researcher to students.

Charter School. Charter school is placed in an old, three stories building. Actually the building is a campus that holds the Charter Elementary/Middle School and the Charter High School, as two separate entities, with different administration but a common main office. The high school occupies the second floor of the building.

The principal of the school chose which class was to be observed and secured permission from the classroom teacher. The class observed was one of the 11th grade advisory classes. By coincidence, this was Emanuel’s advisory class, but he was absent on the day of the observation.

The advisory class at the school starts at the same time, 8:30 am, for all classes, and last for a half hour. It is an inclusive class with special education as well as general education students. The researcher was introduced to the advisor teacher 5 min. prior to class by the school principal. The advisor teacher was a young man, in his first year of teaching math as a TFA² instructor.

The students were in class when the researcher and the advisor entered. This class has a roster of 14 students. On the observation day, there were 11 students, boys and girls, from grades 10 and 11. The researcher took a seat on the left side of the room. Advisory announcements were

² TFA or Teach for America is a nonprofit organization that “recruits recent college graduates and professionals to teach for two years in urban and rural communities throughout the United States. (...) Corps members do not have to be certified teachers, although certified teachers may apply. Uncertified corps members receive alternative certification through coursework taken while completing the program.”¹ Teach For America. (2016, June 21). In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 19:46, June 29, 2016, from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Teach_For_America&oldid=726394426

on the board: “Teeth Health”, “Dance Event”, “Field trip”, and “Student Council”. The first point on the agenda was a short notice that a dental hygiene program will be present in the school on a certain date. Flyers with detailed information for parents were passed out to all students. A boy in the back of the class asked if they would be able to get teeth work and the answer was yes, but it also depended on what needed to be done. The next discussion point was the dance event. There was a general giggle at the back of the room. All the students were chatting, smiling and laughing. The advisor had to raise his voice to be heard and to establish the talking points: dance tickets- where, how much and who intended to go. The first two points were short, just an information released by a student and approved by the advisor. Then students talked about their intention to go to the dance. Majority of the conversation included “are you going? Me too!” However, a boy on the right side of the room announced that he would not go. Several students asked him if he had money problems at home. He denied it, yet did not disclose the reason. Another boy who seemed to be his friend explained out loud” He is embarrassed to dance, so he will not go to the dance.” Students tried to convince the boy to attend the event, if only to watch others dance. Another boy said that he would like to go to the dance just to dress up but he doesn’t want to dance either. Somebody else said that they have good food at this type of events so students decided to go at least for the food. There were student conversations without any interference from the advisor who just observed them. He seemed to be pleased with how the conversation ended and he announced the next discussion point the field trip to Cedar Point. The giggling started again, but it was lower than the previous one. The advisor read the requirements for going to the field trip and asked the class to come up with fund raising ideas by the next class. The boy behind the researcher told the girl in front of him that he didn’t have money for

the Cedar Point trip but he would try some fund raising ideas. The girl was not enthusiastic either about her financial possibilities of paying for the trip.

Next, the screen showed the daily Quote:

“The mind is everything. What you think, you become.”

Buddha

Students did not wait for any prompt from the Advisor. Like in a ritual, they started conversations around who Buddha was, where he was from, and some characteristics of Asian’s culture. A small group of boys led the discussion. They were knowledgeable about the subject. Other students also discussed the quote. The advisor interfered seldom to keep them on topic.

The third component of this class was a 15 min. mini-lesson. The subject was the water crisis in Flint. The observation was done during the time when the water issues in Flint were making national news and were discussed in electoral campaigns. The researcher figured out from discussions that students had watched a video of Flint’s disaster the day before. They also watched the mornings TV news. The researcher was impressed with their knowledge of how people were affected by the poisoned water. Boys were more talkative than girls, but every student participated in the conversation. In this discussion, they rarely talked over one other. The same few boys led the discussions. Suddenly students were up and ready to go. The advisor reminded them to watch the news and to think of fund raising ideas for the Cedar Point trip.

Public school. The researcher had previous contact with the advisor and planned the observation in advance. The public school advisor observed was also a math teacher.

The advisory in this school was scheduled on the 4th hour, from 11:40am to 12:10 pm, daily, across the school. It is organized by: same gender, mixed grades, and an inclusive setting with special education as well as regular education students.

The class observed was an all-girls, 10th grade advisory class, located on the second floor, by the main stairs. Three girls entered the class during pass time while two others were a few minutes late. There were no arranged seats as two of the girls changed seats several times till they were comfortable. These were the only two girls that stayed close to each other. As shown in figure 19, class diagram, girls choose to stay far away from each other. A journal entry was on screen. Figure 18 represents a picture of the journal entry as seen on the smart board. Teacher read the directions:

“Who I Want to Be- Evaluate yourself as a person right now. Next year you’ll be a junior! You’ll have two younger years looking up to you. What are aspects of yourself that you LIKE and aspects of yourself that you DISLIKE? In the future, how would you like to be different from how you are now? Is there someone either a famous person or someone in your life that you really admire/want to be like? What are the aspects of that person you want to yourself after? “

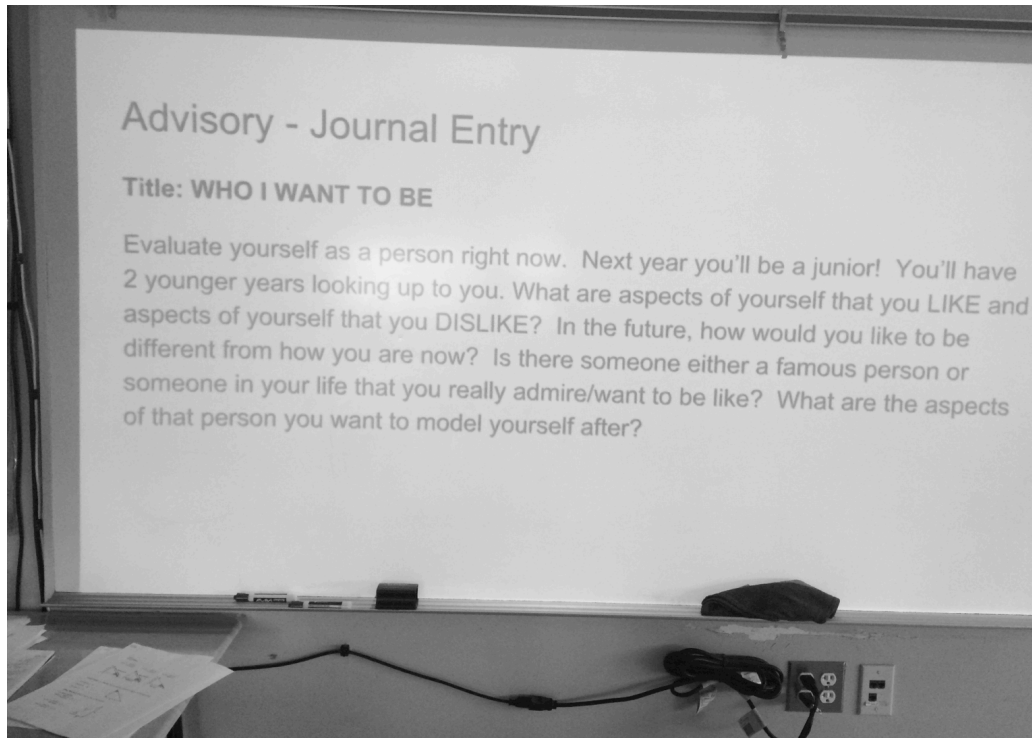


Figure 18. Picture of the board

It was unclear to the researcher if the journal entry was a daily class routine or an occasional one as the girls started to complain about it and unsuccessfully tried to convince the

teacher to skip this part. The advisor gave examples that included Beyonce and her sister. However, students turned around in a circle to talk to each other. One girl identified as R girl on the class diagram (figure 19) wanted to share her problems. The teacher told her that sharing is always at the end of the class, however, she would be able to share after the journal entry part. R was unhappy with the advisor's decision and blurted out to the class that last evening she run away from home. The other girls started to talk all together, majority of them complaining about the self-reflection as a written task, other about the topic and one girl stated that she is not doing it. The advisor stopped the chatter by restating the order of the day: "first journal entry – today it is a self –reflection topic, then "sharing moments." The three girls in the back started to work on the task. The girl in front named B on the class diagram (figure 19) said that she is 15 years old and has behavioral problems. She didn't want to do the writing part, but wanted to answer orally. She also let the class know that since she always had behavioral problems, it was too late to change now, so the world must accept her the way she is. She finished her speech by restating: "It's too late to change now. I can't change. That's who I am." The advisor went close to her and talked her into doing the writing part. At the same time, R walked around the room and kept interrupting the conversation with her own story; since nobody really paid attention to she sat down. Finally it got quiet and the girls were writing in their journals. After another seven minutes, four girls were done. The advisor asked who wanted to read their journal. B-girl volunteered first. The researcher was surprised to discover that B was actually a good writer. She wrote two paragraphs that were well articulated with comparisons and metaphors. Then the other girls shared their short writings.

Lastly, R-girl shared her story. She ran away because she got into an argument with her dad's girlfriend. All the other four girls interfered by cursing the "girlfriend". R explained how

she is between parents, in the middle of a custody battle. Her father reported her to the police, who found her in her mom's house and ordered her to stay with her grandma till the final court decision is made. The general feedback from the other girls was that she should have beaten the dad's girlfriend. R explained that it crossed her mind but she was afraid of her dad's revenge. Suddenly, everybody lost interest in the story, and R calmed down as well. The fifth girl wanted to read her writing so everybody listened to her. There was no feedback given after the readings. The teacher praised them for their work. The time was up and the girls were ready to leave the room.

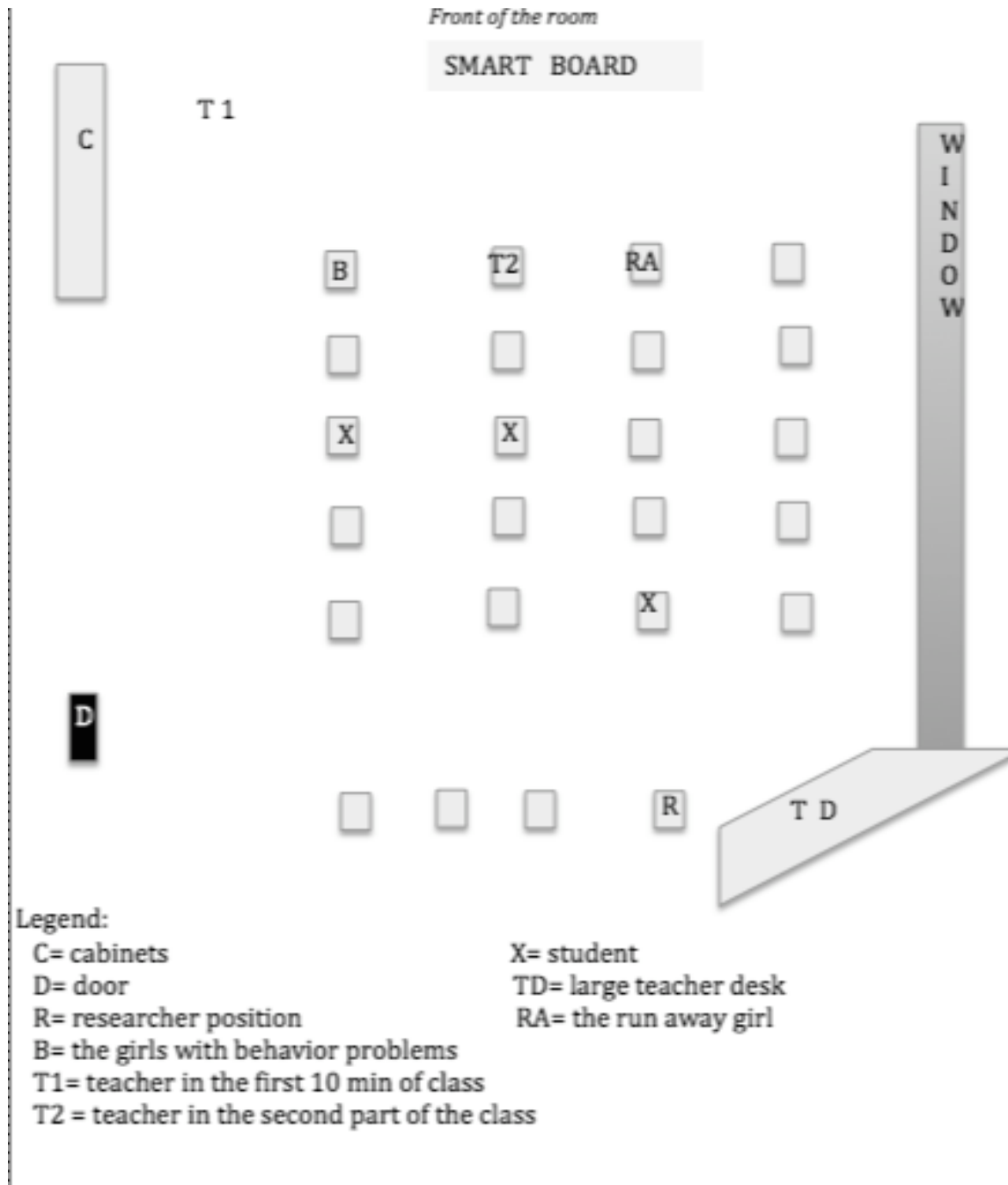


Figure 19. Class Diagram

Outcome of Observations. The analysis of observation occurred after the second cycle of coding of interviews and journals. The researcher created a template tool (Figure 20) for examining the observation notes.

The template matrix contained the main characteristics of how and what is advisory program as described in the literature review- Chapter 2. Five characteristics emerged from the literature: connect school, home, and the real world; foster relationships at all levels; represent a “warning system for any problem the student may face (Hantzopoulos & Tyner-Mullings, 2012); teach and develop habits of mind/ habits of work; provide academic guidance. These categories are broad and overlapping in their definitions, but are not identical either, as they come from different researchers and specialists on the topic. They are represented in purple at the top of the matrix. At the bottom, in red, are the categories that answer the same questions of “How” and “What” as they emerged from coding and represent the opinion of the participants sample. The interrupted line shows similarities between the literature review and research findings. The observation notes were then, stuck on the categories where they belonged. The following color codes were used for schools: Pink sticky notes for Charter school and yellow sticky notes for Public school. The results of this analysis are presented in Figure 22. The final matrix has also a new purple line between habits of work/ habits of mind classification and the behavior category. Also, during the analysis process, the researcher came to the understanding that the habits category was actually composed of skills that build up in behaviors.

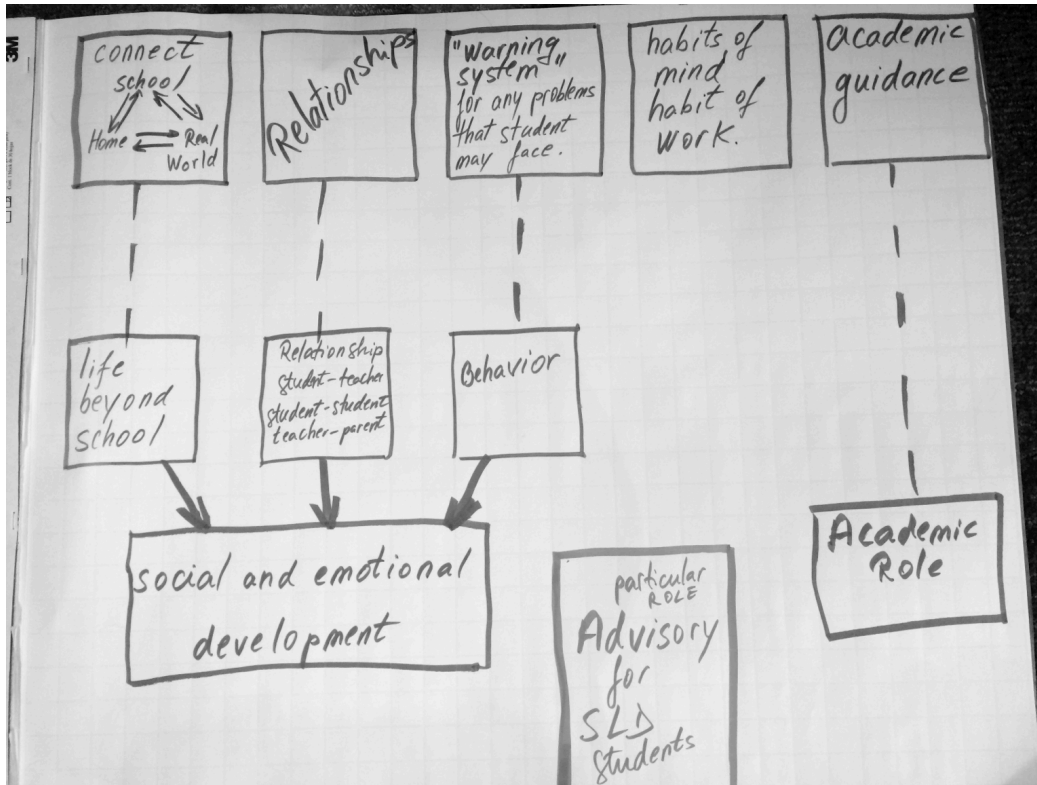


Figure 20. Template- tool for observation analysis

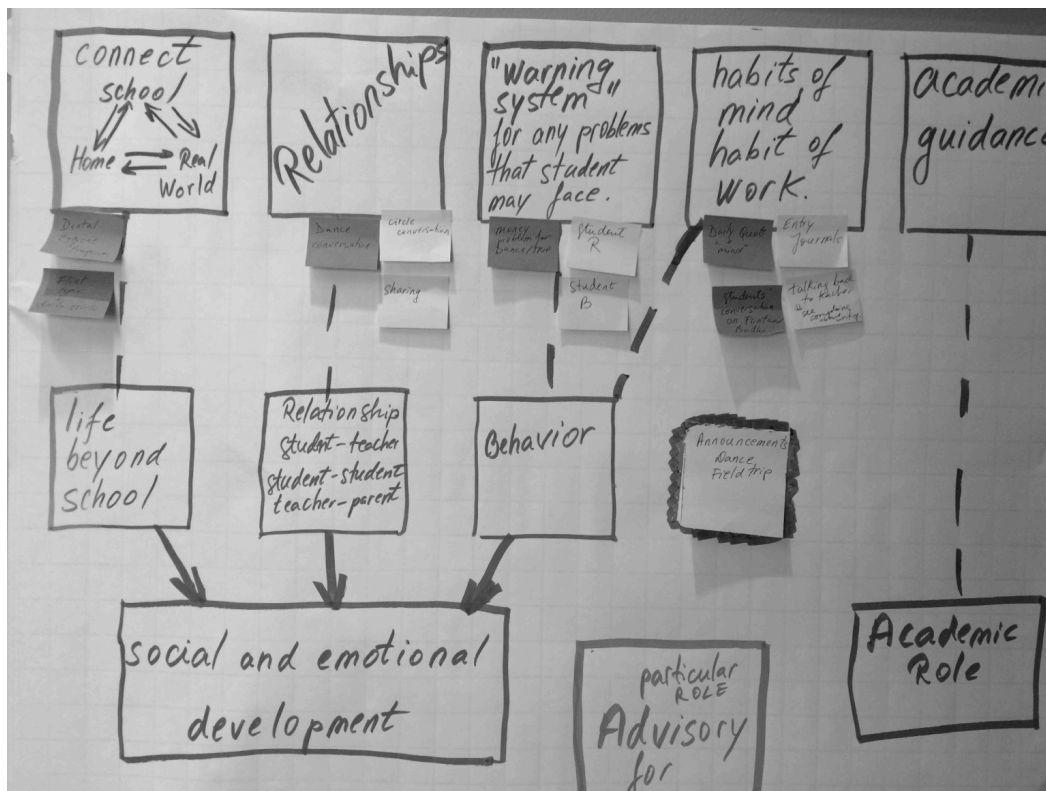


Figure 21. Analysis of Observation notes in relation with Literature Review and research findings

A new category, “Announcements” that is not reflected in literature or in the participants sample responses emerged from the observations. In Charter school, advisory class was also used for school announcements. In this way, school provided students time to debrief the announcements and to ask any questions they might have. The matrix also revealed that one category that emerged from research: the particular role that advisory has for special education students, was not observed in classes or found in literature review.

A detailed matrix is also presented in Chapter 5. It is important to underline that observations are secondary data in this study. That means, they were used to illustrate the practice of advisory programs in different schools. The outcomes cannot be generalized but used as a form of data triangulation (collection and analysis) to check the validity and reliability of research findings.

CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the advisory program for SLD African-American students in M.E.M.A. urban schools. The research questions were:

1. How do secondary school teachers perceive inclusive advisory programs in M.E.M.A. metropolitan area high schools?
2. How do African American students with SLD value their experiences in advisory class?
3. What are the secondary school teachers' critical views on social-emotional development of African American students with SLD in advisory?

Qualitative data was collected from eight participants, students and teachers, then analyzed using grounded theory methods. This chapter will (1) relate the findings to the research questions, (2) present the challenges and limitations of the study, and (3) identify potential implications for improvement in urban education and future research.

The table 7 summarizes the outcome of data analysis described in detail in chapter 4.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Table 8 synthesizes the results by research questions.

Question	THEME	CATEGORY	NODES
Teachers perceptions of inclusive advisory program	The Ground profile of Advisory	THE TYPE OF ADVISORY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive advisory – it facilitates the development of social and team-work skills • Replace advisory for special education- advisory time can be used for working on special education matters with special education students. • Tracking in advisory
Students perceptions of their advisory program	The caregiver role	Student support system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling about advisory –students express their opinions about advisory • How to improve advisory program – students articulate their ideas of improving and solving the challenges of the advisory, based on their experiences in the program.
		The role of advisory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic role – study hall or break • Social emotional development – advisory emphasizes the improvement in behavior, qualitative relationships, graduation, and transition into life beyond high school
Teachers' views on social-emotional development of African – American students with SLD.	The caregiver role	The role of advisory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory for SLD – teachers explain aspects of SLD that can be improved through advisory • Social emotional development – advisory emphasizes the improvement in behavior, qualitative relationships, graduation, and transition into life beyond high school

Table 8. Research Findings

Research question one. How do secondary school teachers perceive inclusive advisory programs in M.E.M.A. metropolitan area high schools?

Teachers in the study articulated advantages and disadvantages of an inclusive advisory class. One common advantage is improving the social skills of students with disabilities. Dora wrote on her second journal entry:

“One of the most obvious advantages of inclusion is the fact that students with disabilities can be integrated socially with their peers. They can create long-lasting friendships that would not be otherwise possible, and these friendships can give them the skills to navigate social relationships later on in life.”

Josie emphasized in her interview:

“You know, if um, we put all LD kids in one room together, they don't learn how to socialize with everyone else and everyone else doesn't learn how to socialize with them. You know, it's awful if you are with people just like you all of your school life, and then you're thrown into a world where everybody is different. You have to learn how to-- how to get along and how to live together, cooperate with other people.”

Other advantages considered by teachers were: role model, peer tutoring, and higher expectations. Bree said: “Feed off of each other, give each other some good suggestions. Role playing is good in advisory also“, (excerpt from Bree's interview). Similarly, Dora mentioned that SLD “students encounter higher expectations – both from their peers and their teachers, as well as the positive academic role models of their non-disabled classmates” (journal entry #2). Flo's opinion was that in an inclusive setting she is”able to address the needs of (my) learning disability students and also encourage them to try to follow the path of the general education students” (excerpt from Flo's interview).

The disadvantages of an inclusive advisory class referred mostly to the comfort zone of SLD students as shown in the following examples:

- “The disadvantage of having an inclusive setting for students with LD would be related to the degree of comfort when their peers know about their limitations.” (Excerpt from Dora’s interview)
- “Students in these seclusive advisories will not feel embarrassed or judged. Students who share similar disabilities will feel more comfortable discussing issues with students who share the same issues, just like students who share similar interests will feel comfortable with each other.” (Bree – prompt 2)
- “Well, the main reason for preferring exclusive is sometimes students are afraid to read or speak in front of students. They feel, "I'm not like them," or they feel that are smarter than them, so if they're comfortable in their learning environment or with their peers that are learning disabled, then they have more of a freedom to express themselves” (excerpt from Flo’s interview).

Research question two: How do African American students with SLD value their experiences in an advisory class?

Students’ perceptions of advisory were diverse and contradictory at times.

Kelvin had a unique opinion on the purpose of advisory. He was constant throughout his interview and written prompts that advisory’s main role is to give students “a break” in the middle of the day: “They give you a break from doing work.” His rationale was “because some classes, you might have a test-- maybe have a whole bunch of tests on all your classes. Then you get tired, and then don't want to do it no more. Then you feel like you got to fall asleep in class, and you end up failing the class. So that gives you a break to relax, to probably take a little cat nap” (excerpt from Kelvin’s interview). Moreover, he wrote in his first journal entry that

students with SLD should have their own class (exclusive class) and in the schedule “they would need advisory because they would have a free period to relax and chill out”.

The idea that advisory is mostly a study hall was a common idea among students. Candy said: “Advisory helps the student deal with other classes, help the student if there is a problem and give support, help with any classwork that they do not understand” (Candy’s interview); Kelvin talked about the use of advisory class as a study hall constantly, as a daily routine:

“Kelvin: Working on academic, trying to get-- if you got homework for a class you didn't do, you got time to do it. If you forgot about it during the day before or fall asleep early, you could just hurry up, do it in advisory, and turn it in when it's time for that class.

Researcher: So it's like a study hall that is giving you extra time for a subject ...

Kelvin: Yes, so you can remember doing the work you didn't do last night.” (Excerpt from Kelvin’s interview).

Leonardo agreed also that one of the advisory’s roles was doing “school work”. However, the academic role of advisory caused confusion among children by overlapping the meaning of resource program with advisory. Kelvin and Candy, students who also had their special education teacher as an advisor, had a hard time comparing the two different programs.

Another role of advisory was to help students’ transition from high school to life beyond it or in Emanuel’s own words “life after we graduate”. Emanuel’s favorite experience in advisory was when they researched and talked about college life. Leonardo pointed out the main role of advisory as a complex, tailored support system:

“The role is just basically helping students in need. (...), because a lot of students don't talk or speak up or anything when they do need help. So the role of the advisory is just someone stepping in for you, controlling the situation for you. Not everything, but just making sure that you're okay and you can get through the little obstacle that you're facing at that time. (...) It's not just academic, it's with everything. Anything that you-- even if you're going through something, it's just for that. You might think it's just there to help you academically, but it's really there to help you all over, all around.”

Indirectly, Kevin talked also about the relationship and emotional bond formed between students and advisor:

“during the advisory we can be able to talk to the teacher about our problem with someone in school or home. (And) since students are very comfortable with them (teachers) they will be able to do what they want with their advisory teacher. Teachers are actually very comfortable with what you got to say because they would know that it's very uncomfortable for you to talk to anyone about it. (And) the reason why people will really like advisory is that it's a good place to get away from some situations that you don't wanna be in the middle of anymore.”

Leonardo exemplified this type of experience:

“This is a little embarrassing, but the most relevant experience (...). I'm the type of person who'll keep everything in and bottled up. And I talked to my adviser, Ms. C, and when she started talking to me, I just started to cry and we was talking about a girl or whatever. She was just telling me, "It's going to be all right. You can't be really focusing on that, and you just need to focus on school and everything that's around you because that's the most important thing that you need to do." So that day was just-- it was a terrible day. And then it was a good day at the end, because she made me realize something that I couldn't see.”

The researcher experienced this point of view during the observation in an advisory class in Public school, as described in detail in chapter 4. In that observation, student R was very comfortable sharing with her small advisory class one of her personal problems. Three out of four students admitted that the person they trust the most in school is their advisor teacher. The student who did not indicate a strong relationship with his advisor, Emanuel, had a new advisor teacher. Also, all students found advisory important for African American students with SLD and as an important motivational factor for graduation.

These results are similar with those obtained by Rey, Smith, Yoon, Somers, and Barnett (2007) in a quantitative research on relationship between teachers and urban African American children from M.E.M.A. . They found that caring teacher-student relationships, as reported by elementary and middle school students predict more interest in school, more feelings of connectedness towards school, and more involvement in school related activities.

Research question three: What are the secondary school teachers' critical views on

social-emotional development of African American students with SLD in advisory?

Teachers agreed that African-American students with SLD need more support in school, not just in academic areas, but also with their social and emotional development. Josie described the causes and the social needs of the African American male students with SLD from her teaching experience:

“African-American male students, in general, need more support than other groups of students. They have more energy, get in trouble more often, have behaviors redirected more often, and require more attention than other students. When you add learning disabilities into the equation, these types of behaviors are increased. Without additional supports, this population of students has an extremely difficult time being successful young adults. (...) Students, especially African-American students with learning disabilities, need multiple opportunities to learn and practice expected social and emotional behaviors.”

Dora explained the complex needs of this population mainly in terms of urban, high poverty environmental factors:

“Attending an inner city school as compared to a suburban school affects many aspects of how a child will receive education. We as teachers have to be aware of the effects of poverty on learning, awareness of the resources available in the school and community, and the acknowledgment that additional emotional support may be necessary. Learning disabled students from low-income families begin school at a disadvantage to other more wealthy students because they begin school less prepared. Low-income parents often don't provide encouragement and emotional support for student achievement and don't place importance on education or their children well-being. Therefore if education is not being reciprocated back at home, the students are not progressing at the same rate as their peers in general education or suburban schools. However, having dedicated teachers who would go an extra mile to offer support to their students, makes a difference. I am a strong believer that all students can learn and be successful.”

She also believes that having an advisory class helps SLD students in specific ways as she explained in her interview: “how to self-advocate for you and then how to overcome it because I realized that in so many cases, if you work hard enough, you can overcome it, have a success story.” In addition, Flo wrote there about African American students with SLD:

“Many times they are less mature and need additional support with social and emotional

development. They need help understanding credits, graduation requirements and how to self-advocacy. (...) if they do not receive the additional support they are more prone to drop out or just give up on school. That's why they need advisories to help fill in the missing blanks and give them additional support.”

However, Flo believed the advisory had more to offer students with SLD:

“the only reason I think it's a little more important for students with learning disabilities, because they have more deficits they have to-- more barriers they have to cross and bear, where some regular or gen ed students can maneuver the system on their own, whereas the students with learning disabilities, sometimes they need a little help, a little push to help maneuver the system.”

Bree was more specific about her opinions of SLD students:

“LD students need more one on one emotional support, positive reinforcement, and encouragement. They require a lot of personalized attention. Their academic needs may sometimes get overlooked in the classroom, so advisers have to pick up the pieces and encourage them to keep trying and may have to offer them alternative resources for assistance.”

Outcomes /Theoretical Implications Emerging from the Study

The outcome of this research is aligned with constructivism theory described in chapter 2. Based on students and teachers perceptions, there is a strong correlation between student, teacher and program. The diagram in figure 22 presents a visual aid that explains the relationships. The arrows represent the cause-effect relationship.

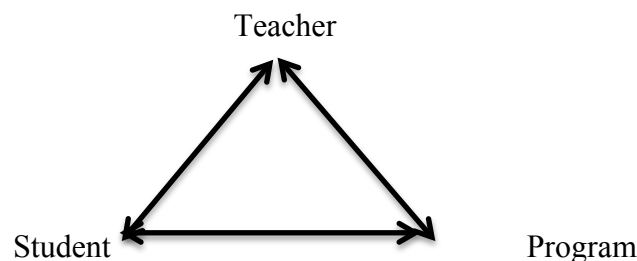


Figure 22 Classic view of relationship in schools

This study presents a different visual representation of the constructivism theory as observed in the study. For African American students with SLD from urban cities, the most at risk high school population, there are two overlapping triangles: one academic and one

social/emotional, as shown in the figure 23. The academic triangle focuses mostly on the academic domain, while the next triangle focuses mostly on social-emotional development.

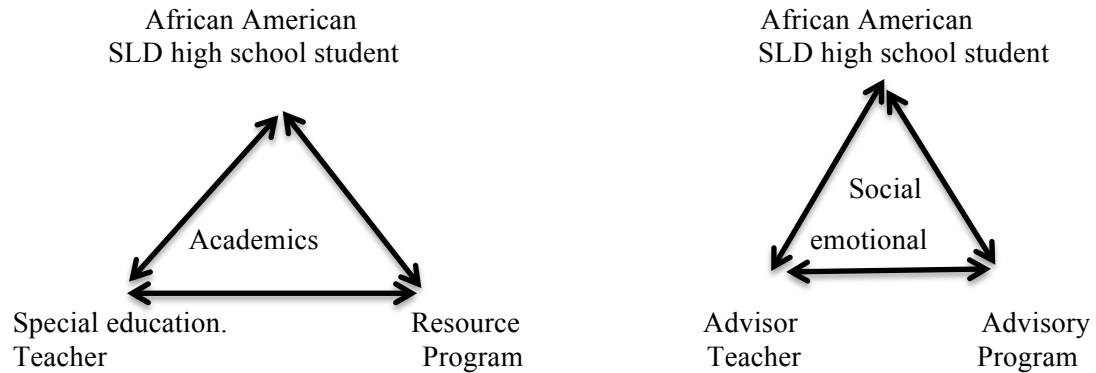


Figure 23. New overlapping views: special education and advisory for African American SLD students

In each triangle every component affects the other two but at the same time is a cause of other actions. This explains the flexibility and diversity of the advisory program as described by the participants in this study. The observation chart in figure 24 connects the literature review with study findings. The top shapes show the role of advisory as resulting from the literature review in chapter two. The three rectangles at the bottom of the diagram show the three concepts that merged into “the role of advisory” category after analysis of collected research data. Two of the emerged concepts, social- emotional development and the academic role of advisory, are similar with connected literature roles of advisory in top shapes. The pentagon diagrams reflect the specific codes form data analysis. The squares reflect the evidence spotted by the researcher during the two observations in Public and Charter schools. The observation brought up a new concept: “Announcements”. In Charter school, advisory time was also used to disseminate important information to students allowing time for students to “digest” it.

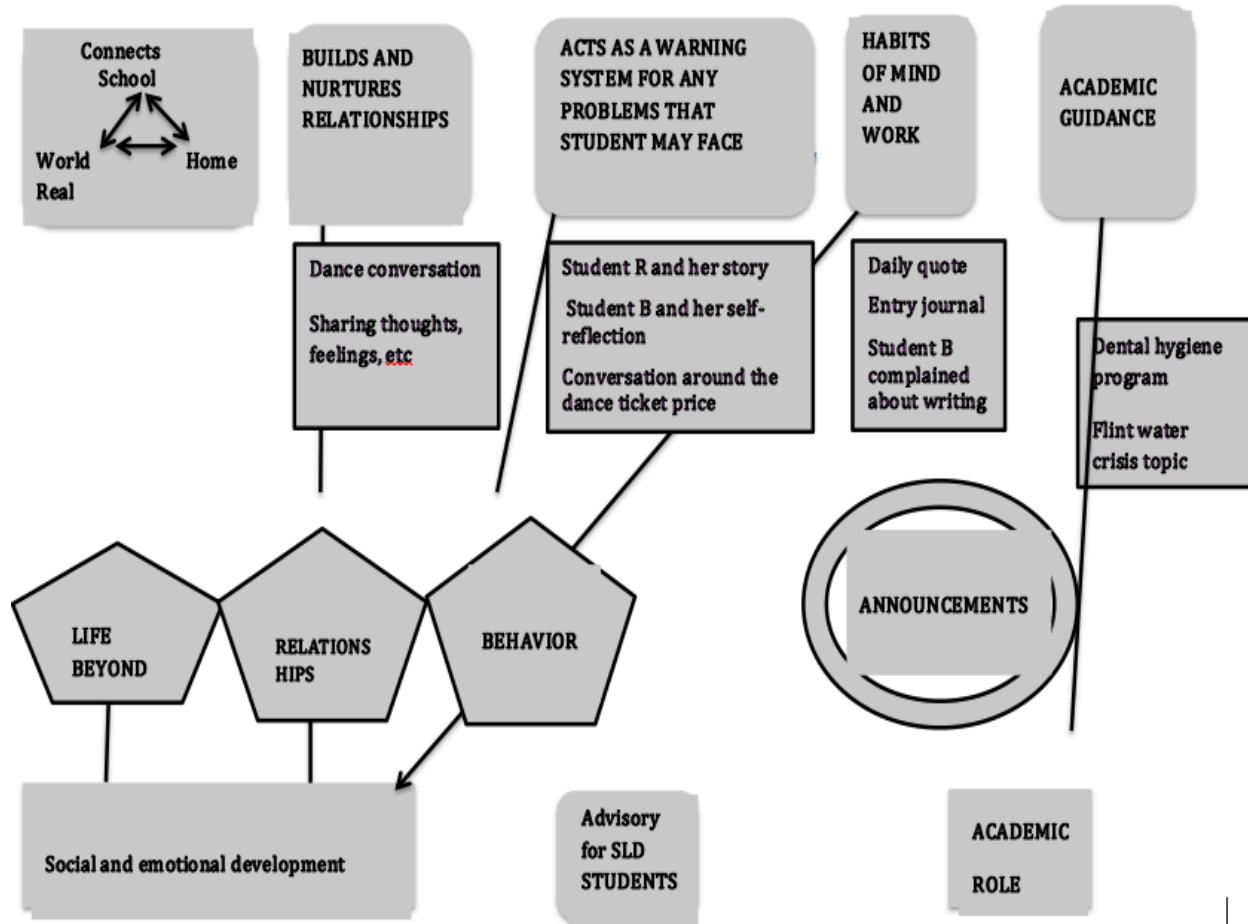


Figure 24. Observation chart

Limitations, Challenges, and Wondering Questions

A major limitation of this study is examining the precursors of graduation rates to show the advisory effect on graduation such as: academic and social motivation, academic help, role modeling, emotional support, attendance check, and peer group encouragement. Because this study focused on a purposeful sampling from a specific population, African American students with SLD, the results can't be generalized. The purposeful sampling also represents a specific geographic and historic characteristic of M.E.M.A. urban schools and cannot be generalized to other geographic areas. The figure 25 shows the structure of this program.

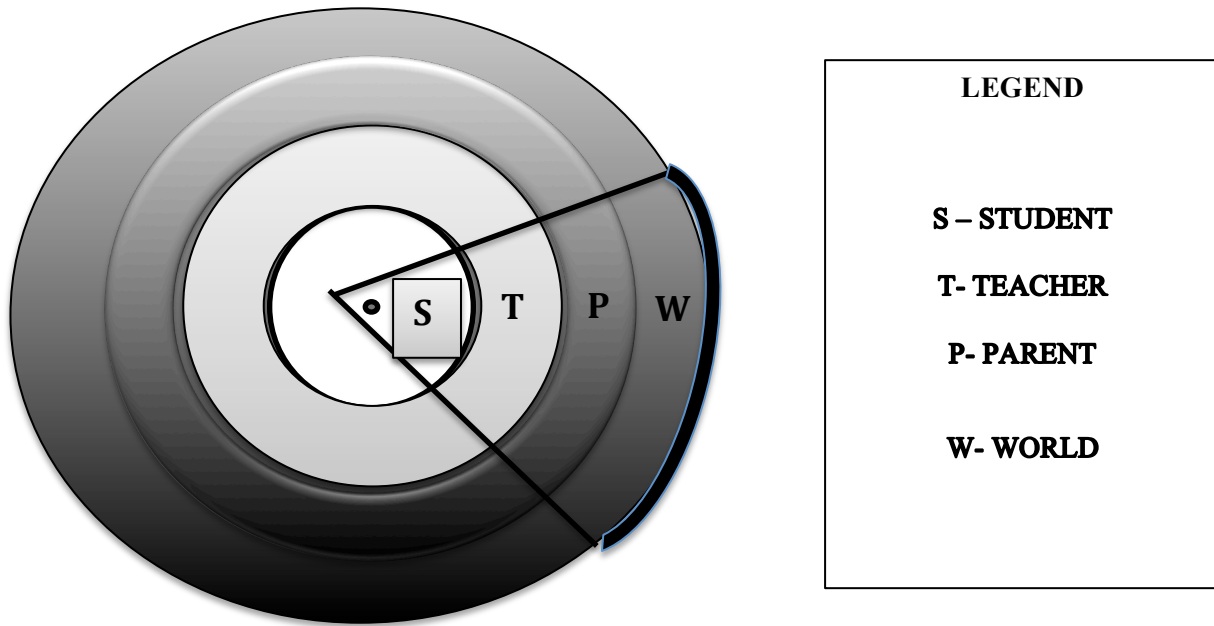


Figure 25.
Pizza slice diagram to reflect the foundation pillars of advisory program.

The advisory program has a general basic foundation that makes the identity of the program cohesive and distinct. The advisory program has foundation pillars that are always the same such as (1) structure – one adult and a small group of students that meet systematically in an organized assembly; (2) the main focus of the program is building trust relationships that nurture the social and emotional development of students; (3) a program configuration that connects all the components as shown in the “pizza” diagram, figure 25.

All the other components are specific to the characteristics and needs a geographically specific student population within a school.

Another limitation of this study is that both class observations were done with regular education teachers. The question that arises is what would have been possibly observed in a special education advisory setting, with a resource teacher as the advisor. An unexpected challenge in conducting this research was to secure the students participants. In the Public School, three students out of six contacted, volunteered to participate in the study. The researcher

needed two students, but all three were accepted to prevent a small sample size in case one student drops out. While the initial idea was to keep Candy as the reserve because of her severe speech impairments, the student T moved out of the district before the data collection began. In addition, the researcher expected to find a small number of special education students in the Charter high school, but Emanuel was the only African American with SLD. His writing skills presented a challenge during the data analysis phase as shown in figure 26. The researcher met with Emanuel to check for understanding.

In addition, it was difficult to get all the data from the participants within the time limit. For example, Leonardo did not return his last prompt on time. He left the campus and his phone got disconnected. The researcher was not able to get in touch with him so there was a deliberation about if data on Leonardo should be used up to the third prompt. However, later on, all missing data came together with an apology for the delay.

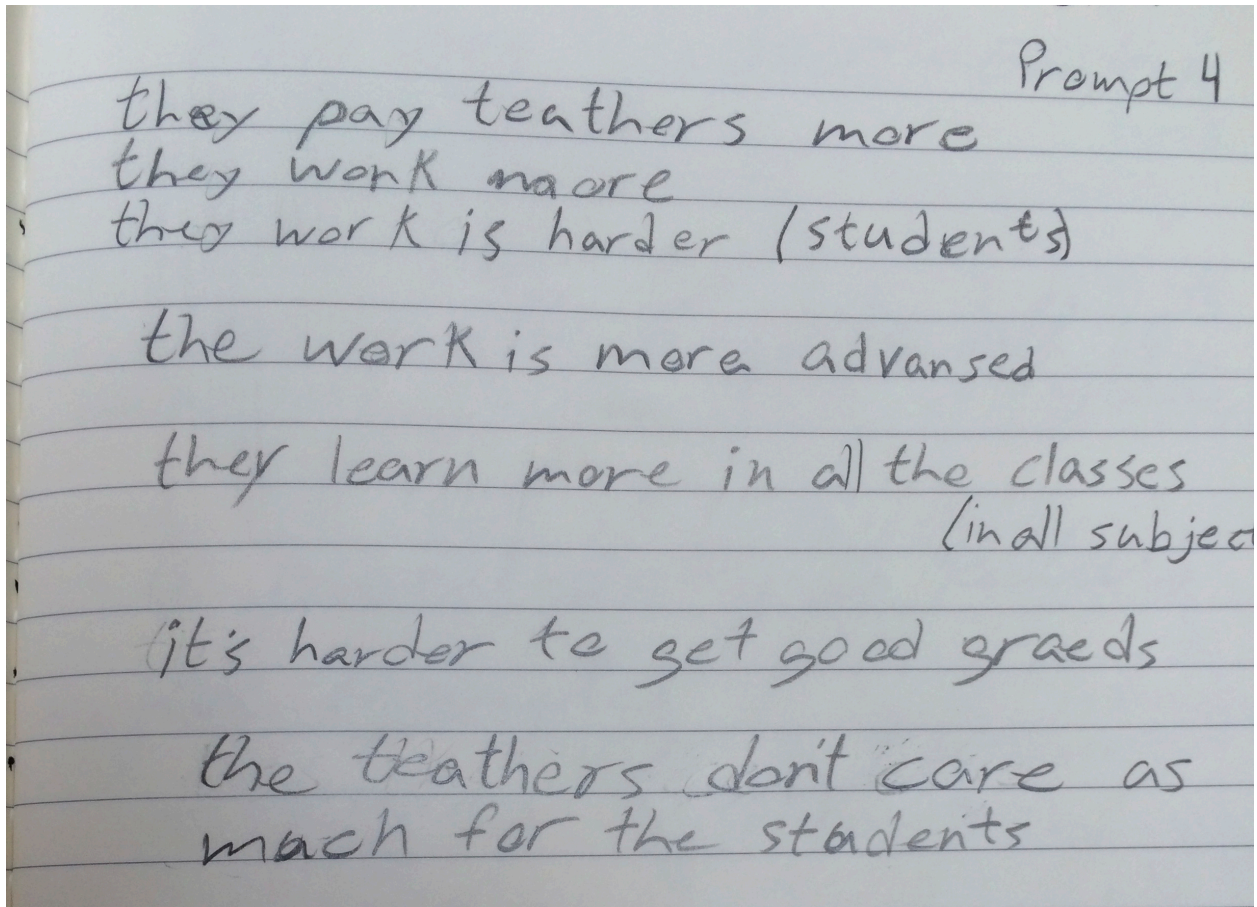


Figure 26. Photo of partial Prompt Four – Emanuel

Implications for practitioners and future research

The researcher wanted to contribute to the improvement of urban education in three critical areas: (1) To establish the benefits and challenges of an advisory class for students with SLD as seen by high school teachers and students; (2) To investigate the challenges of teaching an inclusive advisory class at high school level in the M.E.M.A. metropolitan area; (3) To contribute to the theoretical framework of a new urban educational model that increases the graduation rate of African American SLD students in M.E.M.A. metropolitan area.

This research has several assest information that can guide praticioners, teachers and administrators, from urban high school to improve the design and implementation of the advisory program. Teachers underlined the importance of (a) having a small number of students in

advisory; (b) planning; and (c) having a flexible agenda. Students talked mostly about the caregiver role, having advisors that “care”. Student behavior and inconsistency in implementation of this program were the most frequent challenges mentioned by both groups. Moreover, both groups agreed that advisory kept students on track for high school graduation. All these findings can help in creating and implementing advisory programs in urban schools.

Academic future research is needed on the social and emotional development of SLD students. Another important future research direction is a comparison of relationships and trust between SLD students and regular education teachers versus the relationship and trust between the SLD students and special education teachers. In addition, there is ambiguity in what students understand and expect from teachers in a caregiver role. Future studies might examine if this need for a teacher’s double role, academic instructor and caregiver, is specific to a particular student population or is generalized in different levels for all students.

Summary and Conclusions

In this study, I examined the effectiveness of the advisory program on a specific student population – African American students with SLD. A variety of findings surfaced from the data collected from four teachers, three students and one former student- a recent graduate. Table 9 presents within and across groups comparison of finding patterns.

G R O U P	Pattern →	Academic support in advisory	Teacher's Caregiver role	Advisory: social emotional support	Advisory: guidance in life beyond school	Connect school, family, student	Trust student-Teacher relationship
	Evidence						
S T U D E N T S	Leonardo	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
	Kevin	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
	Candy	✓		✓		✓	✓
	Emanuel		✓		✓	✓	
T E A C H E R S	Josie	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
	Dora	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Flo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Bree	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
O B S E R V	Charter		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Public		✓	✓	✓		✓

Table 9. Comparison of findings within and across groups

The conclusion of this study is aligned with the theory that we are in the midst of a paradigm shift in education. K. Fogle consider that:

“It takes a long time for institutions such as schools to change from the status quo, even when everyone can see that there is a desperate need to do so. Personal computers and the Internet are playing an influential role in the current paradigm shift in education but so is brain research, which started this paradigm shift over 50 years ago” (Retrieved from <http://www.karenfogle.com/paradigm-shift-in-education>).

Merriam –Webster dictionary define paradigm as “ a model or pattern for something that may be copied, a theory or a group of ideas about how something should be done, made, or thought about ”. J. Barker, as cited by G. McAllister (1989), considers in his video that “The paradigm shift is the key ingredient in understanding change. A paradigm shift means fundamentally altering the way things are done.” (Retrieved from: http://vasthead.com/Articles/Business_of_Paradigms.html). Table 10 shows the paradigm shift items as related to the findings of this study in M.E.M.A. urban education:

Traditional Approach Emphasis	Holistic Approach Emphasis
Teacher has more voice/ student is mostly a listener	Teacher is mostly a listener/ student has a voice
Teacher seen with an academic role only	Teacher as Caregiver for students' psychological needs: social, cognitive, emotional
Teacher directed instruction	Student leaded learning process: metacognition
Identification of the specific learning disabilities	Building on the student's strengths

Table 10. Evidences of educational paradigm shift

The large idea that appears to be supported in this study is that school systems have to shift from its main purpose to address academic instruction areas in urban schools toward programs that support the social and emotional development of this student population. Rey et al. (2007) presented research evidence that suggests “that developing at least one supportive relationship with an adult at school can have a significantly positive influence n their school functioning” (p.361). Teacher preparation programs should train urban teachers not to be learning facilitators in academic areas alone, but “caregivers” as well. Merriam –Webster

dictionary define caregiver as: “a person who gives help and protection to someone, a person who provides direct care” where “care” is mostly related with health and safe. However, in traditional paradigm, the common idea of the caregiver is mostly related to the physical needs, whereas in the new view of the caregiver role in urban school, the accent falls on the psychological developmental and environmental needs as essential factors to keep students healthy and safe.

APPENDIX A**SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FOR STUDENTS**

A mix of interview guide and standardized open-ended interview

1. Please tell me a little about yourself?

Probes: Where do you live?

What grade are you in?

2. Could you describe for me your personal experience in special education program in this school?

Probes: How you get help from resource teacher?

Are you aware of other students with IEP in your class?

3. How would you describe the role of an advisory program in your school?

Probes: In your opinion, what are the teachers trying to accomplish during the advisory time?

4. At this point, we're about half way through the interview. I think is going very well.

You've been telling me some really interesting things. How's it going for you?

5. Imagine that I am a new student in this class and I never heard about an Advisory (Seminar) class. What would you tell me about your advisory class?

6. What is the most relevant experience you have had in advisory and why?
7. I have already heard that your advisory class has some troubles, so feel free to tell me about the troubles you've seen.
8. The next question is very important. What do you think should be change in your advisory class to make it better?

APPENDIX B

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FOR TEACHERS

A mix of interview guide and standardized open-ended interview

1. Please tell me a little about your preparation and background in facilitating an advisory program and in working with students with disabilities.

Probes

What classes or professional development you have had to prepare you for this type of instruction?

For how long are you working with students with an IEP?

About how many students with disabilities do you work with?

2. Please describe the student population in your advisory (seminar) class.

Probes

Talk about gender distribution, grades, students with current IEP and their disabilities, social/emotional/ academic behavior trends, etc.

3. What is the most relevant experience that you have had in advisory with (a) student(s) with learning disabilities?

Probes

Please describe your experience in details by using a capital letter instead of the real name of student(s)/people involved.

4. What are the correlations between your advisory class and the behavior of your LD students?

Probes

Explain if you believe that your advisory program has a direct or indirect effect of the social/emotional development and how.

5. How would you criticize the advisory program in direct relation with LD students?

Probes

What are the strengths and the weaknesses of your program in relation with the social/emotional needs of LD students?

6. What would be two reasons for preferring an inclusive / or seclusive advisory class?

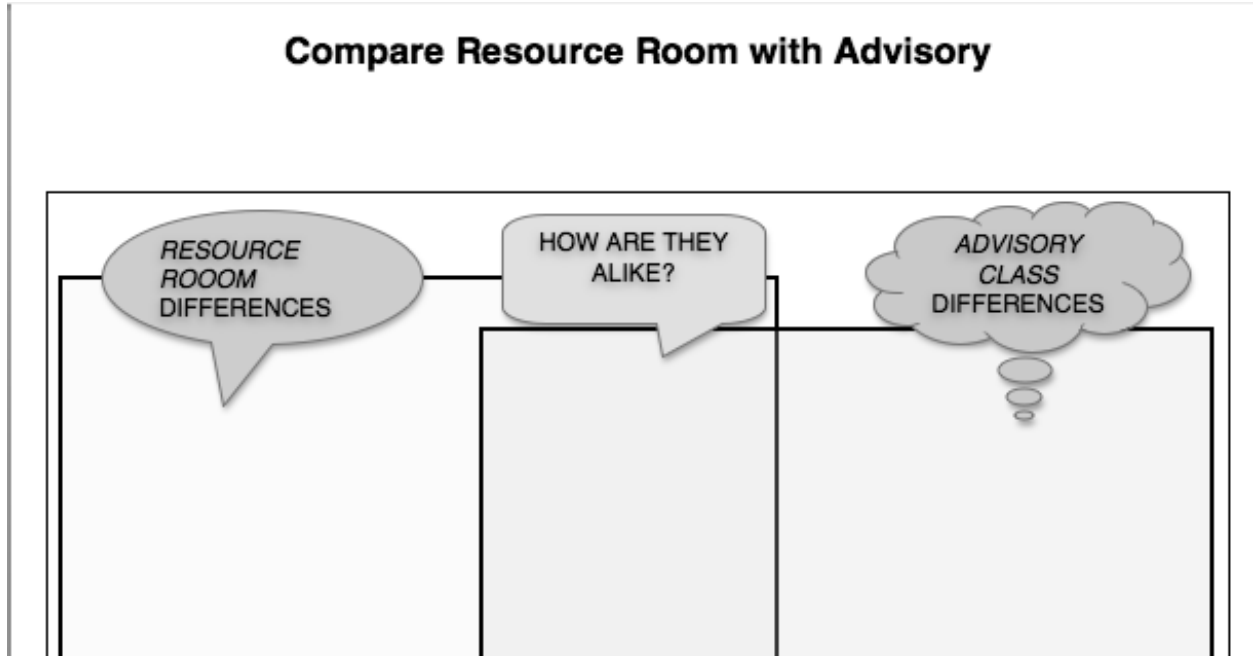
7. How do you think the program could be improved for students with special needs?

APPENDIX C
STUDENTS JOURNAL PROMPTS

Prompt 1: Imagine that you are a superintendent that has the opportunity to create a brand new high school. At this point, you are required to write the part of the plan that addresses the educational program offered for students with Learning Disabilities. Use the following support questions to write your plan:

- How will your school support students with Learning Disabilities?
- Why would they need an advisory class? What would they learn/experience in that advisory class?

Prompt 2: If you would be your school's principal, how would you structure it? Would that be a class that has students with and without disabilities, or you prefer, (as a principal) to have an "Advisory/ Seminar- Honor class, average- achievers class, students at-risks in a class, and a separate class for students with disabilities? Explain your answer with 2 reasons.

Prompt 3:**Prompt 4:**

Other than material resources, how do you think the education in suburban schools is different than yours and why?

APPENDIX D
TEACHERS' JOURNAL PROMPTS

Prompt 1: From your perspectives, what are the outcomes of an advisory class in urban education? In your answer, please be specific IF there are different/ additional outcomes for students with disabilities.

Prompt 2: What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of facilitating an inclusive advisory class, vs. a seclusive advisory class for students with disabilities?

Prompt 3: Think of African American students with Learning Disabilities that you taught during your career! If you compare this particular population with the rest of your students, how would you describe their needs for support in social- emotional development?

Sub-Prompts:

- If the LD is added to the characteristics of African American students, are these students more prone to fail to understand and maneuver the high school system?
- Does this population need more support in nonacademic fields such as behavior, emotion control, understanding and obeying rules, social relationship, etc., than regular ed. Population? Or even suburban school population?
- Due to schools' schedule and academic pressure, is there a need for implementing a specific structural program (such as advisory) to support these aspects?

Prompt 4: Compare Resource program (special education) with Advisory program (regular education).

Prompt 5: The technical literature of the advisory promotes the program as a way to increase the graduation rate in underserved populations, such as the African American minority. Students with Learning Disabilities are more prone to drop out than regular education students. How would you criticize these statements based on your direct observation and experience?

APPENDIX E
STUDENTS' SURVEY

RESEARCHER: MRS. R. GLIGOR

SURVEY

STUDENT NAME: _____

CIRCLE THE ANSWER THAT BEST FITS YOU

1. Is your advisor also your special education teacher?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

2. In your advisory class, are all the students in special education?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

3. The adult that I trust the most in school is
 - a. A security officer
 - b. My advisor teacher
 - c. One of my teachers – but not my advisory's teacher
 - d. The secretary
 - e. Other

4. If advisory would be an elective class next year, would you take it?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

5. Is your best friend in special education?

- a. Yes
 - b. No
6. How important is your advisory class in keeping you motivated to succeed and graduate?
- a. Very important
 - b. Somehow important
 - c. Not so important
7. How much planning work do you think your advisor puts in your advisory class?
- a. A lot
 - b. Not too much
 - c. Minimum
 - d. None
8. The role of my advisory class is
- a. To help me with homework and academic work from other classes
 - b. To help me improve my attendance and behavior
 - c. To prepare me for college
 - d. All of the above
9. For an African American student with Specific Learning Disabilities in urban schools, the advisory program is:
- a. Very important
 - b. important
 - c. Not important

APPENDIX F

NVIVO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH SOFTWARE - SCREEN SHOT

The screenshot displays the NVivo software interface. On the left is a navigation pane with categories: SOURCES, NODES, CLASSIFICATIONS, COLLECTIONS, and OPEN ITEMS. The SOURCES table lists various prompts and folders. The main window shows a text node titled 'prompt 3 Dora' with a paragraph of text. On the right side of the text node, there is a coding density visualization with vertical bars representing different codes applied to the text.

Name	Nodes	Refere...	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By	Color
Dora copy	0	0	1/29/16, 6:58 PM	RG	1/29/16, 6:58 PM	RG	
prompt 2 dora	5	24	6/26/16, 10:31 AM	RG	6/30/16, 3:42 PM	RG	
prompt 5 Dora	5	9	6/26/16, 10:36 AM	RG	6/26/16, 10:37 AM	RG	
prompt 4 Dora	10	16	6/26/16, 10:39 AM	RG	6/26/16, 10:40 AM	RG	
Prompt 1 Dora	11	27	2/27/16, 11:40 AM	RG	Today, 6:40 PM	RG	
prompt 3 Dora	11	19	6/26/16, 10:42 AM	RG	6/26/16, 10:43 AM	RG	
Dora invivo	21	73	2/8/16, 8:09 PM	RG	3/20/16, 5:09 PM	RG	

student achievement and don't place importance on education or their children well-being.

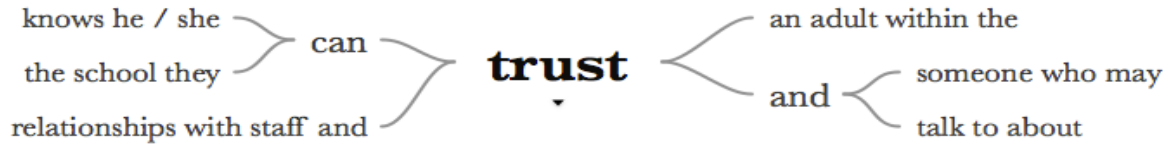
Therefore if education is not being reciprocated back at home, the students are not progressing at the same rate as their peers in general education or suburban schools. However, having dedicated teachers who would go an extra mile to offer support to their students, makes a difference. I am a strong believer that all students can learn and be successful. For that to happen I had to develop knowledge of their particular issues, know that their resources may be unique and a different behavior from my end may be required. An adequate educational program that enables students to maximize their potential and offering them an equal educational opportunity is the key. Knowing that you are there for them and you really care improves their chances to success.

teachers experience
special ed support
the role of advisory
knowledge of disability
social emotional development
feeling about advisory
In urban settings,
Coding Density

APPENDIX G

Word Tree Diagrams

Trust diagram



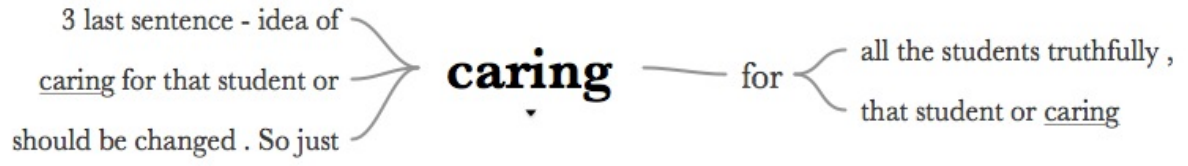
student , but the student — **trusts** — the advisor and is

the opportunity to develop — **trusting** — relationships with their advisors

Care diagram

sure that they knew somebody — **cared** — about them . I wanted to





APPENDIX H
SAMPLE CODE : TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE

- Internals\teachers\Bree\T- Bree invivo

4 references coded, 4.55% coverage

Reference 1: 0.56% coverage

B: I was one of the founding-- what do you call it?

I: Members.

Reference 2: 1.09% coverage

Members of the small schools at DIT where we had an advisory membership program, and we had a small advisory group

Reference 3: 1.23% coverage

how long have the small schools-- as soon as the small schools models started, they started that full inclusion model, I think.

Reference 4: 1.66% coverage

I've been a teacher for 13 years. I would at least say 10 out of those 13 years.

- Internals\teachers\Donna\T-D invivo

2 references coded, 1.62% coverage

Reference 1: 1.43% coverage

Been working with kids with disabilities for a long time, specifically students with learning disabilities, students who generally have a math dyscalculia or students who lack reading comprehension skills.

Reference 2: 0.19% coverage

we've always done advisory.

- Internals\teachers\dora\Dora invivo

4 references coded, 3.97% coverage

Reference 1: 0.94% coverage

with students in the advisory program for about eight years,

Reference 2: 0.35% coverage

Eight years, as I said.

Reference 3: 0.72% coverage

I've been working again in inner city schools,

Reference 4: 1.96% coverage

all students with IEPs. In regards to disabilities, disabilities are varied from LD, EI, CI, to maybe some autistic students.

- Internals\teachers\Josie\T- Josie-in vivo

8 references coded, 12.47% coverage

Reference 1: 0.51% coverage

began working with advisory about five years ago.

Reference 2: 0.79% coverage

I had worked-- I had advisory in public school and advisory in charter school.

Reference 3: 1.53% coverage

There were students with disabilities in my advisory classes, yes. I: In both charter and public schools? Josie; In both childhood and public schools.

Reference 4: 0.84% coverage

--urban schools, even, you know, both charter and public were both urban schools.

Reference 5: 2.79% coverage

Um, I've experienced three different sit-- advisories. So, I would say in my first advisory, I probably had close to 30% students with IEPs. In my second advisory, it was probably more like 15% to 20% and in my, uh, latest advisory, there was one student out of 15 that had an IEP.

Reference 6: 0.76% coverage

The total advisory students I've seen? I: Yes. Josie: Um, I would say 50, 55.

Reference 7: 1.08% coverage

So, in my first advisory class, I think I had about 15 or 16. In my second, I had 22. And then in my third, I had 16.

- Internals\teachers\T-Flo\T-F in vivo

4 references coded, 6.60% coverage

Reference 1: 1.42% coverage

FLO: Well, for the last five years, I've had an advisory at the school where I teach, at Cody DIT.

Reference 2: 0.81% coverage

FLO: Urban Detroit, yes, Detroit public high school.

Reference 3: 2.12% coverage

FLO:: I've been a special ed teacher for about nine, ten years now. I started off in regular ed and my master's is in LD, Learning Disabilities.

Reference 4: 2.26% coverage

I currently have about seven students with learning disabled, and I have two emotionally impaired students, and one cognitively impaired student.

APPENDIX I
SAMPLE OF NVIVO NODES LIST – FIRST CYCLE ANALYSIS

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
advisory size	5	8	Feb 15, 2016, 11:21:10 AM	RG	Mar 28, 2016, 5:27:17 PM	RG
grade	6	6	Feb 18, 2016, 5:26:29 PM	RG	Mar 28, 2016, 5:20:31 PM	RG
issues	2	5	Feb 15, 2016, 6:10:54 PM	RG	Mar 22, 2016, 8:47:00 PM	RG
length of the program	4	4	Mar 22, 2016, 7:42:04 PM	RG	Mar 28, 2016, 5:24:25 PM	RG
student population in advisory	6	8	Feb 15, 2016, 11:25:20 AM	RG	Mar 28, 2016, 4:53:07 PM	RG
feeling about advisory	5	9	Feb 18, 2016, 5:32:51 PM	RG	Mar 28, 2016, 5:49:14 PM	RG
how to improve	5	10	Feb 18, 2016, 5:39:48 PM	RG	Mar 28, 2016, 9:32:27 PM	RG
implementation issues	6	17	Feb 15, 2016, 6:29:44 PM	RG	Mar 28, 2016, 5:46:46 PM	RG

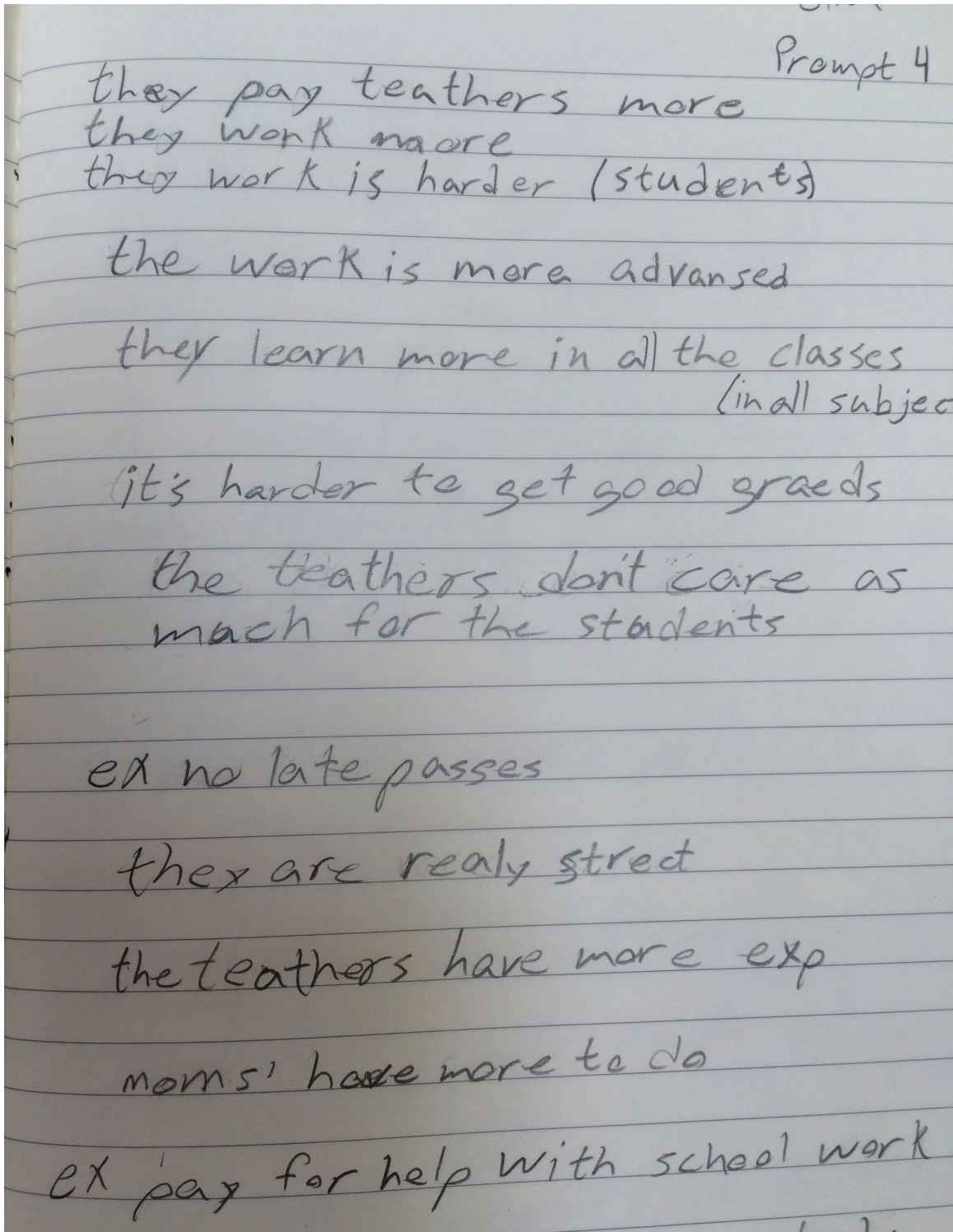
planning for advisory	3	7	Feb 15, 2016, 11:21:53 AM	RG	Mar 22, 2016, 8:00:48 PM	RG
knowledge of disability	2	6	Feb 15, 2016, 12:08:24 PM	RG	Mar 20, 2016, 5:16:32 PM	RG
PD	3	8	Feb 15, 2016, 11:19:11 AM	RG	Mar 22, 2016, 8:00:48 PM	RG
teachers experience	4	19	Feb 15, 2016, 11:15:04 AM	RG	Mar 28, 2016, 4:51:42 PM	RG
special ed support	7	12	Feb 18, 2016, 5:41:27 PM	RG	Mar 29, 2016, 8:41:21 AM	RG

APPENDIX J
SAMPLE OF CODE/ NODE BOOK

Name	Type	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Advisory-GROUND PROFILE	Theme	-	-	Aug 18, 2016, 7:19:19 PM	RG	Aug 18, 2016, 7:37:48 PM	RG
Characteristics of advisory	Category	-	-	Feb 15, 2016, 11:58:36 AM	RG	Mar 22, 2016, 8:03:20 PM	RG
advisory size	node	5	8	Feb 15, 2016, 11:21:10 AM	RG	Jun 30, 2016, 2:47:31 PM	RG
grade	node	7	9	Feb 18, 2016, 5:26:29 PM	RG	Jun 25, 2016, 7:12:22 PM	RG
length of the program	node	5	5	Mar 22, 2016, 7:42:04 PM	RG	Jun 27, 2016, 9:39:27 AM	RG
student population in advisory	node	8	9	Feb 15, 2016, 11:25:20 AM	RG	Jun 30, 2016, 2:47:09 PM	RG
implementation issues	node/ category	7	20	Feb 15, 2016, 6:29:44 PM	RG	Aug 18, 2016, 8:10:33 PM	RG
type of advisory	category	-	-	Mar 12, 2016, 6:29:40 PM	RG	Mar 12, 2016, 6:36:17 PM	RG

inclusive advisory	node	10	20	Feb 15, 2016, 11:24:12 AM	RG	Aug 19, 2016, 7:04:39 PM	RG
replace ad. for sp ed	node	8	10	Feb 15, 2016, 6:57:35 PM	RG	Jun 30, 2016, 4:36:10 PM	RG
seclusive advisory	node	11	35	Feb 15, 2016, 6:07:08 PM	RG	Jul 25, 2016, 6:44:47 AM	RG
tracking in advisory	node	3	4	Feb 15, 2016, 7:01:30 PM	RG	Jun 25, 2016, 5:23:44 PM	RG
professional expertise	category	–	–	Mar 12, 2016, 6:20:55 PM	RG	Aug 18, 2016, 7:39:13 PM	RG
knowledge of disability	node	3	7	Feb 15, 2016, 12:08:24 PM	RG	Aug 19, 2016, 7:04:39 PM	RG

APPENDIX K
SAMPLE OF STUDENT JOURNAL ENTRY



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ABSTRACT**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ADVISORY PROGRAMS WITH TEACHERS AND LEARNING DISABLED AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS IN URBAN HIGH SCHOOLS**

by

CAMELIA RAMONA GLIGOR**May 2017****Advisor:** Dr. Gerald Oglan**Major:** Special Education**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

This is a study that investigated the effects of Advisory program on African American high school students with specific learning disabilities. In this qualitative study the advisory program is examined through the lenses of teachers and students from a Mid East Metropolitan Area (M.E.M.A.).

Three research questions guided this dissertation: (1) How do secondary school teachers perceive inclusive advisory in urban schools; (2) How do African-American SLD students value their experiences in advisory; (3) What are the secondary teachers' critical views on social-emotional development of African American SLD students in advisory?

Previous research indicates that advisory program creates strong bounds between student - school community, student - an adult advisor in school, and family – school. This program represents a support system that addresses (1) the social - emotional needs of adolescents as synthesized in developmental theories and (2) increases the graduation rate for urban minorities at –risk high school students. In addition, the research builds on literature gaps on social-emotional needs of adolescents learning disabled students.

This study advances our understanding of high schools' non-academic support systems needed by African American learning disabled students from M.E.M.A. inner city.

Using data from interviews, diaries, and surveys from M.E.M.A. eight volunteers (teacher advisors and students), as well as two observations on advisory program in two M.E.M.A. schools, the researcher conducted an inductive study based on Grounded Theory methodology.

The findings from the research illustrate how the expectations of a high school instructor's job shifted in students and teachers beliefs from just being an academic facilitator to embracing a caregiver role. Contrary to the researcher's expectations, two other types of advisory were found, besides the inclusive and seclusive forms: tracking as a form of inclusion and the replace of an advisory curriculum with special education support in seclusive special education classes.

Theoretical contributions and educational implications of the findings are discussed.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Many students want to embrace the teaching profession because teachers are constant role models in children's lives. I was one of them. Both my parents were educators back in Romania. Therefore, my family is the primary factor that contributed to my decision to become a special education teacher. I got my B.S. and M.A. degrees in special education with major in Visual Impairments and minors in Psychology, Cognitive Impairments and Hearing impairments at Babeş Bolyai University (Cluj, Romania). Later on, in USA, I was eager to continue my education to a higher level- the Ph.D degree.

To complement my educational background, my practical experiences are also extensive and varied. During my 20+ years of professional experience, I have worked with a large array of students, from kindergarten to college, in different settings: from special education institutions to regular schools and universities (private and public). The roles I held at these institutions were also varied: certified special education teacher highly qualified in science, lead teacher, special education specialist, adjunct instructor, and school administrator.

Research and professional accomplishments are also an important part of my professional image. I participated in several conferences as a presenter in different educational domain such as: science instructor, place-based education, professional learning communities, and urban education.