

Effective School Counseling Teams

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### Abstract

Despite much attention given to effective teams in the workplace, school counseling teams have been neglected in the research. The primary purpose of this mixed methods study was to learn what characteristics secondary counselors perceive contribute to an effective school counseling team. The first research phase conducted six team interviews; themes emerging from the interviews yielded the development of the Effective School Counseling Team Questionnaire (ESCTQ). The following research questions were investigated: What factors do counselors perceive contribute to their team's effectiveness?, Are the scores on the Effective School Counseling Team Questionnaire related to team effectiveness as described by school counselors? Is there a relationship between team characteristics (amount of time together, individual counseling experience, gender, age) and team effectiveness? Is there a relationship between the perceptions of members of effective and ineffective teams?

The literature on effective team factors was reviewed and analyzed in three categories: internal, interpersonal, and external. Qualitative results indicated that the majority of participants viewed internal traits as the number one factor contributing to their team's success. Most frequent were competencies, respect, sharing duties, caring for each other and serving students.

The second area participants listed as most important was interpersonal factors, such as communication, interactions, and planning. Overall, communication was cited as the number one factor needed for an effective team. Conclusions drawn suggested that teams need altruistic, personal qualities to feel most effective. These were summarized by participants as a team member who is caring, giving, and putting the needs of students first. The second key area for

school counseling teams was support from external sources, primarily school administration and central office.

In phase two, the questionnaire was developed and used to confirm the interview findings. During the second phase, the ESCTQ was administered to 199 secondary school counselors, yielding an 82.4% (n = 164) return rate. The survey when analyzed by teams did not show major significant differences between the teams; it did, however, confirm the qualitative findings of the internal and personal characteristics counselors of effective school teams possess.

The survey also allowed team members to rate their current team and their ideal team. The difference between the two ratings (ie. gap score) showed there was a significant mean difference (20.50) between the means of those who perceived their team as highly effective (26.55) and those who perceived their team as least effective (6.05). When looking at the questionnaire this could be interpreted to mean that the team members who felt most effective had the smallest gap score between their current team and their ideal team. When teams' gap scores were compared to their overall team rating "global" scores, as the global score increased for a team their gap score decreased. Meaning an effective team had fewer discrepancies (smaller gap) between their current and ideal team. Clearly, teams that perceive their team as "relatively effective" are rating the team closer to their ideal team than those that see their team as "relatively ineffective".

In order to enhance performance of a counseling team, this study was important to assess school counseling team's effectiveness. Two research methods were used to analyze effective teams; this research provides valuable information relating to school counselors and effective teams.

Dedication

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:13

To Tim the most wonderful husband in the world and  
our three most precious gifts from God: Addison, T. Davis & Graham

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

School counselors are trained in multiple areas including but not limited to counseling theories, techniques, group work, individual counseling, career development, diagnosing, and human growth and development. Classroom knowledge is gained through the lecture and readings as well as practical experience on the job during practicum and internship. A school counselor has the ability to impact students' educational and personal development through individual and small group counseling, classroom guidance, and consultation (ASCA, 2003; Beale, 2003; Borders & Drury, 1992). School counselors will impact students not only individually but as a team. The majority of professional school counselors at the secondary level will work on a team. Nowhere in their program are they guided as to what makes an effective team. Clearly this demonstrates the importance of examining what makes an effective school counseling team.

### Statement of the Problem

A school counselor's day is full of many responsibilities imposed by the school, school district, and national guidelines. Typical duties of a secondary counselor may include, but are not limited to, individual and group counseling; presenting guidance lessons; academic and career development counseling; interpreting cognitive, aptitude and achievement tests; interpreting and maintaining student records; and collaborating with teachers, principals, support personnel, and parents to better assist students (ASCA, 2003). In order to fulfill these multiple roles, a school counselor must rely not only on himself or herself, but also on a counseling team of individuals to meet the students' needs and efficiently assist the school. Although there are many who support the school counselor, this research will define a counseling team that consists of those counselors who share the same duties as described previously by ASCA (2003).

When researching team effectiveness, one can reference literature ranging from industrial engineering to medical science to organizational psychology researching team work and their effectiveness. Unfortunately, this area has been neglected with regard to effective secondary school counseling teams. In fact, I was unable to find any published research in the electronic library databases on what characteristics make an effective school counseling team.

According to West & Markiewicz (2004), “the point of teamwork is to bring people together with different skills, experiences, and knowledge to work interdependently to accomplish a task that is best done by such a group rather than by individuals working alone or in parallel” (p. 106). The importance and benefit of working with a team can also be applied to secondary school counselors. This study examined secondary school counseling teams to better understand what characteristics make an effective team. By exploring the group dynamics, individual differences, interpersonal factors and external supports, an understanding of counselor’s perceptions of an effective team emerged.

#### Rationale

The American School Counselors Association (ASCA; 2003) developed a national model which describes the major roles and responsibilities of school counselors and outlines how school counselors can maintain professional competency. This model aids school counselors in designing and implementing a comprehensive school counseling program, by providing a list of standards or competencies. These standards provide the roadmap for how counselors can support students in obtaining knowledge and skills in academic, career, and personal/social development. According to Johnson and Johnson (2003), the one common focus for school counselors is “the need to ensure that all students gain specific competencies they need to be successful students and to become successful adults” (p. 183). With the standards in place, this structure allows

school counselors assurance that “(a) all students are served, (b) counselors have specific roles and functions, and (c) counselors and counseling programs are accountable” (Anderson, 2002, p. 315). The standards allow counselors to better “implement a program and apply the distinct skills and knowledge that only they possess” (Anderson, 2002, p. 316).

When compared to working alone, people who prefer to work with others may be more satisfied and effective in teams (Campion, Medsker, & Higgs, 1993). A group of counselors will develop into a team when their purpose is understood by all members. Within effective teams, each member performs an assigned task using his or her talent to the best advantage. When team members integrate their skills to accentuate strengths and minimize weaknesses, team objectives can be achieved (Daniels, 2004). If the school counselor feels that he or she is competent in the job, then “teaming in areas of strengths and perceived weaknesses can be formalized among colleagues” (Bodenhorn and Skaggs, 2005, p. 27).

Because teams are viewed as a valuable tool, organizations use them to address a variety of complex tasks. However, many teams are formed without much forethought, likewise for school counseling teams. When there is a vacancy, eligible candidates interview for the position, their references are checked, and the most suitable prospect is hired (Salas & Fiore, 2004).

The available literature regarding teams seems to suggest that they can be very effective if properly orchestrated; however, there is a significant gap in the literature with regard to school counseling teams. Studies on teamwork and performance suggest that teamwork can enhance performance; it is important to understand what makes effective teams in order to improve teamwork (Stout, Salas, & Fowlkes, 1997).

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this two-phase, sequential mixed methods study was to explore secondary school counselor's views of effective counseling teams. The first phase was a qualitative exploration of the characteristics of an effective team based on interviews with a purposeful sample of 6 secondary school counseling teams, chosen by the counseling supervisor because they are considered effective teams, in Southwest Virginia. Themes emerging from the qualitative interviews guided the development of a questionnaire. The second phase questionnaire confirmed through a wider population of high school counselors the qualities counselors perceived contributed to an effective team. The second group surveyed was comprised of 199 counselors.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What factors do counselors perceive contribute to their team's effectiveness?
2. Are the scores on the Effective School Counseling Team Questionnaire related to team effectiveness as described by school counselors?
3. Is there a relationship between team characteristics (length of time on current team, years of personal counseling experience, gender, age) and team effectiveness?
4. Is there a relationship between the perceptions of members of effective and ineffective teams?

## Definition of Terms

The following terms were relevant to this study:

1. Work Team: an interdependent collection of individuals who share responsibility for specific outcomes for their organizations (Sundstrom, DeMuse, & Futrell,

1990).

2. Effective Team: one in which the members use a collection of processes, strategies, and actions that allow them to effectively and efficiently perform as a group (Stout, Salas, & Fowlkes, 1997). For school counselors to be effective they meet their student's needs.
3. Secondary counseling team: two or more counselors who have worked together for at least one school year at the middle school and/or high school level (grades 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup>).

### Summary

In response to the many challenges placed on school counselors within any given work day, school counselors must make use of their individual skills, expertise and colleague assistance. A single counselor is limited in what he or she can individually accomplish; however, with a collaborative supportive team, a counselor's work can be more effective benefiting not only their students, but the entire school. This study helps address the gap in the literature with regard to what makes an effective school counseling team and provided valuable information for school counselors, other team members, and the administration group working with the team. Chapter two will present a review of the literature relating to school counseling challenges, roles, and effective team characteristics.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study explored secondary school counselors' views of effective counseling teams. Chapter two presented a review of the current literature related to group dynamics, effective work teams as well as school counseling challenges and roles. To better understand this working team of counselors, it is helpful to first examine the stages of group development.

### Group Development

Groups, like people, develop over time. With time, all group members begin to “manifest themselves interpersonally, each creating his or her own social microcosm” (Yalom, 1995, p. 293). Individual members can then analyze their style and then begin to experiment with new behavior. It is important to understand the developmental sequence of a group, to prevent feelings of confusion and anxiousness about the group stages (Yalom, 1995). There have been various stage models of group development, beginning with Tuckman (1965), who was the first to list five stages of group development: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. In his group development model Tuckman does not include a termination stage which other theorists have found important in a composite group model (Braaten, 1974). For the purpose of this study termination will also be eliminated since school counseling teams do not conduct formal termination.

#### *Stage 1: Forming*

In the first stage of forming, team members seek out information from other members regarding their experiences and knowledge (Tuckman, 1965). Team members may be guarded about information and wanting to know what the expectations will be. This is an important time to clearly state and agree upon team goals. Conflict is minimal and conformity and compliance are high. Wheelan (1999) labeled this era “Silence of the Lambs”; a group is in this stage when

the leader asks a question and no one responds. The leader's words seem to vanish in the "Bermuda Triangle". Yalom (1995) described this time when members are sizing each other up in search of what their roles will be in the group.

### *Stage 2: Storming*

In the storming stage conflict emerges between individuals and subgroups. Leaders are challenged on their authority and competency. Tensions surface with honesty and openness emerging within the team as they work through the difficulties. Negative comments and intermember criticism are more prevalent (Yalom, 1995). During this stage, it is imperative that the team leader (coordinator) encourage open communication among the team members. Emerging contact through individual mentoring and weekly meetings can help clarify what the team needs to accomplish.

The leader may use these times to build commitment and trust with the group. Subgroups and coalitions may form; however, the more concerns that can be voiced to the group as a whole, the less likely subgroups are to form. With humor Wheelan (1999) said an individual in this stage will know when, "you'd rather have all your teeth pulled than go to the next meeting" (p. 26).

### *Stage 3: Norming*

In the third stage, norming, conflicts are resolved and the team begins to work together positively (Tuckman, 1965). Team members communicate their thoughts and feelings well and a mutual support emerges among the members. During this stage, there is an increase of mutual trust, moral, and self-disclosure (Yalom, 1995). The norms (or agreed rules) are established and it is important that they meet the needs of the entire group. The leader begins to give more responsibility to team members and minimize the leader's authority. Cohesion, trust and member

satisfaction increase. This third stage can be spotted when the group member who drove you crazy for weeks begins to make you smile (Wheelan, 1999).

#### *Stage 4: Performing*

During the performing stage the team members settle into working together successfully on tasks. The individual members feel comfortable and work together flexibly. The team leader can begin to lessen their involvement and the team feels comfortable with this decision. The team is cohesive, team members are cooperative, and the team has effective conflict management strategies. Wheelan (1999) called this stage “In the Zone”. There is no set time limit when a stage will be reached; this stage may be achieved in a few months, a few years or perhaps never. “You know you’re in stage four group when being on the team makes you feel better than Prozac” (p. 29).

#### *Stage 5: Adjourning*

The final stage for teams is adjourning. All teams do not necessarily enter a terminating stage, particularly if the group does not have a formal ending. Instead teams will fluctuate depending on the individual’s commitments; for school counselors the team may change as members exit and enter the group.

It needs to be noted that not all teams follow this exact model set by Tuckman (1965). A team may go back and forth, revisit stages, or even become stuck at a stage. It is also important to remember that group development doesn’t always proceed in a positive manner (Wheelan, 1999). However, team leaders can encourage effective team development by ensuring that “the team tasks are clear, conflicts are processed with satisfactory (and ideally creative) consequences, team members’ roles are clear, positive norms are established, and the team performs well“ (West & Markiewicz, 2004, p. 98).

Stout, Salas, and Fowlkes (1997) report that group studies would be a more appropriate label than team studies due to the group stages of development. Regardless of the term used, there are predictable stages of group and/or team development over time (Tuckman, 1965; Yalom, 1995). Changes in members, external demands, and changes in leadership can all affect the work of the group. Background information about group development can be useful for teams and members, making the group experience seem more manageable (West & Markiewicz, 2004).

### Effective Work Teams

When looking at effective work teams, the literature cites many areas where team work has been studied, from military to businesses to public education. It is possible to find quantitative research on areas from aviation teams to personal testimonies in “self-help” books, all of which have philosophies of what components are necessary for an effective team. Scarnati (2001) describes teamwork as a “cooperative process that allows ordinary people to achieve extraordinary results” (p. 5). He further concludes that teamwork for most people is neither a new concept nor an unfamiliar one.

Along with the different types and goals of a team, depending on the discipline, different terms and language are used to describe the team. Some authors even make a distinction between the words *group* and *team*. The business world has the most developed and practical application articles; their terminology and strategies are well developed for building top executive teams. A clear definition of teams is needed to resolve the ambiguity and provide a focus.

For the purpose of this study the terminology being used is *team* and not *group*. Although the intention of this study is to explore what secondary counselors perceive make an effective team, the team literature in this review was compiled from an organizational psychology

perspective. It also includes the perspective of executive teams in the business world. Salas, Dickinson, Converse, & Tannenbaum (1992) define a team as:

a distinguishable set of two or more people who interact dynamically, interdependently, and adaptively toward a common and valued goal/object/mission, who have each been assigned specific roles or functions to perform, and who have a limited life span of membership (p. 4).

### School Counseling Teams

For the purposes of this study, in addition to the definition provided by Salas et al. (1992), a school counseling team is defined as two or more school counselors who have been together for at least one academic calendar year.

In order for school counselors to utilize their full potential, it is crucial that the team operates effectively. For the purpose of this study the definition of an effective team is one in which the members “use a collection of processes, strategies, and actions that allow them to effectively and efficiently perform.” (Stout, Salas, & Fowlkes, 1997, p. 170) According to Cannon-Bowers, Tannenbaum, Salas, and Volpe (1995), this is made possible when members of a team possess and use team competencies. These authors explained that team competencies are comprised of knowledge, skill, and attitudes. When teams use these competencies to accomplish their goals, then the team performance is optimized (Stout et. al, 1997). Building upon that definition, the term *effective school counseling team* is being used to describe a team that is seen by their district counseling supervisor as fulfilling the responsibilities of the individuals and producing a positive result; the individual counselors work together as a team to ensure that the objectives are being met. Specifically, coordinators felt that teams were effective when they worked together to ensure the students’ needs were being met. One supervisor also felt that a

team was effective when they viewed each other as having equal duties. Having equal duties was not the issue; it was the perception that they had equal amount of work to complete.

Incorporated in their daily tasks, school counselors advocate for equal opportunity for all students to achieve (Sears, 1999). They must collaborate with students, parents, education professionals, and community agencies in order to build a sense of community (Baker & Gerler, 2004). Like other teams, school counselors can greatly enhance their effectiveness through the work of a high functioning team.

### Components of an Effective Team

The first evidence that there is a strong belief in teams is that teams are used widely. Many books and articles have been written with the intent to create effective teams. It has been proposed that team-based work provides social-emotional as well as competence-related benefits (Allen & Hecht, 2004). In fact, people feel optimistic about the possibility of being on a team (Brinthaupt, Moreland, & Levine, 1991). Moreover, there is evidence that individuals perceive working in group to be more enjoyable than working alone and time is perceived as passing more quickly when working in a group (Diehl & Stroebe, 1991). A few researchers have also examined the possibility that teamwork offers the advantage of mental well-being to employees. Greater well being was experienced by those who worked on a team (Carter, 2000; Wallin & Wright, 1986). In reviewing the literature Allen and Hecht (2004) suggested that teamwork fulfils universal social needs, and often team membership is associated with greater enjoyment, job satisfaction, and well-being.

Several decades of research from longitudinal theorists suggest that groups develop norms, cohesion, and roles over time (Sundstrom et al., 1990). Effective teams have norms and rules of behavior agreed on by all members; an organization's culture may provide an avenue for

external influences over group norms. Foushee (1984) reported some success in altering group development with flight crews, when videotaped and provided feedback about their interpersonal styles. Norms with cohesion has also been found to be correlated with communication and conformity to group norms (McGrath, 1984). Other favorable conditions for effective teams are small group size, similar attitudes (Terborg, Castore, & DeNinno, 1976), and physical proximity of work space (Sundstrom, 1986). Sundstrom et al. (1990) examined empirical research published from 1980 to 1990 and found that most studies used a multiple approach to team development, often using an interpersonal approach combined with others such as goal setting, role definition and problem solving. In their opinion team development could be more successful when studying effective teams while also focusing on external relations.

Because there is an extensive amount of research on teams and their effectiveness, this discussion is organized into three categories along the most common themes: internal factors, external factors, and interpersonal factors. Internal factors are characteristics each individual team member possesses that affect the group. External factors are those influences outside of the individual's control but equally affect group members; and interpersonal factors are those factors that deal with the relationship between the group members. Some factors listed may actually fall into more than one area, so it is important to remember that blending occurs within the three broad categories listed.

### *Internal Factors*

Teams are made up of individuals who “interact independently in order to accomplish mutual goals” (Morgan, Glickman, Woodard, Blaiwes, & Salas, 1986, p. 3). Because each individual is independent, each brings his or her own unique characteristics to the group, which then influences the group's effectiveness. Individual roles are an essential aspect of teams

(Sundstrom et al., 1990). There are unique qualities in team members that may impact a team's effectiveness: (1) biological differences, (2) personality differences, (3) differences in general and task-relevant abilities and (4) leadership differences (Morgan & Lassiter, 1992). Internal factors for the individual will be viewed to better understand the effects they have on a team.

*Biological Differences.* There is evidence to suggest that biological variables such as age, gender, race, and cultural background (Schneider, 1983) are important factors in the performance of teams. Groups that are more homogenous may find a closer psychological attachment to other same sex members, increasing their communication and reducing turnover (Hinds et al., 2000). Members of the same gender are also more task-oriented, individualistic (less social), and competitive than members of mixed gender teams (Wyler & Malinowski, 1972).

*Personality.* There is some debate concerning whether the individual team member's personality can affect the group as whole. Regardless of the personality, it is vital that the counselor's attitude and beliefs be positive with regards to the team and their job (Baker & Gerler, 2004).

Barry and Stewart (1997) used a five-factor model in order to classify personality traits of the team members in a manageable fashion. The five factors are extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness. In their study they found that group members perceived extroversion as the key personality-based correlate with individual impact on group performance. When they analyzed the group they found that the proportion of high-extraversion group members did relate to the group's focus on task accomplishment and performance. Other studies have also used the five-factor model to predict job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991). If a prediction can be made between personality and preferences for

management, then this information could be helpful in selecting individuals that fit within the organizations culture (Stevens & Ash, 2001).

Wiggins & Weslander (1986) conducted a study to identify particular personality and demographic characteristics of secondary school counselors who were viewed as effective or ineffective by their supervisors. In this study, an increase in counselors' self-esteem was accompanied by an increase in tolerance for ambiguity. Counselors who were flexible and viewed the world in shades of gray rather than black and white seem to be able to counsel most effectively. They also tended to have a social/artistic personality profile on the Holland Scale. In contrast, ineffective counselors as rated by the supervisor, were dissatisfied with their jobs, had low self-esteem, had low level of tolerance for ambiguity, and were not correlated significantly with the Holland environmental code for counselors.

*Personal Competencies.* Individual professional competence is a highly sought after factor when choosing a group member. To be competent one would possess knowledge, skill and attitude competencies (Cannon-Bowers, Tannenbaum, Salas, and Volpe, 1995).

In their four-year research project, Hinds, Carley, Krackhardt, & Wholey (2000) found that people like to work with others who worked hard and were successful in similar projects. A strong work ethic of individual competence was valued in team members.

In addition to working hard, there is a wealth of knowledge that a school counselor must possess in addition to those required to be a counselor. Knowledge competencies allow the team members to perform their tasks and understand their roles and responsibilities (Cannon-Bowers et al., 1995). The logistics of a school system, class registration, state/national testing, college admissions, and classroom guidance are critical areas in which a counselor must possess knowledge.

With this knowledge, another key to building an effective team is to have a high and appropriate level of participation. Team members must interact, share information, and also provide input in the decisions that are being made (West & Markiewicz, 2004).

Skill competencies are what allow the individual to carry out the required tasks. These skill dimensions as defined by Cannon-Bowers et al. (1995) are adaptability, situational awareness, performance monitoring and feedback, leadership and team management, interpersonal relations, coordination, and communication, and decision making. Beale (2003) reports “to ask counselors to use their skills and knowledge simply to make schedule changes or to count and distribute test materials is a misuse of their education” (p. 68). Instead, school counselors could best make use of their skills through individual and group counseling; being a resource to students, parents, faculty, and community counselors; and advocating for students (ASCA, 2003).

Attitude competencies are beliefs that team members have about performing team actions and attitudes toward teamwork, collective efficacy and cohesion. Greenless, Graydon, & Maynard (2000) defined collective efficacy “as the group’s shared belief, emerging from an aggregation of the perceptions of individual group members of the group’s capabilities, in its ability to attain a desired outcome” (p. 451). Is there a uniform commitment to the outcome of the team? Can the counselors communicate, plan, execute activities, integrate work styles, and handle conflict?

*Self-Efficacy.* Another internal factor that can effect how well the team works together is an individual counselor’s self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined as belief in one’s ability to perform a behavior. According to Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy theory, self-efficacy beliefs are based on an individual’s expectations of what skills and knowledge they possess. People also

posses the ability to take action to overcome their problems and triumph over stress and life pressures based on their level of self-efficacy. The strength of their efficacy will also influence the amount of effort and persistence they put forth when facing challenges (Bandura, 1977b). Likewise, Bodenhorn & Skaggs (2005) wrote “rather than identifying how an individual or team of counselors would achieve the results, self-efficacy reflects the individual’s confidence that he or she can achieve the results” (p. 15). Sutton and Fall (1995) considered how the school environment was related to the counselor’s self-efficacy. They found that a school counselor’s self-efficacy was higher with fewer non-counseling-related duties and with a higher degree of staff support. The quality and quantity of the relationship between the counselor and principal may be a vital component of the counselor’s self-efficacy and may contribute to the effectiveness of the school counseling program. They concluded that a school counselor’s self-efficacy may be influenced by school climate. Baggerly (2002) also identified that school counselor’s self-efficacy was highest for appropriate duties such as classroom guidance, individual and small group counseling, and consulting with teachers, parents and administrators. In contrast the counselor’s self-efficacy rated lowest when conducting inappropriate duties such as coordinating tests, disciplining students, and doing miscellaneous duties.

Bodenhorn and Skaggs (2005), using these same standards set forth by ASCA (2003), surveyed 342 school counselors in five areas of with regards to their self-efficacy. Those areas include: Personal and Social Development, Leadership and Assessment, Career and Academic Development, Collaboration, and Cultural Awareness. The questionnaire allowed counselors to rate how competent they felt in the five areas listed above. With the exception of Career and Academic Development, all the other components correlated positively with each other. This is an interesting finding since the standards require that school counselors are competent in all

areas related to school counseling. If an individual school counselor feels deficient in an area, what role does this play in the team's effectiveness? Perhaps having a team of individuals with different strengths that compliment one another would make the group more competent in all areas of the standards.

*Complementary Skills.* Jon Katzenbach (1998) defines a team as “a small number of people with complementary skills” (p. 217). This definition recognizes that extra levels of performance results cannot be obtained by one individual but rather from the mix of skills that multiple people possess together. To leverage the talent on any given team, members need to know what talents their colleagues possess. Since school counselors carry many responsibilities and each team member has a variety of strengths, they can become aware of each others strengths and draw upon them. This will also allow insight into overlapping areas, and gaps, and needed areas of development could possibly emerge (Daniels, 2004).

This section reviewed internal factors that impact on team effectiveness. The next area to examine is external factors that contribute to the group's effectiveness.

#### *External factors*

*Team Goals/Vision.* For an effective counseling team “recruiting counselors whose visions include guidance and counseling programs that serve the need of all students is of key importance” (Gysbers, 1990, p. 138). The first step to having a team goal is to clarify what the group goals will be. Time must be made for group members to share their work values, interests, and motivations in order to develop a clear articulated vision (Daniels, 2004).

Once school counselors determine the amount of time needed to complete their action plan, a calendar can be established, published, and provided to students, teachers, and parents (ASCA, 2003). The next task is to align the team goals and personal goals. When the team vision

matches that of the individuals, motivation, team loyalty, effort, and commitment are more likely when team members hold common values and principles in business and personal life, members act conscientiously in delivering on their promises (Kline, 2003). Whitney (1994) also found group goal commitment was higher when the assigned group goals were congruent with individual team members' personal efficacy beliefs.

Another aspect of the vision is that it must be attainable, not lofty or seemingly unreachable. For some team members pre-assigned goals can be viewed as a positive aspect. Assigned goals provide a sense of direction and purpose, stimulate action and effort, serve as a standard on which performance capabilities can be measured, and serve as guidelines for developing a sense of efficacy (Appelbaum & Hare, 1996). If goals are set too high, the result can be performance failure, and may result in negatively impacting the counselor's self-efficacy and future performance. The reverse would be goals that were easily attainable, whereas a false sense of self-efficacy would be created and lead to quick discouragement when faced with failure (Appelbaum & Hare, 1996). It is important that once the team goals and responsibilities are dispensed, the team vision needs to be reassessed. Individuals and teams constantly evolve, so must a team's vision.

*External Support Personnel.* Support for school counselors would be valued from administrators, teachers, students, parents, central office, and the community. With regards to administrators, the quality and quantity of the relationship between counselor and principal may be a vital component of counselor's self-efficacy; and may contribute to the effectiveness of the school counseling program (Sutton & Fall, 1995). It is important for administrators and supervisors to "be supportive by encouraging collaboration and sharing in the process of defining school problems and developing solutions to better serve the students and the school

community.” (Murray, 1995, p. 9) For administrators and counselors working together this can be a comfortable relationship. There is a natural relationship, and both have the training and the sensitivity to complement each other in approaching this process. Even if their offices are not next to each other, they can still learn to think in terms of proximity of effort (Wesley, 2001).

According to Gysbers (1990) a comprehensive guidance program, “requires an ongoing support system. That is why system support is a major program component. Unfortunately, it is often overlooked or only minimally appreciated. . . without continuing support, the other components of the guidance program will be ineffective” (p. 18). Support can also include public recognition and praise for the team’s success, celebration, or individual rewards such as desirable schedules, money, or preferred work schedules (Sundstron et al., 1990). Pritchard et al. (1988) found in aviation maintenance units, that after introducing a group incentive plan based on time off, there was an increase in job performance and satisfaction.

School counselors can be proactive in enhancing their support by “promoting school climate that results from fostering initiatives which involve students in activities that support the overall purpose of education” (Murray, 1995, p. 7). Lapan, Gysbers, and Sun (1997) found school counselors who were more effective with fully implemented guidance programs also had a more supportive school climate.

*Team Leadership.* The belief that leaders are instrumental in an effective team is deeply rooted in society. Some argue that leaders have innate traits that propel them into leadership roles, while others feel that individuals can learn to be leaders through acquiring certain knowledge and skills. Regardless which stance one takes, both views agree that the leadership role is vital to creating and maintaining an effective team.

For Gysbers (1990) a key element of positive and energetic leadership starts at the building level (principal, assistant principal, or department coordinator) and funnels to a successful guidance program. If the leader is not energetic then “the dynamics of leadership become stale in a vacuum” (Gysbers, 1990, p. 138) This suggests that energy is contagious; if the leader has energy and promotes a positive work environment, then the group shares the excitement, work is enjoyable and spirits are lifted. Effective leadership can transform the school counseling program (House & Hayes, 2002). Leadership is evident when the counselors commit to organizing the program around student competencies and developing a comprehensive program (O’Dell & Rak, 1996). School leadership is needed to close the achievement gap and help all students be successful in academic, personal/social, and career matters (Kaffenberger, Murphy, & Bemak, 2006), and each school counselor can be a leader in that effort.

Baker & Gerler (2004) believe that leadership and collaboration are avenues through which school counselors can be of greater service to a broad range of clients. The leader needs to have clear guidelines. One guideline would be to maintain focus on the team mission and vision (Daniels, 2004). Any team can lose sight of the group’s goals and get lost in details. The leader can also clarify group behavior. How team members behave is essential to the team’s success. The leader can set the norm and make clear the expectations. Even though the leader can’t control other member’s behaviors, they can address counterproductive behavior.

The leader should also work to foster trust. If there is fear and defensiveness in the group, it could develop into a lack of cooperation. If the leader is working to build a cohesive unit, then he or she should be aware of group dynamics. Cliques and conflict could prevent a team from becoming cohesive. Once a team learns how to handle conflict and trust one another, then norms can be created to manage and resolve most challenging situations (Daniels, 2004). When

defining teams, Wesley ( 2001) offers “TRUSTING” as an acronym for each of eight definitions of how the team should function (teaming, realism, understanding, sensitivity, talking, student interests, nurturing, and giving the benefit of the doubt). In his opinion we can get an idea of how the administrator-counselor relationship can work to the benefit of not only the students but also the counselor. Specifically he said, “When we can share and take an interest in one another as individuals, it becomes that much more likely that we will be able to stand together amid the annoyances and crises that constitute our workdays (p. 62)”.

After reviewing internal and external factors that impact team effectiveness, the final area to examine is interpersonal factors. Interpersonal factors are those between and among group members that enhance the group’s effectiveness.

#### *Interpersonal Factors*

*Team conflict resolution.* As noted above, even effective teams occasionally experience conflict, and the roots of those conflicts are often found in interpersonal factors which influence group dynamics. Team effectiveness can be challenged when team members do not celebrate the diversity and differences of the team members. Team leaders can deal with team discord by listening and creatively approaching the conflict. Team members need to understand the source of the problem and work toward overcoming the difficulties. Open, one-on-one communication is the best way to handle the differences when they first arise. Team leaders can act as a resource to involved parties and may find it necessary to use an out side mediator (Morgan & Lassiter, 1992).

An essential component for team effectiveness is monitoring information sharing. There are different levels in which team members can share information: through a letter, e-mail, telephone conversions, video conferencing, or talking face to face. Information transferred

through e-mail is not going to be as rich as that shared face to face. It lacks body language, voice inflection, and facial expressions which all add to the richness of the information. The team must decide how they want to share information in the richest possible form, taking into account that face to face is the most time consuming (Morgan & Lassiter, 1992).

*Interactions together.* Individuals working together must have interactions. Informally, it strengthens bonding and cohesiveness. Interactions during task performance allow an exchange of information and a chance to harmonize efforts. An example of this is a scheduled meeting time. Meeting time allows the team time to collaboratively problem solve school or student difficulties (Zetlin, 2000). In the opinion of West & Markiewicz (2004) poor team meetings are better than no team meetings; at least members are given the opportunity to exchange information. Without these interactions team members may amass misperceptions about the other members and tasks, resulting in increased conflict within the group. The group needs to decide how much time should be spent in formal meetings; minimally the group should convene each month.

One effective strategy includes suggesting to the principal that a regular meeting time be set for collaboration among building administrators and school counselors. It is amazing how much insight and information can be shared during a one-hour team meeting at the beginning or end of the week (Murray, 1995).

*Making Decisions.* We cannot assume that work groups make better decisions than individuals alone. There are deficits in the group decision making process. Personality traits, for example, can affect the way a team member comes across. Specifically, if the team member is shy, he or she may not be able to effectively communicate his or her thoughts. On the other hand, if a member is skilled at communication, then that member may be able to sway the other team

members to their point of view. Some group members tend to dominate others and take up time arguing their point or perhaps there is an egocentric member that is unwilling to listen to others' opinions. Some team members will work less hard knowing that they will not be rated individually but as a group (Allen & Hecht, 2004).

An advertising executive A. F. Osborn coined the term "brainstorming" as an effective method for teams to generate ideas with better quality (Osborn, 1957). Group members would express whatever came to mind, not critically evaluating each idea, and generate as many ideas as possible. Since his proposal, researchers have examined the hypothesis that brainstorming groups will out perform individuals. Research shows that the groups actually perform more poorly than the individuals that work alone (Diehl & Strebe, 1987). However, since brainstorming is an ingrained tool in the business world, researchers are also studying ways to make it more effective.

West & Markiewicz (2004) recommend a 'stepladder' approach to ensuring that higher quality decisions are made. Before a decision is made, each group member is given time to think about solutions and present a document to the group stating his or her own view. When all members have presented their ideas and a face to face discussion has occurred, then a decision can be made. This method allows for more reflection time, more individual ideas, greater communication, fresh ideas, and fewer disagreements.

### Professional School Counselors

#### *Challenges for Professional School Counselors*

School counselors serve a vital role in contributing to the lives of the students and faculty they serve; they "are trained and positioned within their schools to make a difference in all students' academic achievement" (Beale, 2003, p. 71). However, school counselors confront

many challenges every day. Some challenges are related to students, such as absenteeism, family problems, abuse, anger issues, and low academic achievement (Worsham, 2005; Musheno & Talbert, 2002). Staff related challenges include working with teachers who are stressed or overwhelmed, or principals who are not clear on the counselor's role and use them as disciplinarians, substitute teachers, or bus duty monitors (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Counselors also face challenges of working with parents to involve them in the child's mental and physical growth, making contact with outside resources, and providing resources to parents (Musheno & Talbert, 2002).

### *Roles of a Professional School Counselor*

As an individual counselor, and collectively as team members, it is important to know the specific expectations of a professional school counselor. In fact, "the most significant challenge for school counselors rests in the on going debate over role definition" (Paisley & McMahon, 2001, p. 107). As counselors they "must be clear and proactive in defining what it is they do better than anyone else in their schools" (Beale, 2003, p. 68). School counselors struggle with role conflict, due to the many conflicting demands placed upon them (Coll & Freeman, 1997). Counselors must cope with varying priorities, expectations and demands, such as higher achievement, greater diversity, working with at-risk students, and accountability (Anderson, 2002). Even with ideal small student ratios, fulfilling all of the expectations would be difficult (Paisley & McMahon, 2001).

In order to gain clarity, school counselors must define their multiple roles. The American School Counselors Association (2003) has developed a model in order to provide a framework for school counselors. There are differing demands being placed on them by parents, teachers,

students and administrators; by setting boundaries, school counselors will reduce role ambiguity and be better able to meet the demands and expectations placed upon them (Anderson, 2002).

The primary emphasis of the leadership function in the ASCA initiative seems to be on taking charge of the planning, initiating, and managing of comprehensive school counseling programs and the associated guidance curriculums. By so doing, students will benefit. The leadership function begins around and within the school counseling programs themselves. This, in turn requires collaboration with administrators, teachers, students, families, and the greater community to achieve the program goals (Baker & Gerler, 2004, p. 312).

Although the ASCA model (2003) has suggested a comprehensive model for school counselors to follow, many school counselors feel that their daily routines do not always align with the recommendation thus spending more time in noncounseling, administrative duties (Coll & Freeman, 1997). Furthermore studies have shown that school counselors and principals have differing perceptions on how much time is actually spent by counselors on their assigned duties versus the amount of time they ought to spend on duties (Monteiro-Leitner, Asner-Self, Milde, Leitner, & Skleton, 2006). Monteiro-Leitner et al. (2006) in their research suggest three reasons for this disparity: (a) all key players do not know or agree upon what a school counselor's role is; (b) there is a hierarchy of power between the principal and counselor within the institution; and (c) economic, regional, and social needs can play a significant part in what the school counselor's daily duties will be. Once school counselor's roles are defined, this must be shared with all key players. Once roles are established, counselors can work on what is required to ensure an effective team (Monteiro-Leitner, 2006).

Roles of the school counselor are constantly being scrutinized (Curcio, Mathai, & Roberts, 2003) by parents, teachers, administrators, and students due to the inconsistency of the counselors' daily tasks (Rayle, 2006). In addition to following the ASCA Model (2003), school counselors may perceive greater effectiveness if they (a) team and consult with teachers; (b) provide in-service for teachers; (c) create mentoring and peer counseling programs to provide support for all students; (d) assess barriers to student learning; (e) collect and interpret student data for reformation; (f) advocate for rigorous academic preparation and experiences that will broaden all students' educational and career options; and (g) link with agencies in their communities to provide resources for students and their families (Musheno & Talbert, 2002). In addition to working with the school and families, counselors need particular skills to be effective including "teaming and collaboration, leadership, assessment, and use of data to bring about change, advocacy, and counseling and coordination" (Musheno & Talbert, 2002, p. 186)

All schools have a guidance and counseling program; some are better organized and more comprehensive, but all need to be evaluated for their effectiveness (Myrick, 2003). Counseling teams are continually being challenged to transform their role and move closer to being aligned with current models (Burnham & Jackson, 2000). By establishing the challenges school counselors face and the roles that they must fulfill, teams are better able to collaborate on ways to be more effective.

### Summary

School counselors have numerous demands placed on them daily both internally from within their school and externally from national guidelines (ASCA, 2003). As counselors define their roles to better enhance student achievement and accomplishments, they increase meeting the needs of the students and staff. Most counselors do not tackle this job individually but with a

team of certified, professional school counselors. However, it is not clear what makes an effective school counseling team. Current literature focuses on other work settings and work team theories; however, with regard to school counseling work teams the research is nonexistent. The literature reviewed here noted group development, components of an effective team and the challenges professional school counselors face with their multiple roles. This information supports the rationale behind the research questions guiding the present study. Specific methodology will be discussed in Chapter 3.

### CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

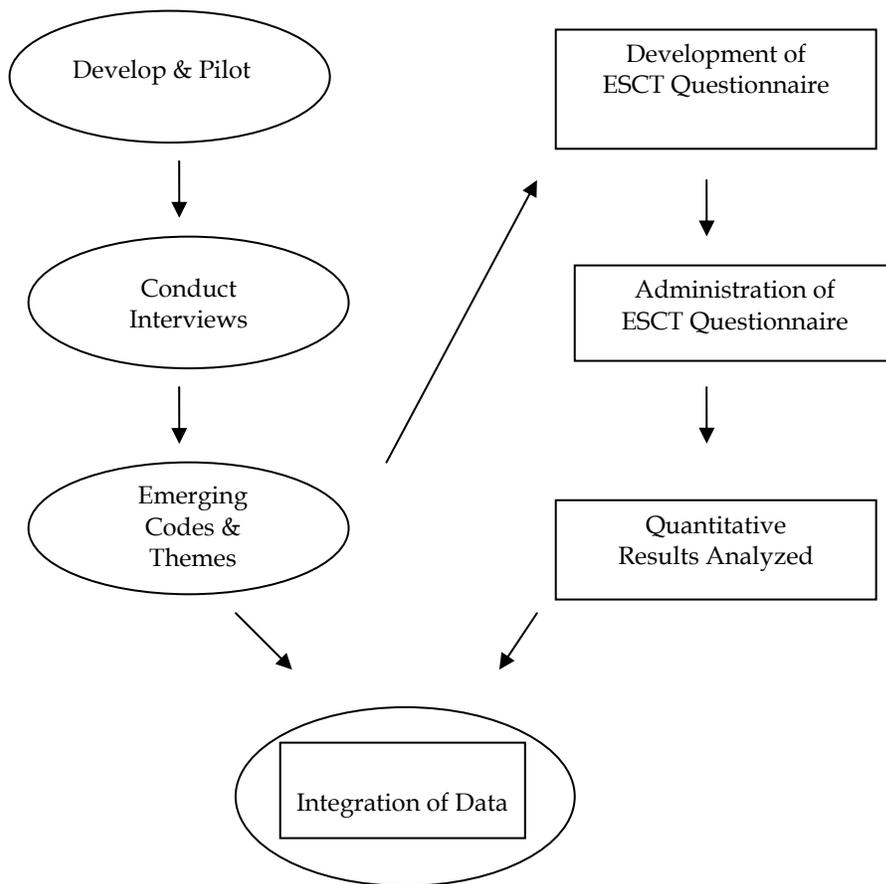
This chapter presents the methodology for this research study regarding effective school counseling teams. This chapter includes a discussion of the research questions, data collection procedures, and the statistical techniques implemented to analyze data.

#### Introduction

The purpose of this two-phase, sequential mixed methods study was to explore secondary school counselors' views of effective counseling teams. The first step was to interview six effective teams, as identified by their supervisor, in an effort to understand their perspectives on what makes an effective school counseling team. One supervisor defined an effective team as one in which all members worked in advocating for the student. Two supervisors also felt it was important that the individual team members perceived each other as sharing equal responsibilities - not necessarily that the duties were equal to one another but that responsibilities were shared. All three supervisors agreed that open communication was a key element for an effective team.

The emerging themes from the interviews were used to construct the Effective School Counselor Team Questionnaire (ESCTQ) which was given to secondary school counseling teams. In addition, this study compared themes collected from interviews to data collected from the ESCTQ. The data generated from the questionnaire did quantifiably add validity and confirm the findings from the individual interviews, ultimately strengthening the study (Greene & Caracelli, 1997). By combining methods of data analysis, a more detailed survey instrument was able to be constructed, as well as having a better understanding of the phenomenon of what makes an effective school counseling team (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Visualization of Research Procedures



### Research Questions

Through the use of individual interviews, the Effective School Counseling Questionnaire, and the comparison of the results with existing literature, this study addressed the following questions:

1. What factors do counselors perceive contribute to their team's effectiveness?
2. Are the scores on the Effective School Counseling Team Questionnaire related to team effectiveness as described by school counselors?
3. Is there a relationship between team characteristics (length of time on current team, years of personal counseling experience, gender, age) and team effectiveness?
4. Is there a relationship between the perceptions of members of effective and ineffective teams?

### Permission to Research

The researcher submitted the research proposal to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Tech. Additionally, a proposal was submitted to the central administration supervisors from the involved southwestern Virginia school districts, informing them of the purpose, research questions, and procedures of this study. Furthermore, the researcher obtained a signed informed consent from each subject to participate and to use their information in this study (see Appendix A). Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed.

### Participants

Participants in this study were school counselors holding a Virginia School Counseling License currently counseling at a secondary level (middle or high school) in public school

districts in southwestern Virginia. An additional criterion set by the researcher was having the team work together for at least one calendar school year. This time frame was chosen to give the team the opportunity to complete an academic year cycle and all the customary tasks that accompany it.

Access to these counselors was gained through their district supervisors. In using two methods (qualitative and quantitative), the researcher had also decided to use two different groups for the proposed study. The first group was identified by their central office supervisors as teams that work effectively together (see definition given in Chapter 1). This group was comprised of 6 teams (3 middle schools and 3 high schools) which included 24 individual counselors. Two teams were used to pilot interviews, one middle and one high school. Once adjustments were made to the interview protocol, the following four teams (two middle and two high school teams) were interviewed. The second group, which consisted of approximately 200 counselors, was asked to complete the Effective School Counseling Team Questionnaire (ESCQT) (Appendix G). Additional information is presented in Table 1 for a clearer look at the research questions, phenomenon, sample, and data collection technique. Initial contact was made through the central administration supervisors, who were asked for permission to contact their counselors and solicit their participation. A brief summary of the findings from the completed study was offered to participating districts.

### *Instrumentation*

The mixed method approach results in two types and levels of inquiry; the first is the individual interview with six teams. A questionnaire was then constructed based on information gained from the interviews. The second phase of research is to administer the Effective School Counselor Team Questionnaire (ESCTQ). The purpose of these methods was to discover what

characteristics school counselors perceive contribute to an effective team and to determine whether scores on the ESCTQ relate to team effectiveness as well as confirm the interview themes.

Table 1:

*Study Research Questions, Sample, & Data Collection Techniques*

	Phenomenon	Sample	Data Collection Technique
RQ 1:	Counselor's perception of effective teams	6 teams <sup>1</sup>	Individual Interviews
RQ 2:	Relationship between team factors & scale	200 counselors <sup>2</sup>	Individual Interviews followed by ESCTQ <sup>3</sup>
RQ 3:	Relationship between demographics & team effectiveness	200 counselors	Individual Interviews & ESCTQ
RQ 4:	Relationship between effective & ineffective teams	200 counselors	ESCTQ

*Note.* <sup>1</sup> Pilot interviews consist of 2 teams (1 middle, 1 high) total of 5 individual counselor interviews, and research interviews consist of 4 teams (2 middle, 2 high) total of 24 individual counselor interviews, <sup>2</sup> counselor's to pilot the questionnaire and 200 will be given the improved version <sup>3</sup> ESCTQ = Effective School Counseling Team Questionnaire

### Individual Interviews

Interviews were conducted to explore the overall characteristics counselors perceive contributed to their effective team. The semi-structured, open ended question protocol was developed by the researcher. A copy of the interview protocol is included in Appendix B. In addition, the interview protocol was reviewed by a panel of experts and piloted with two teams.

Discussion in chapter two suggested effective teams possess certain characteristics in order to operate effectively; the proposed study gathered a list of those traits, generated from the

interviews. The emerging interview themes led to the development of the ESCTQ which was used in the second phase of this research project.

#### Questionnaire (ESCTQ)

Based on the interview responses the questionnaire was developed and piloted, and then it was administered to nine school districts which consist of 18 teams. The ESCTQ, a survey consisting of Likert Scale questions and open ended questions, measured school counselors' perception of effective teams. The school counselors assessed the extent of his or her agreement with the 4-point Likert-type scale, which included statements from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."

### Data Collection

#### *Pilot Study of Instruments*

According to Creswell (2003), pilot testing the instruments is important in order "to establish the content validity of an instrument and to improve questions, format, and the scales" (p. 158). For these reasons, the researcher piloted both phases of the research. The interview protocol was piloted with members of two teams, one middle and one high school. In addition, the interview questions were examined by an expert school counseling panel and changes were made to ensure clear wording, format, and understanding of the questions. As a result of piloting the instruments, the length of time to complete the survey was assessed and a survey specialist affirmed the instrument had face validity.

#### *Initial Contact*

Each selected participant was contacted by their supervisor encouraging them to participate in this study (See sample e-mail in Appendix C). A few days later they received a

cover letter from the researcher explaining the complete study, its purpose, confidentiality of responses, and encouragement of the school counselor's participation in the study (Appendix D).

#### *Schedule Interview*

A follow up call was made during that same week to schedule an appointment for the interview. The researcher e-mailed the informed consent to each participant to review prior to the interview. Any questions were answered at the initial interview meeting, along with obtaining a signature for the informed consent, and selecting a pseudonym to maintain participants' anonymity. All interviews were audio taped and field notes were taken by the researcher during and after each session. The individual interview lasted approximately an hour and was conducted face-to-face in the school counselor's office by the researcher. The research provided a boxed lunch to each interview participant.

A standardized semi-structured interview, along with probes, was used for clarity and to encourage a more detailed response from the participants (Patton, 2002). The wording and the sequencing of the questions in the interview protocol remained consistent throughout the interviews. Open ended questions were used to encourage the participant's views of what make an effective school counseling team (Creswell, 2003).

#### *Questionnaire*

In order to ensure a higher response rate for the survey portion of this project, the Tailored Design Method (Salant & Dillman, 1994) was followed. The first contact was an e-mail from the supervisor notifying the counselors that the questionnaire that is forthcoming. The following week the ESCT Questionnaire was mailed to 18 secondary teams. Included in their packet was the cover letter explaining details of the study (see Appendix D), their appreciation

gift of personalized note cards, and a return stamped envelope for the questionnaire. Each questionnaire was coded to allow for follow-ups of non-respondents.

A postcard follow-up was sent to all members one week following the initial mailing. Postcards thanked participants who had already completed the survey, encouraged those counselors who had not, and provided contact information for participants who had not received the survey materials. A final mailing was sent out three weeks after the initial mailing. It consisted of a personalized cover letter, questionnaire, and preaddressed return envelope with postage. This mailing was sent to all nonrespondents.

### Design and Analysis

This is a mixed-method design with the intent to triangulate. This strategy is used in order to enhance the validity of the research findings (Mathiason, 1988). Being a mixed-method design both qualitative and quantitative data were collected, to better understand school counselor's perceptions of effective teams. After each phase in this sequential design, the data were collected and analyzed (Greene, Caracelli & Graham, 1989) (Figure 2). Through triangulation of data, this research problem was better understood, and the quantitative data complemented and confirmed the qualitative data.

Figure 2

#### *Procedural Steps in Data Collection*

- Step 1:** Pilot Team interviews & make adjustments (1 middle school, 1 high school = 2 teams = 6 counselors)
- Step 2:** Conduct additional individual team interviews (3 middle schools, 3 high schools = 6 teams = 22 counselors)
- Step 3:** Analyze qualitative interviews: look for emerging codes and themes

**Step 4:** Integration of Data

**Step 5:** Develop the ESCTQ (Effective School Counseling Teams Questionnaire)

**Step 6:** Pilot study questionnaire & make adjustments (20 counselors)

**Step 7:** Administration of ESCTQ (53 middle & high school counselors)

**Step 8:** Analyze quantitative results

**Step 9:** Final Conclusions

#### Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data were collected first, with the intent to explore school counselors' perceptions of effective teams (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative data were collected through interviewing six teams of secondary school counselors for exploratory purposes. Following the interviews, the researcher had the tapes transcribed and carefully listened to recordings. This process was repeated for each tape, listening for recurring themes. Data analysis in qualitative research is an iterative and recursive process (Sprenkle & Moon, 1996). The researcher coded and categorized the material, which began the process of looking at recurrent themes, and placed each into categories. The researcher looked for in vivo terms and clustered similar topics. The transcripts were then reanalyzed with a reduced set of codes and interrelationships between categories were examined. The coding process was then used to generate five to seven themes as the major findings of effective teams; an analytic matrix was made for each research question to aid in clustering the common themes that emerge (Creswell, 2003). The themes emerging from the interviews laid the foundation for the development of the Effective School Counseling Team Questionnaire (ESCTQ). Rich, thick description was provided to add clarity to the findings (Patton, 2002). Routine meetings with the advisor for this research project served to test interpretations for internal validity and control for researcher bias. Software was used to assist in

the analysis process (N-Vivo). This aided in organizing coded themes, grouping data together and comparing passages in the transcripts, and field notes.

### *Quantitative Analysis*

After completing the analysis of the interviews, the Effective School Counseling Team Questionnaire (ESCTQ) was developed. Comparisons were made from the interviews and the quantitative data from the ESCTQ. All statistical analyses were completed using *SPSS for Windows, v 13.0* and answered research questions presented in this study. Analyses of variance and correlational analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between ESCTQ subscales and groups. The information was integrated to see if the ESCTQ related to team effectiveness. Also, any relationship among selected team demographics, professional variables and team effectiveness were explored.

### *Integration*

Data were integrated after each phase and then at the end of the research study. The quantitative data are being used with the purpose of confirming the qualitative findings from the interviews. A greater insight into effective school counseling teams was gained by using both methods.

### Anticipated Ethical Issues

Pseudonyms, during the interview and transcription, were given to individuals and places to protect the identities of participants. Similarly with the questionnaire: participants' names were not used, but given a code on their questionnaire allowing a reply to non-respondents. Data will be kept for five years and then destroyed. For confidentiality purposes, these data were not shared with individuals not involved in this project. In order to insure accuracy of the

interpretation of data, a research professor's expertise was used to validate the accuracy of the data.

### Summary

The intent of this study is to provide descriptive information regarding effective school counseling teams. In addition, explanations were made regarding the individual interviews and the questionnaire which were used in sequential phases. The interviews were conducted and then the questionnaire developed to confirm the findings of the individual interviews. Chapter three provided a detailed description about the participants, data collection, and the design and analysis.

## CHAPTER IV: RESULTS OF THE STUDY

### Introduction

The purpose of this two-phase, sequential, mixed methods study was to explore secondary school counselors' views of effective counseling teams. This chapter presents the results of the data analysis. Information was obtained from the individual team interviews and the Effective School Counseling Team Questionnaire. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to analyze the four research questions. Each research question was considered individually.

### Summary of Research Questions

These four research questions were addressed:

1. What factors do counselors perceive contribute to their team's effectiveness?
2. Are the scores on the Effective School Counseling Team Questionnaire related to team effectiveness as described by school counselors?
3. Is there a relationship between team characteristics (length of time on current team, years of personal counseling experience, gender, age) and team effectiveness?
4. Is there a relationship between the perceptions of members of effective and ineffective teams?

### Phase I: Qualitative Data

There were two phases to this mixed methods study. Phase I used the qualitative data analysis through team interviews, and specifically focused on Research Question I.

### *Team Interviews*

As discussed in chapter three, members of six teams were interviewed in order to gain a thorough understanding of what characteristics school counselors felt contributed to an effective team. A questionnaire protocol (Appendix B) was developed and piloted. In order to obtain teams which were perceived as effective, three school district supervisors were asked about their secondary teams and solicited for team recommendations. The researcher met in person with each supervisor and provided her/her with copies of the interview questions, IRB approval letter, and a mini proposal explaining the study. The supervisor then contacted the team and encouraged them to participate. After receiving confirmation from the supervisor, the researcher then contacted the team leader, explaining the study and asking for a commitment. The interview date and times were established and the researcher e-mailed the same information to each counselor. A total of 24 interviews were conducted: three at the middle school level and three at the high school level.

The interviews took place at the school counselors' offices. The researcher provided a boxed lunch for each participant. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and followed the interview protocol (Appendix B). The interviews were audio taped and transcribed by [escriptionist.com](http://escriptionist.com). The researcher took special precautions to ensure confidentiality for the participants and signed a confidentiality contract with [escriptionist.com](http://escriptionist.com). The transcripts were sent electronically through their secured drop box, and when completed, transcripts were e-mailed to the researcher.

### *Qualitative Demographic Information*

The 24 participants ranged in age from 28 to 60; four counselors were male and 20 female. All participants held master's degrees; one counselor had a Ph.D. Each maintained

Licensed Professional School Counselor certification. The participants represented two cultural backgrounds; 3 participants were African American and 21 Caucasian. One individual had been with her current school counseling team for 2 years; the most veteran member had been on her current team for 33 years ( $M = 8.79$ ). The individual team members' counseling experience ranged from 2 years to 37 years ( $M = 13.71$ ). All ( $n = 24$ ) but 7 participants had prior teaching experience ( $M = 7.71$ ).

Table 2

*Qualitative Demographic Information*

Team	Participant	Age	Gender	Degree	Culture	Yrs on current tm	Counseling experience	Teaching experience
HS – Team 1	Whitney	45	F	Masters	AA	13	13	10
	Elizabeth	43	F	Masters	C	6	6	15
	Sierra	33	F	Masters	AA	8	10	0
	Sarah	53	F	Masters	C	2	19	13
	Sue	53	F	Masters	C	22	22	6
	Joe	39	M	Masters	C	3	10	5
	Sally	40	F	Masters	C	3	3	17
MS – Team 2	Fred	48	F	Ph.D.	C	4	13	0
	Floyd	53	F	Masters	C	3	13	19
	Lori	51	F	Masters	C	3	10	28
HS – Team 3	Jay	33	M	Masters	AA	8	9	0
	Liza	28	F	Masters	C	3	3	0
	Marilyn	42	F	Masters	C	13	13	14
	Brittany	39	F	Masters	C	4	5	0
	Ruffus	50	F	Masters	C	5	18	10
	Beth	43	F	Masters	C	5	5	10
	Nicole	58	F	Masters	C	6	6	0
MS – Team 4	Ellen	60	F	Masters	C	7	37	4
	Jerry	60	M	Masters	C	32	32	2
HS – Team 5	Grace	59	F	Masters	C	33	34	0
	Dave	54	M	Masters	C	14	24	12
MS – Team 6	Susan	45	F	Masters	C	5	15	8
	Mandy	41	F	Masters	C	4	14	0
	Mary	49	F	Masters	C	5	14	12
<i>Average</i>		<i>46.63</i>				<i>8.79</i>	<i>13.71</i>	<i>7.71</i>

### *Analysis*

The data were organized by teams; each participant chose a pseudonym and was placed in the analytical matrix. During the initial coding phase, N6 software was used to organize key concepts expressed by the participants. All the data were read through to obtain a general sense of the information and reflect its overall meaning. Analytical insights occurring during fieldwork were noted and used to create themes during analysis. During the coding process, material was organized into categories and labeled. Twenty-two main themes were found and placed in an analytical matrix (Appendix H). Thematic analysis (Ely, 1991) was conducted among the categories. Through re-reading the transcripts carefully, use of some categories was revised and others eliminated based upon the amount of participants responses to that code. If a code was a common theme among the participants, then it was developed into a category. Five main categories emerged from the twenty-two original themes: personal qualities, altruism, interactions, external support and experiences (Appendix H), which then rose to the top tier. From there the researcher placed each item in the three main categories of internal, external, and interpersonal factors which paralleled with the literature findings.

#### Research Question One

The first research question, “What factors do counselors perceive contribute to their team’s effectiveness?” was answered through individual interview responses. Each interviewee was asked to provide a current rating for their team (1-10), one being the least effective and ten being the most effective. On this 10-point scale, all but four counselors ( $n = 22$ ) rated their team above a 7 ( $M = 8.10$ ). Based on the 24 individual interviews, most of the school counselors rated their current team high. This number helped to give a baseline for the interviewee’s responses.

The next section will discuss internal, external, and interpersonal factors that the school counselors felt contributed to an effective team. Quoted material is presented as it originally appears in the verbatim transcript.

### *Internal Factors*

During the interview, internal factors were those defined as qualities each individual counselor possessed that influenced the effectiveness of the team. Internal factors that emerged from the analysis of qualitative data were: being student-centered, being committed, openly handling conflict, having individual competencies, being dedicated and positive personality traits.

The strongest internal theme emerging from the interviews was being *student centered* and putting the needs of the students first. Team members expressed having the same philosophy or motto surrounding that theme. This sharing of the motto “putting students needs first” can create a bonding between team members. Whitney, HS Team 1, commented that this motto helped her team to maintain focus and stay professional. Her teammate, Sally, HS Team 1, said:

I feel really good about the group we have. I feel really good about the jobs we do. . . . we are all pretty focused on a common goal . . . to help kids. From top to bottom if you ever – any of the seven people in here, I would have no qualms in saying their heart’s in helping kids . . . That’s where our heart’s at.

The bond can go beyond just caring for others to include actually loving others and reinforcing why counselors are in this profession. According to Dave, HS Team 5, he and his colleague “both love kids; we got into this business to help students, younger people and we both share that . . . love.” Not only did this commonality create a bond between team members, but when a question would arise about what to do, the team would fall back on this motto to guide

them to the appropriate decision. Fred (MS Team 2) said that sometimes this priority can be a problem. She said, “we’re here to work for the kids. And we put them as our priority because that’s for them. And it can make us unpopular (laughter) and that’s a problem with teachers or whomever.” She further explained that she may not always agree with her principal but must explain to the principal “that’s just the way it is” (Fred, MS Team 2). For some counselors this commitment to serve students may also be difficult at times. For other counselors this common theme may have reinforced the commitment that counselors have to their job and their students regardless of their individual differences.

I think the key is commitment to your students . . . commitment to serve your students. . .

And I think that’s the thing that holds us together even though we have different personality styles. Even though we may not agree on how everything that we do – you know, I’m sure I do things differently, but I think we’re all committed to serve our students (Sue, HS Team 1).

Another topic that emerged during the interviews was the different strengths and *competencies* that colleagues possess. Words like “individual differences”, “talents”, “personal experiences”, and “excellent training” were used to describe team member competencies. Many counselors valued the knowledge and experiences that each individual brought to the team.

Those areas of expertise were seen as valuable and contributed to the whole group.

If I had to rate our competencies I think this is what is really neat about our team . . . we both have strengths. We share the same strengths and we also have strengths in the area that the other one doesn’t. And I really believe that this is one of the reasons that in my opinion that we get the job done very well around here (Dave, HS Team 5).

For Liza (HS Team 3) her team had different strengths which aided the team's competency. Liza (HS Team 3) said:

I think that is what makes this an effective team, is that many [counselors] carry the different strengths. I think that some of them carry different strengths in terms of being more organized, and being efficient in terms of managing SOL's. . . one of the counselors is responsible for some of the [grief] groups that have been offered . . .that is the biggest strength (is) that we work together in completing those different tasks [using our particular strengths].

Jerry (MS Team 4) added to this by not only discussing the different competencies of his team but that their differences actually helped each other to grown professionally. Jerry (MS Team 4) said, "I think we're competent in everything . . . So the advantage of being around each other for any period of time and trusting each other and not having boundaries . . . allows you to develop your own competencies as well as add to theirs."

In addition to valuing each other's competencies, team members described a sense of collegiality in which they would seek out the opinions of their team mates drawing on their strengths and areas of expertise.

I feel like everybody is competent, I think everybody pretty much knows what they're doing. All of us go to each other if we're not sure about something; we go to each other, ask or say will you think about this? Am I doing this right? Will you look over this? It's just all been pretty open (Whitney, HS Team 1).

Ruffus (HS Team 3), a team leader, also valued the counselor's individual competencies. Regarding one particular counselor, she said, "I have one who is very good with computer technology and a master schedule . . . we would struggle quite a while because that is that

person's field of expertise." As a coordinator for her department she assigns tasks based on the counselor's areas of expertise and interests.

A third theme, some of the counselors had *previous experiences* at different levels or school systems; and others worked in entirely different fields before becoming school counselors. Nicole, HS Team 3 remarked that due to her previous experience, "being in the business world and so forth, I have a lot of experience that I can bring to the table." She expressed to her students what the real world is looking for and uses her previous experiences to share practical knowledge when they interview for jobs. Overall, the team members believed that having different strengths in different areas added to the team.

Another personal attribute, or internal factor, described by team members was a need for the entire team to be *dedicated*. It was stressed that each team member be hard working, motivated, and committed. For an effective team, counselors needed to perceive the other members as contributing an equal effort. This theme was not only prevalent during the interviews with team members but was mentioned by two supervisors as necessary for effective teams. Contributing equally will not only enable goal achievement, but will diminish the possibility that resentment is built up between members.

There is no – you know, there's no one person that doesn't do their job. Everybody's assigned different responsibilities and everybody gets it done . . . because it makes it – it stresses everybody else out. I think it makes the whole department look bad and everybody else that is doing their job has to work twice as hard to make up for the slacker (Joe, HS Team 1).

Effective team members possessed a desire and dedication to work diligently to ensure a job well done; they possessed an internal willingness to work together and were self-motivated.

“We all do what we need to do to meet the needs of the kids and cover what’s expected of us to cover each year” (Lori, MS Team 2). Lori’s, MS Team 2, philosophy is “if you have a good staff, then the school can run itself”. Throughout the year, projects arise that must be completed outside the contractual hours. Individual members must be motivated to get their assignments done; but for an effective team, members must be dedicated to making sure all members’ projects are completed. Sierra, HS Team 1, saw her team’s dedication to themselves and each other as an asset to the team.

I’m not trying to brag or anything, but like I said, I think we’ve got a good department, and we have something to do, we get it done. And if we can’t get it done, I mean we have stayed after ‘til like six and seven o’clock. But, like, if (my colleague) finishes before me, she’s gonna help me. And if I finish before (another colleague), I’m gonna help her. It’s like – so we work together to make sure that it’s done, and I think (our coordinator) feels comfortable with it because he knows it’s gonna get done (Sierra, HS Team 1).

Sierra, HS Team 1, further explained this was more than collaboration or working well together, because it was something her team mates chose to do; for her it was characteristic of her team members’ personalities and how they “look after” each other.

The team members also described counselor’s individual *personality traits* that they valued. They described themselves and other members as flexible, approachable, caring, supportive, trusting, courteous, respectful and humorous. Lori (MS Team 2) described her team as flexible. “We are all really flexible. We work really well together, and each of us has different personalities and different likes and dislikes, and it just seems to work (Lori, MS Team 2). She described herself as “the one who deals with difficult kids and her colleagues as the “energizer bunny” and “reserved and processing counselor” (Lori, MS Team 2).”

In addition to being flexible counselors desired their colleagues to be trustworthy. It was important that they believe in each other and trust them both professionally and personally. For Jerry (MS Team 4) trust was his number one trait needed for an effective team. He said, “trust and honesty are what keep you functioning. They are the things that make it easy because you know they [colleague] will be there (Jerry, MS Team 4).

Team members also discussed striving to do and be their very best. Joe, HS Team 1 coordinator, personally reflected about reviewing the teams’ tasks. He remarked, “I’m always looking for something that’s more efficient and better serves the students. I’m always open to suggestions. If there’s a better way of doing something we do it.” Joe, HS Team 1, not only speaks to an important personal quality of self-reflection to improve, but addresses the first internal factor listed of serving the student.

### *External Factors*

A second significant theme discussed by team members is the external factors needed to be an effective team. The following themes emerged as external factors: school administration and support personnel, central office administration, and proximity to each other.

For many teams the function of the *school administration* was the number one area they noted could impact their team’s effectiveness. A variety of members were categorized with the school support personnel: principals, department secretaries, teachers, student assistant counselors, parents, campus security and career counselors. Of the external support members the administrative team received the most attention. Some counselors were discouraged and wished others, especially principals, knew what counselors’ duties were. Whitney, HS Team 1, felt that the school administrators did not see the big picture of everything her team does. In her opinion, “if they knew what I was responsible for, perhaps they would take away some of the duties that

have been placed upon us (the counselors)”. Likewise Sue, HS Team 1, was struggling to meet the needs of her students with new duties placed upon her and her team this year.

There’s just been some barriers that have been created. Lunch duty every single day, and homeroom every single day. And those are the two main times when kids come to see their guidance counselors . . . we’re not trying to get out of anything, but we think we’re hurting our services to our students because we’re unavailable when a lot of students are free (Sue, HS Team 1).

Sue, HS Team 1, said being asked to perform these duties “caused a little bit of a rift between us and some administrators.” Extra duties not only limited the counselor’s time to be available to the students, but it placed team members in a disciplinary role. Counselors, for example, did not feel comfortable acting in an administrative role when they had to reprimand students or remind them to pick up their trash. Secondly, the counselors felt mixed messages were sent to the students. They were being portrayed as disciplinarians and yet expected students to confide in the counselors regarding personal information. The team members wanted to be viewed as an advocate to students and not as disciplinarians. Liza, HS Team 3, said she would question, “Well, is this really our job? Should we really be doing discipline, or should we really be making a phone call home to a parent regarding a behavior problem that was handled?”

With regard to administration, counselors also voiced their desire for open communication between both parties. Grace, HS Team 5, would appreciate more communication between the school administrators and the counselors, particularly if it involved a student and she needed to be aware of the situation. She said:

a colleague and I’ve talked about that we feel like they do some of our things like when dealing with students sometimes we feel like we should know a little bit more about what

is going on that that we could be . . . of help you know due to our counseling and the fact that we work with them. I know that I have had parents to call before and say, “I want to talk to you about such and such and the situation that happened” and I’ve had to say “I am not aware of that situation” you know.

Grace, HS Team 5, felt that being “in the loop” would not only increase her awareness, but increase her self-efficacy so that administrators would value her opinion. She said:

So we just see it as you know we are here for purpose and we work with these kids and there are things that we talked to them about, and about their academic achievement and maybe they have had a problem in some other area that we’ve dealt with and then when something else happens this is just a continuation and more knowledge. And in other words we know about confidentiality.

Grace, HS Team 5, thought she would be more effective in her job and in serving students if she was made aware of situations pertaining to her caseload. She did not know why her principal did not include the counselors more often for consultation. Her only explanation was, “you take care of business and then something else comes up and you just don’t have time to go share or to include the person”, alluding to lack of time being an important factor regarding miscommunication.

Members of other teams described a positive relationship with their administration team both professionally and personally. A team member, Ellen, MS Team 4, described monthly social events between the counseling department and the administration team, like “pie parties”, potlucks, and eating lunch together. She described in detail the daily open communication that she, as a coordinator, had with her principal and support that her team receives from the administration team. She said they “know what we’re doing, and I send them a copy of

everything we do, and they pop in our classes and listen to what's happening. I think it's nice when everybody knows what everybody's doing." Some counselors receiving the support of their administrative team considered it an attribute to their effectiveness.

A second area of external support that teams discussed was *central office support staff*. Counselors felt that central office members could be supportive if they were aware of expectations placed upon the counselors. They also thought it was important to obtain counselors' input prior to requiring them to do additional tasks.

I think leadership from the central office sometimes has no clue what we're dealing with. So when decisions are made, we look at them and think 'What are they thinking?' because it just doesn't apply. It would be nice to have more communication on that end, I think (Beth, HS Team 3).

Team members wanted improved communication with central office and to feel assured that their job duties and expectations were understood. Jay, HS Team 3, had only one wish, "that everybody can truly understand our job, what it requires, what it consists of, and what it takes to get it done. Because I feel like if everyone knew that, we could be a lot more effective." This idea of everyone knowing what the counselors are responsible for was also mentioned with regard to teachers and parents. The counselors worked diligently to provide information to parents, students, and the community through school communications including newsletters, flyers, daily announcements, website updates, and programs. With the multiple methods of communication to faculty, parents, and students, Jay, HS Team 3, said, "Ignorance was not an excuse for missing information."

Some counselors felt that the central office staff members who make decisions for the counseling team did not ask for or value their input. "They don't always present the best form for

us to use and yet they need to communicate with us, okay, here's the form that I think would be good for this particular job or whatever (Nicole, HS Team 3)." In Nicole's (HS Team 3) opinion, if her supervisor would ask input from the counselors, and then make a decision on which form was to be used; the task would be better received and valued.

With regard to duties the amount of counseling paperwork was also mentioned by team members. Sarah, HS Team 1, felt this hindered her effectiveness.

The amount of paperwork that we have to do to track SOLs, to track several different things within the department that typically you would expect to see at this point in time on computer, and right now we're still having to do a lot of those things by hand, so I feel like that time, again, is taken away from students, working on-on-one with students, in order to get administrative roles down [completed].

*Proximity* was not an initial research concern until three team members, not located together, said they felt "disconnected" from the other counselors. Five out of the six counseling teams were located in a suite type area; where they had individual offices connected by a waiting room, and a secretary assigned to them. By not being located in the same area the sixth team was affected in how well they knew each other and what they were doing but also in working through difficult situations together.

I really feel like if we were all in the same area that we would be 100% more effective, because you would be dealing with counselors every day and seeing them and having to interact with them. We don't have to interact right now. We don't have to deal with someone we can't get along with. We don't see them. We don't have to. It's almost like they don't even exist. (Brittany, HS Team 3)

For Brittany's, HS Team 3, particular team, as a result of not being located together, there was not a central place to keep the student records. Each counselor was responsible for keeping the records in their office and maintaining them. Although they had a departmental secretary, that individual was located with the coordinator and not in close proximity to the other counselors. Proximity, although an external support, could actually improve interpersonal relationships. On the other hand, for one counselor not being located together was a positive aspect because it made the counselors more accessible to the students. In her opinion, a student may find it inconvenient or be intimidated by approaching a counselor in a suite area. Interestingly, for this particular school, the counselors were previously in separate buildings on campus, and the new building was designed to have counselors located on separate hallways to be more accessible to the students.

### *Interpersonal Factors*

A discussion of interpersonal factors was a portion of the interview with members of counseling teams. Interpersonal factors were those that occurred between team members. Team members described colleagues' interactions as "flexible", "getting along with each other", being on the "same wave length", and having a positive "chemistry" among team members. Predominant themes that emerged were communication, handling conflict, sharing duties with one another, and department planning.

Six participants noted that *communication* was the number one factor needed for a team to be effective. Words like "being open", "honest with each other", "non-territorial", and "consulting" other team members, were used to describe communication for effective teams. For Beth, HS Team 3, "Communication is a courtesy, everybody's on the same page, on the same plan, maybe the same goals. We're also negotiating for that end. It just has to happen for

everything else to work.” A few counselors felt their team communication was jeopardized due to the size of their school. By having large student case loads and little support staff, there was little time to communicate with each other. Even for those counselors who felt their team functioned ineffectively, they too could appreciate the importance of open communication. In their opinion if counselors knew how to effectively communicate, they were more productive in their duties as well as better at handling *conflict* openly. Brittany, HS Team 3, who rated her team a 5 out of a possible 10, was asked how conflict is handled within her team. She replied:

You know we really don't address it, which is the sad thing. Even from, I hate to admit, from the coordinator. I think she knows (the team tension of) what goes on . . . every now and then, someone (will suggest we work together) – it'll just be like a little side note that comes in. It's not like we're really discussing (the conflict) as a group.

When conflict is not addressed counselors described the situation as tense and uncomfortable. The researcher followed up with Brittany, HS Team 3, asking if she ever confronts an issue that is going unresolved. She said most of the time she does not, because without having the entire team open to discussing differences, “it makes the situation worse.”

Interestingly, members of 5 out of the 6 teams interviewed could not remember when they previously had any *conflict* within the team. They could recall differences of opinions and feeling strongly about an issue, but when the team discussed the matter at hand they were able to compromise and reach an agreement. For effective teams, mature communication about making decisions was essential. Team members discussed respecting and trusting one another. When they knew their colleagues felt passionately about a particular topic, they would compromise and collaborate on a solution. Team members mentioned that they used a democratic approach and

the majority ruled even on days when “everybody [does not] get along . . . we’ll work it out (Sierra, HS Team 1).” Similarly Sarah, HS Team 1, sums this theme up:

I can’t really think of a time when I’ve noticed a conflict enough to really call it a conflict. Now we’ve had some differences of opinions about things, but we usually talk those out and either come to a consensus, or we agree to disagree.

Three teams mentioned that they were able to diffuse conflict by placing the focus on the student and not on their individual wants and needs. Sally, HS Team 1, said that she and her team focused on making decisions based on what was in the student’s best interest. This was their measuring stick, although at times making “the right decision for the kids was not always the easy way to go.” Sue, HS Team 1, reflected that this focus helped her to better handle conflict. She felt by maintaining a focus on the students, “those other little things are not that important” and can be worked out.

Members of a few of the teams also referred to their previous experience with teams and being in a “territorial setting.” “Territorial” was described by counselors as “one who did not work together for the students’ best interest and was caught up in whose responsibility a particular task was”. Five out of the six teams’ counselors were assigned students by grade level or by alphabetically. Those teams who communicated well were flexible in seeing each other’s students; however, they also practiced follow-up communication with the “official” counselor. Floyd, MS Team 2, describes this “non-territorial attitude” her team mates possessed.

I think communication is the main thing to me, because we can talk, and we work together. We don’t try to be territorial – I think that’s the main thing. We problem solve when things come up, and we don’t get territorial about it. I guess we care about each other so much that we respect each other to the point that, whatever the other person says,

you're not gonna think that they're out to get you, or that you're in competition with them. It doesn't have any of that feel to us.

Part of being non-territorial for counselors was feeling good about who they are, and what they were accomplishing. They described wanting to share information with other team members. Likewise, the counselors felt a need to be unified in what information was distributed. Whitney, HS Team 1, said, no two counselors on her team would identically present information; however, they would choose to respect the other person's opinion and choose to provide the same services with their own individual variance regarding the information.

A common interpersonal theme that is associated with being non-territorial and communicating is the need to *share duties and care for each other*. Team members described automatically doing things for their colleagues without being asked because they cared for them. This personal attitude of selflessness can be best described as individual altruism.

Some teams described working well together and aiding other team members when they were having personal difficulties. Ellen, MS Team 4, pointed out that she and her colleague has both had personal issues which removed them from the office. She said, "I've had emergencies, and he's had emergencies, and he's picked up the slack." She went on to further explain that she did not call and ask him to please help her; he just did this act of kindness on his own. Acts of kindness were reciprocated; when he was out of the office, she took care of his duties. Jerry (MS Team 4), Ellen's colleague described the same reciprocating kindness. He further attributed their supportive kindness to one another because they believed and trusted each other.

You have to believe in each other to make a good team. You can have an effective work group and not trust each other at all. But you'll be very busy spending – wasting a lot of time looking over your shoulder. But if you trust each other it's different . . . it's when the

shortstop steps behind the second baseman to cover his catch. It's – that's the way it's gotta be, and it's gotta be automatic. But you can't just make it automatic. You have to just have to discover each other and work until you're comfortable (Jerry, MS Team 4). Counselors expressed appreciation when their colleagues would ask about their well being and were not only able to provide them physical support at work but also emotional support.

A final category of themes that teams expressed regarding effectiveness was the need to *plan* for upcoming events. For some teams this meant weekly meetings to ensure cohesiveness on a project like classroom guidance. Other teams described planning as getting ready for large events like Career Day. Team members found it helpful to consult with another counselor when they had a question or needed their opinion. Two teams discussed project collaboration; in which one counselor was in charge of an event yet everyone helped equally. Brittany, HS Team 3, who viewed her team as being ineffective, had a different experience. When asked if the team ever worked together on projects, Brittany, HS Team 3, said:

It really sounds like a good concept (laughter). I'm sorry but it does. We don't do that . . . . Because we're so spread out, because we're just sent here to do this, do that, we're all doing a little piece of the puzzle. We never come together as a group. I think that's also why we're not very effective as a team. We don't get things accomplished like we'd like to or get our point across. A lot of times we'll have some counselors want something a certain way, and others not. We don't ever come as a group to discuss why we need to be together on this. We just never discuss stuff. (Brittany, HS Team 3)

Even though the team may not work collaboratively, the team coordinator did feel the need to plan and organize upcoming events. Ruffus (HS Team 3) said organization was one of the most important factors needed for an effective team. Examples given were, “a well planned

out calendar, a well-planned out focus so that you know this is where we are and that's where I need to be by a certain point" (Ruffus, HS Team 3). Discussion and planning are key elements to help a counseling department improve upon their services to students and parents. A few counseling teams mentioned improving upon their services each year; teams were described as "well oiled machines", "nearly perfect, and "doing a great job". For Sarah, HS Team 1, the goal of her counseling department is "to help our department grow and improve and become better each year." Through planning and communication, teams were able to see their services improve each year.

### *Qualitative Summary*

Through specific factors listed, and team incidents that were recorded, there was a clear picture drawn of what school counselors feel make an effective team. Factors detailed by team members included: being student centered, colleagues' competencies, previous experiences, dedication, personal qualities, supportive administration, proximity, communication, caring and sharing attitude, and planning. The next level of analysis included creating a higher level of abstraction in order to categorize the 20 themes into 5 main categories. Those 5 categories that emerged were: Personal Qualities, Altruism, Interactions, External Support and Experiences (Appendix H). By moving the codes into 5 main categories, larger team themes emerged. Questions were then developed for the ESCTQ based on the participants' insight.

### Phase II Quantitative Data

In the second phase of the project, quantitative data analysis was used to answer research question 2, 3, and 4. Based on the participants' perceptions of what characteristics make an effective team, the Effective School Counseling Team Questionnaire was developed. Data were

collected using a four-step process, including contact through their supervisors, an initial packet with a cover letter and questionnaire, a post card reminder, and a follow up mailing.

### *Survey Response Rates*

The questionnaire was mailed to 199 school counselors in seven different school districts. One hundred sixty-four counselors responded, which included 4 unusable surveys, and represents an 82.41 % response rate. There were 35 counselors who chose not to return their questionnaire (Table 3). According to Babbie (1973), a response rate of 50% was suggested to be adequate, with 60% being good, and 70% very good. Steps were taken to increase response rate such as having the school system's support. A self-addressed, stamped envelope was also included with each packet to encourage a higher return rate. In addition, with each survey an appreciation gift of personalized school note cards was also sent, resulting in an overall response rate of 82.41%, reducing the nonresponse bias.

Table 3

### *Questionnaire Response Rates*

Step	Number Returned	% Total
Initial Mailing with reminder from supervisor	117	58.79
Post card follow-up mailing	20	10.05
Second follow-up questionnaire mailing	27	13.56
Total	164	82.41

*Note:* There were 199 possible participants

### Individual ESCTQ Demographic Data

School counselors' responses on the Effective School Counseling Team Questionnaire (ESCTQ) were used to describe the teams participating in this study and determine the relationships between demographic variables and overall effective school counseling teams. Questions 30 through 39 of the survey were used to collect demographic information and may be useful in understanding the characteristics of effective teams. The variables discussed are in the order that they appeared on the ESCTQ (Tables 4 and 5).

The respondents were asked what their highest degree completed, and the largest number of school counselors surveyed held a masters degree (93.8%, n = 152), while some counselors (2.5%, n = 4) had additional coursework above a masters degree and the third group had a doctorate (3.7%, n = 6) from 162 responses.

Participants were then asked to indicate whether they worked in a middle school or high school. The majority of the respondents in the study were working in high schools (55%, n=90), with the remainder 45% (n=74) working in a middle school setting. All respondents chose to answer this question.

The counselors were asked to indicate the setting in which they worked. The largest group of respondents reported their school setting as suburban (42.2%, n = 68), followed by rural and urban each as 21.7% (n=35). The fewest respondents said they worked at a combination of settings (14.3%, n = 23, N = 161). Three counselors chose not to respond to this item.

The majority of respondents in the study were female (83%, n=136), while the male counselors (n=28) accounted for the remaining 17% of the participants. A total of 164 counselors respond to this item, and this ratio was similar to a national study of ASCA members in which

the majority of the respondents were females (83.6%, n=719), with the minority group being males (14.53%, n=125) (Bodenhorn & Wolfe, 2007).

With regard to race, the largest group of respondents reported their cultural background as Caucasian (83 %, n = 134), followed by African American (17 %, n=28). There were no respondents who chose Native American, Asian or Pacific Islander, or Hispanic/Lantino/Latina as their primary cultural background. Two counselors chose not to respond to this item (N=162 responses). These data were compared to a current ACA professional member profile, which reported 71.8% Caucasian, 4.8% African American, 2.2% Hispanic/Latino, 1.2% Native American, and .6% Asian (Lawson, In Press).

Table 4

*Individual Demographic Summary from ESCTQ – Categorical*

Item	Participants Responses Questions 30-35			
Degree (N = 162)	Masters (n = 152, 93.8%)	Masters plus (n = 4, 2.5%)	Ph.D. (n = 6, 3.7%)	
Location (N = 164)	Middle School (n = 74, 45%)	High School (n = 90, 55%)		
Setting (N = 161)	Suburban (n = 68, 42.2%)	Rural (n = 35, 21.7%)	Urban (n = 35, 21.7%)	Combo (n = 23, 14.3%)
Gender (N = 164)	Female (n = 136, 83%)	Male (n = 28, 17%)		
Cultural Background (N = 162)	Caucasian (n = 134, 82.7%)	African Am. (n = 28, 17.3%)		

*Note. Due to nonresponse, question 35, addressing biracial participants, was omitted from the chart.*

The mean years of experience for respondents was 9.93 ( $SD= 7.45$ ,  $Mdn= 8$ ). Years of experience for middle and high school counselors surveyed ranged from the first year to the 37<sup>th</sup>

year. With regard to years on current team, the respondents' (N = 162) experience ranged from their first year to thirty-second year with the mean of 4.30 ( $SD= 4.3$ ,  $Mdn= 3$ ).

Of the total number of participants 46.6% of participants indicated that they did not have prior teaching experience before becoming a counselor. Out of those who had taught (n = 87), their mean years of teaching experience was 5.68 ( $SD= 8.2$ ,  $Mdn= 1$ ). There were 163 responses to this item.

Finally, the mean age of respondents was 43.01 years old ( $SD= 10.63$ ,  $Mdn= 43$ ). Four participants failed to answer this question. The youngest school counselor was 25 years old; the oldest was 64 years old.

Table 5

*Individual Demographic Summary from ESCTQ – Continuous*

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median
Years of counseling experience	9.93 (n = 163)	7.45	8
Years on current team	4.3 (n = 162)	4.3	3
Years of Teaching Experience (Among those who have worked as a teacher)	5.68 (n = 87)	8.2	1
Present age	43.01 (n = 160)	10.63	43

*Note. Total survey participants = 164.*

Team ESCTQ Demographic Data

In addition to analyzing individual school counselor's questionnaire items, means were also compared for the individual items and demographic groups by teams. Nine teams were removed from this stage of the analysis, because fewer than 30% of the individual members

returned the survey, and thus the responses were likely not representative of the team. The data were used in reporting the individual statistics but was not used for the team analysis. As a result, data from 48 teams and 152 respondents were analyzed. The data were then compiled creating a mean score for each team and a total global score which was the average of the item responses for each team.

The team categories were coded as: highest degree completed (Masters = 1, Masters Plus = 2, Ph.D. = 3, Combination = 4), school level (Middle School = 1, High School = 2), school setting (Rural = 1, Suburban = 2, Urban = 3, Combination = 4), and gender composition (Male = 1, Female = 2, Combination = 3). There were five possible culture choices listed in question 35; out of the five responses the participants only chose two, African American and Caucasian. The teams combined into cultural background groupings defined as all African American = 1, all Caucasian = 2, or Combination = 3. There were no participants that chose Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander, or Hispanic/Latino/Latina as their primary cultural background. The last four team demographic questions were grouped based on the corresponding quartile. The last four categories were coded and grouped as shown in Table 6.

Table 6

*Coding of Team Demographic Categories*

	1	2	3	4
Years employed as a school counselor	1-17	18-26	27-36	37 plus
Time on current team	1-5	6-11	12-18	19 plus
Years of teaching experience	0-5	6-15	16-25	26 plus
Present age	28-39	40-42	43-47	48 plus

*Note.* Quartiles are reported in years. N=48

The team demographics are listed in order of appearance on the ESCTQ (Table 7). The team demographic questions regarding highest degree completed, ranged from 79.2% (n=38) of the teams whose members had a Masters Degree to 20.8% (n=10) of the teams comprised of both groups Ph.D. & Masters.

Participants were then asked to indicate whether they worked in a middle school or a high school. The majority of the teams in the study were middle school teams (54.2%, n=26), with the remainder 45.8% (n=22) in a high school setting. All teams chose to answer this question.

There were four team setting categories listed as possible choices on the questionnaire: rural, suburban, urban, and combination. The majority of teams listed their setting as suburban (45.8%, n=22). The remaining teams chose rural setting (18.8% n=9), combination setting (18.8%, n=9), and urban setting (16.7%, n = 8).

When analyzing the team's gender, two groups were evenly divided among all female groups (50%, n = 24) and a combination of both males and female representative of the team (50%, n = 24). There were no teams that were composed of all male counselors.

The team culture was comprised of three groups: all African American (2.1%, n=1), all Caucasian (60.4%, n = 29) and a combination of both groups (37.5%, n = 18). As stated previously there were only two cultural groups represented from the participants.

Table 7

*Team Demographic Summary from ESCTQ – Categorical*

Item	Team Responses Questions 30-35			
Degree (N = 48)	Masters Only (n = 38, 79.2%)	Ph.D. Only (n = 0, 0%)	Masters & Ph.D. (n = 10, 20.8%)	
Location (N = 48)	Middle School (n = 26, 54.2%)	High School (n = 22, 45.8%)		
Setting (N = 48)	Suburban (n = 22, 45.8%)	Rural (n = 9, 18.8%)	Urban (n = 8, 16.7%)	Combination (n = 9, 18.8%)
Gender (N = 48)	All Female (n = 24, 50%)	All Male (n = 0, 0%)	Combination (n = 24, 50%)	
Cultural Background (N = 48)	All Caucasian (n = 29, 60.4%)	All African Am. (n = 1, 2.1%)	Combination (n = 18, 37.5%)	

*Note. Due to nonresponse, question 35 addressing biracial participants was omitted from the chart.*

The mean years of experience for the team was 29.35 ( $SD= 17.41$ ,  $Mdn= 26$ ). Years of team experience for middle and high school counselors surveyed ranged from 4 years to a combination of team experience of 83 years. With regard to years on current team, the teams' (N = 48) combined experience ranged from two years together to 57 total years together with the mean of 12.71 ( $SD= 9.85$ ,  $Mdn= 11$ ).

Of the 48 teams, 5 teams indicated that they did not have prior teaching experience before becoming a counselor. Out of those 43 teams who had members with teaching experience the teams' mean years of teaching experience was 16.70 ( $SD= 15.34$ ,  $Mdn= 14.5$ ). Finally, the mean team age was similar to the individual participants being 43.01 years old ( $SD= 6.25$ ,  $Mdn = 42.17$ ).

Table 8

*Team Demographic Summary from ESCTQ – Continuous*

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median
Years of team's counseling experience	29.35 (n = 48)	17.41	26
Years on current team	12.71 (n = 48)	9.85	11
Among those years of teaching experience	16.70 (n = 43)	15.34	14.5
Team's present age	43.02 (n = 48)	6.25	42.17

*Note. Responses are based on the team's total responses.*

#### Research Question Two

Information gleaned from the interviews was compared to the questionnaire results and used to explore the second research question, “Are the scores on the Effective School Counseling Team Questionnaire related to team effectiveness as described by school counselors?” From the 5 main categories (personal qualities, altruism, interactions, external support, and team contributions) 29 questions were constructed to frame the ESCTQ. Referencing back to the literature, there were 9 questions representing internal factors, 7 questions for external factors, and 13 for interpersonal factors (Appendix H).

Individual counselor's scores on the ESCTQ were combined with those of their team members and averaged to get a team score. The result was an individual score for each of the 29 items on the ESCTQ. Originally there were 57 school counseling teams; nine teams were removed from the data set because of lack of participation which did not accurately represent the team. Several questions were included in the instrument for exploratory purposes only. These were questions that were not entirely consistent with the theoretical constructs of the study

(Internal, External, and Interpersonal Influences), and which had been mentioned sparingly in the qualitative phase of the study. These eight items were excluded from further analysis. (Appendix J and Table 9). Ultimately, there were 21 dimensions which were deemed theoretically and practically most useful to teams in providing information.

Using the *global team scores* of the 48 teams, Cronbach's Alpha was used to calculate the average of all split-half reliability coefficients of the ESCTQ. The findings showed a split-half reliability of .943 and Standardized item alpha .952. Reviewing the Corrected Item-Total Correlation, 3 items did not moderately correlate with the other items: there is a willingness to put student's needs first (.36), members' past professional experiences contribute to the team (.38), and serving the students is the team's primary goal (.35). When reliability statistics were calculated for *team members' individual scores*  $\alpha$  was .978 and Standardized item alpha was .988

The next analysis was used to examine the questionnaire's construct validity. In order to further compare the teams' reported effectiveness to the questionnaire, information regarding the teams' percentage agreement of their current team to the questionnaire items was calculated. Each questionnaire item was calculated based on the team's response to their current combined rating of the questionnaire item. The team had four ratings from which to choose: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) agree, and (4) strongly agree. Using SPSS, descriptive statistics were calculated on the frequencies of the four ratings. Those teams marking a 3 or 4, meaning they agree or strongly agree with the item, were divided from the 48 total teams, leaving an agreement percentage with the questionnaire item.

Three questionnaire items received 100% agreement: members are self-motivated, there is a willingness to put student's needs first, and serving the students is the team's primary goal. Meaning, all 48 teams agreed or strongly agreed that these three statements were reflective of

their current team. The first questionnaire item was labeled under the qualitative category as a *personal quality* and the second two items were under the *altruistic* category. Forty-six out of the 48 teams agreed (95.8%) that members need to have a pleasant personality, show courtesy toward one another, and view each other to be competent for an effective team. Those items were categorized as *personal qualities* and *competence* items.

Out of the 5 qualitative categories, *external support* was ranked by fewer teams and received lower percent agreement. Those five questionnaire items were ranked as the following: members feel supported by school administration (79.2%, n=38), members feel supported by central office (47.9%, n=23), members feel supported by other staff members (75%, n=32), and members receive sufficient support to efficiently handle testing responsibilities (66.7%, n=32). Meaning for teams, they did not agree that they were receiving adequate support for team effectiveness at their school or central office. One specific area counselors did not feel support addressed testing and the responsibilities that accompany that assignment.

A final item receiving a lower rating referred to the teams' interactions, specifically, the teams' ability to discuss and openly handling conflict. Results reported 35 out of the possible 48 teams agreed that their team handled conflict openly through discussion (72.9%) to improve their team effectiveness. Approximately, 27% (n=48) of the teams surveyed did not feel that their team discussed conflict.

Clearly, this analysis showed that there was a high level of agreement between the effectiveness characteristics teams reported in the interviews and endorsement of a specific questionnaire item. For most teams they felt their team's personal qualities (94.16%, n=48), altruism (97.23%, n=48), interactions (83.74%, n=48), and team contributions (91.65%, n=48) were important for an effective team. External support (67.2%, n=48) was not rated high by

teams, perhaps they did not feel supported by their school administration (79.2%, n=48), central office (47.9%), staff members (75%, n=48), or receive adequate testing support (6.7%, n=48).

The findings from the ESCTQ were similar to the interviews described in Phase I. Using an exploratory design, the ESCTQ was developed from the team interviews. It can be concluded that in using a mixed-methods approach, by integrating the two approaches to analyze team effectiveness, triangulation occurred. Table 9 presents the teams' percentage agreement between the questionnaire items and the qualitative interview categories.

Table 9

*Team's Percentage Agreement with ESCTQ Items regarding their current team*

Questionnaire Items	Personal Qualities	Altruism	Interactions	External Support	Team Contributions
members are self-motivated	100% (n=48)				
members have a pleasant personality	95.8% (n=46)				
members trust and respect one another	89.6% (n=43)				
members show courtesy toward one another	95.8% (n=46)				
members have a caring and giving attitude towards one another	89.6% (n=43)				
there is a willingness to put student's needs first		100% (n=48)			
serving the students is the team's primary goal		100% (n=48)			
members pitch in to help with each others work		91.7% (n=44)			
open communication is practiced among team members			83.3% (n=40)		
member handle conflict openly through discussion			72.9% (n=35)		
members are willing to compromise to accomplish tasks and resolve problems			93.8% (n=45)		
collaboration on projects is valued and encouraged			83.3% (n=40)		
members consult regularly with each other			85.4% (n=41)		
members feel supported by school administration				79.2% (n=38)	
members feel supported by central office				47.9% (n=23)	
members feel supported by other staff members				75% (n=36)	
members receive sufficient support to efficiently handle testing responsibilities				66.7% (n=32)	
each members unique knowledge, skills, and abilities are used					83.3% (n=40)
members' past professional experiences contribute to the team					100% (n=48)
members' view each other to be competent					95.8% (n=46)
members' individual strengths are used to enhance the entire team					87.5% (n=42)

*Note. Percentages are based on 48 teams' composite scores for questionnaire items and grouped based on 5 emergent qualitative categories from interviews.*

In addition to examining the current team ratings, participants were asked to rate their ideal team. For an ideal team, counselors were rating characteristics they felt should be present for a team to be effective. Similar to the current team scores, the ideal team scores were the average of the team members' responses to each ESCTQ item. When reviewing their ideal score on the questionnaire items, each item ranked above a 3.77 (n=48), with a 3.0 indicating agreement with the item and a 4.0 strong agreement. Although this research question focused on the current team scores, this ideal team score agreement was an additional indicator that counselors strongly believed that personal qualities, altruism, interactions, external support, and team contributions were important for an effective team.

### Research Question Three

The team data set was also used to explore the third research question, "Is there a relationship between team characteristics (length of time on current team, years of personal counseling experience, gender, age) and team effectiveness?" Within the data set, each demographic characteristic was averaged by team, assigned a global team score, and used to compare and contrast the differences in teams.

Two Analysis of Variances were used to examine the effect of each independent demographic variable (highest degree completed, school level, school setting, gender, and cultural background) separately as well as the effect of combinations, or the interactions among independent variables (Grimm & Yarnold, 1995). An individual score was totaled for each participant equaling their current rating of their team. Then the team's scores were added together and divided by the number of team members to obtain the global team score based on their answers to their current team's effectiveness rating.

Formula:

$$\text{Global score} = \frac{\text{Sum of Each Team Member's Individual ESCTQ Current Team Score}}{\text{Number of team members}}$$

The following demographic variables were selected for this analysis based on the items listed on the ESCTQ. The dependent variable, team effectiveness, as measured by the global team score was examined to see if there were any significant differences.

Two ANOVA's were conducted in an effort to detect any differences in global team score when compared by demographic variables. As described in Appendix K, counseling teams were given a score of 1 to 4 based on their degree composition. A team comprised of counselors with a Masters degree received a 1, those teams where every member had a Master's plus (additional credits above a Master's Degree) received a 2, a team of all counselors with a doctorate received a 3, and a those teams having a combination of degrees were given a 4. Based on the composite of the teams a number 1 or 4 was assigned. There were no teams made up entirely of Master's plus or counselors with doctorates. The four groups were then compared. With regard to the highest degree completed  $F(1, 47) = 1.392$ ,  $p = .244$ , since the p value is greater than .05, no significance was found between degree and global team score.

There were two school levels analyzed, middle school counseling teams were categorized as a 1 and high school counseling teams were labeled 2. When means were compared between school levels  $F(1, 47) = 3.206$ ,  $p = .080$ , there was no significant difference found.

Teams had the possibility of being in one of four categories. They were categorized 1 for rural, 2 for suburban, 3 for urban, and 4 if team members picked a combination of settings. As shown in Table 10, school setting was not a significant predictor of team effectiveness  $F(3, 45) = 1.380$ ,  $p = .261$ .

The fourth demographic category analyzed was gender. All male teams were categorized as 1, all female teams as 2, and teams with both genders were rated 3. The interaction effects between team effectiveness and gender were not significant  $F(1,47) = 2.134$ ,  $p = .151$ .

Teams composed of all African American counselors were categorized as 1, an all Caucasian team was noted as 2 and teams with a combination of both cultures were labeled 3. The counselor's culture background was not a predictor of team effectiveness  $F(2, 46) = .253$ ,  $p = .777$  because no significant differences were found. Table 10 presents the results of the Analyses of Variance calculated for team demographic characteristics.

Table 10

*Comparison of Effectiveness Scores by Team Characteristics (ANOVA)*

N=48

Source		SS	df	MS	F	Sig
Degree	Between Groups	240.860	1	248.860	1.421	.239
	Within Groups	8056.773	46	175.147		
	Total	8305.634	47			
Level	Between Groups	556.536	1	556.536	3.304	.076
	Within Groups	7749.098	46	168.459		
	Total	8305.634	47			
Setting	Between Groups	722.34	3	240.775	1.397	.256
	Within Groups	7583.309	44	172.348		
	Total	8305.634	47			
Gender	Between Groups	379.959	1	379.959	2.205	.144
	Within Groups	7925.674	46	172.297		
	Total	8305.634	47			
Culture	Between Groups	98.684	2	49.342	.271	.764
	Within Groups	8206.950	45	182.377		
	Total	8305.634	47			
Total		8305.634	47			

\*p &lt; .05

In analyzing the 48 teams, the team group global scores did not produce any significance ( $p < .05$ ) when compared to the first five demographic variables (Table 11). The last four demographic questions, being continuous variables, were analyzed by running a correlation with the team's global score. Each team was given an average for the remaining demographic questions.

After being averaged, the first category assessed was the team's average years employed as a school counselor. These two variables were not correlated and no conclusions can be made drawn on the counseling team's experience  $r(46) = -.051, p = .733$ .

The second item examined was the average amount of time the counselor's were on their current team. The global team score was compared to the teams' average years on their current team. Statistically, there was no relationship shown between the amount of time a counselor had been at their school and their global team score  $r(46) = -.156, p = .290$ . This question was also analyzed by looking at the amount of time the team had been intact. The newest member who subsequently recorded the least amount of time on the team was compared to the global team score. These two variables were also not correlated  $r(46) = .024, p = .872$ .

Next the team's average teaching experience was correlated to again see if there was a relation present between teaching experience and global team score. The correlation showed these two variables were weakly correlated  $r(46) = -.305, p = .035$ . As the global scores increased, the amount of time that the counseling teams had taught decreased. There was some difference but, the r-squared value of .093 is very small and this finding may have limited practical importance.

The last category assessed was the team's average age as a school counselor. There was no correlation between the teams average and their global score and no predictions can be made  $r(46) = -.193, p = .190$ .

Table 11

*Correlation between team global score and continuous demographic variables*

*N=48*

Questionnaire Item	<i>r</i>	<i>Sig</i>
Team Experience	-.051	.733
Time on Current School	-.156	.290
Time of Team Composition	.024	.872
Team Teaching Experience	-.305 *	.035
Team Age	-.193	.190

\* $p < .05$

In summary the analysis from this research question did not show any relationship between team characteristics and team effectiveness, except for teaching experience. There was a negative correlation between the amounts of time school counselors taught to their effectiveness. This could be in part because many counselors did not have teaching experience and were grounded in the personal identity of being a counselor.

#### Research Question Four

Research question four, “Is there a relationship between the perceptions of members of effective and ineffective teams?” was addressed through three steps. First, the 48 teams were given a global score based on the sum of the responses to the current team items. The teams were ranked in descending order by global team score. Based on their global team score the teams were then divided into quartiles. The top quartile, those 12 teams with an effectiveness score of 78.44 ( $SD= 1.18$ ) or higher were labeled “relatively effective”. Likewise at the bottom quartile

were 12 teams whose raw score were 65.15 ( $SD= 5.07$ ) or lower and labeled “relatively ineffective”. There was a statistically significant difference between the groups on the global score  $F(2,47) = 106.57, p = .000$  indicating that there are actual differences detectable with the ESCTQ scale.

Table 12

*Analysis of Variance of Global Scores*

N=48

Source		SS	df	MS	F	Sig
Global Score	Between Groups	2725.69	2	1362.84	106.57	.000
	Within Groups	575.45	45			
	Total	3301.14	47			

\*p &lt; .05

Second, a gap score was compiled for each team. This score was derived by computing the difference between the teams’ current rating and their ideal rating on the questionnaire items.

See formula below:

$$\text{Gap Score} = \frac{\text{Ideal Team total}}{\# \text{ of team members}} - \frac{\text{Current Team totals}}{\# \text{ of team members}}$$

For example, if team 1 had a total team score of 75. That would be subtracted from their ideal team score of 84; leaving team 1 a gap score of 9. This is the difference between their ideal perception of an effective team and the reality of their perceptions of their current team.

Following the same formula, a gap score was figured for each of the 48 teams. As expected, there was also a significant difference between the gap scores of all three effectiveness groups (relatively effective, moderately effective, least effective).

There was a significant difference between the groups for the gap score  $F(2, 47) = 37.64$ ,  $p = .000$  indicating that the ESCTQ is able to discern the differences between counselors assessment of their current team's effectiveness and an ideal team. For the gap score and team effectiveness, there was a significant mean difference (20.50) between the means of those who perceived their team as most effective (26.55) and those who perceived their team as least effective (6.05). When looking at the questionnaire this could be interpreted to mean the teams that perceived themselves to be most effective also had the smallest gap score between their current team and ideal team.

Table 13

## Analysis of Variance of Gap Scores

N=48

Source		SS	df	MS	F	Sig
Gap Score	Between Groups	2699.51	2	1349.64	37.64	.000
	Within Groups	1613.88	45	35.86		
	Total	4313.39	47			

\* $p < .05$ 

Finally, a correlation was run between the teams' Global score and their gap score based on their ESCTQ responses. The gap score highly correlated with the global score ( $r = -.904$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Meaning, teams that perceived their team as effective had an overall higher global score correlated significantly with those having a smaller gap score, which was the difference between their current and ideal team. This relationship accounted for 81.7% ( $r^2$  value) of the variance between these two items suggesting, not only a statistically significant relationship, but a very

strong one. So as the overall team rating “global” score increased for a team their gap score decreased and they found fewer discrepancies between their current and ideal team.

### Summary

This chapter presented the results of the current study and answered the following research questions: What factors do counselors perceive contribute to their team’s effectiveness; are the scores on the Effective School Counseling Team Questionnaire related to team effectiveness as described by school counselors; is there a relationship between team characteristics (length of time on current team, years of personal counseling experience, gender, age) and team effectiveness; is there a relationship between the perceptions of members of effective and ineffective teams.

Six teams were interviewed, a total of twenty-four counselors, and based on their responses, a questionnaire was constructed. The questionnaire was sent to 199 school counselors and a total of 164 middle and high school counselors responded to the survey, representing an overall response rate of 84.21%. Effective school counseling team information was gathered in three global areas: internal, external, and interpersonal factors.

Participants described internal characteristics needed for an effective team. They reported counselors needed to be student centered, committed to the job, able to handle conflict openly, be competent, and dedicated to their job. School counselors were also asked to expand upon external traits necessary for an effective team. They responded school administration, internal support personnel, central office and being located in close proximity were all factors that helped their team operate more effectively. There were also characteristics occurring between members; such as, communication, handling conflict, sharing duties and planning that counselors expressed

would influence the effectiveness of a team. These same traits were also assessed through a questionnaire developed by information gathered from the participants.

Through the questionnaire, demographics were compared which for the most part did not produce any significant differences between teams. The only area that showed significance was in regard to those teams with teaching experience. The analysis of the questionnaire also showed as a team's global score (total rating of the team) increased, their teaching experience decreased. Specifically, with regard to the team's global score, those teams that considered themselves to be highly effective had a high score and a smaller gap score between their current team and their global team scores. Those teams that rated themselves as least effective had a significantly lower global score, and were almost neutral in their responses to the questionnaire items. Lastly, the quantitative analysis confirmed the reliability of the themes identified in the qualitative analysis.

## CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a summary of the study, including the review of the research questions and a discussion of the significant findings. In addition, conclusions based on the data analysis with recommendations for the counseling profession and future research is presented.

### Summary of the Results

ASCA (2003) has developed specific guidelines for school counselors in the areas of Personal and Social Development, Leadership and Assessment, Career and Academic Development, Collaboration, and Cultural Awareness. School counselors who perform these duties are not alone, but usually work with a team of colleagues. While team work has been widely studied over the years in other fields, little attention has been given to school counseling teams and what characteristics make an effective team.

The intent of this sequential mixed methods study was to explore secondary school counselors' views of effective counseling teams. Information was gathered first through 24 individual counselor interviews, from 6 different teams and then through the Effective School Team Questionnaire to answer the following research questions:

1. What factors do counselors perceive contribute to their team's effectiveness?
2. Are the scores on the Effective School Counseling Team Questionnaire related to team effectiveness as described by school counselors?
3. Is there a relationship between team characteristics (length of time on current team, years of personal counseling experience, gender, age) and team effectiveness?
4. Is there a relationship between the perceptions of members of effective and ineffective teams?

Participants in this study consisted of professional middle and high school counselors working full time in nine public school systems in Virginia. Data were collected through 24 individual team interviews and the Effective School Counselor Team Questionnaire (ESCTQ).

### Qualities of Effective Teams

Prior to the study being conducted, I hypothesized a team's effectiveness would be in some way reflected in their demographic information. This was not the case. There were no differences between teams based upon their setting, gender, culture, length of time as a counselor, time together on current team, or the team's age. This finding was surprising. These individual differences of counselors may impact the team's effectiveness (Morgan & Lassiter, 1992) but cannot be summed up as qualities of an effective team. Instead, those effective qualities were internal personal characteristics that any counselor could possess regardless of their demographic disposition.

The participants had a clear idea of what qualities make an effective team, whether or not they considered their team to be effective. First and foremost, was the personal attributes of team mates. Counselors on effective teams were seen as caring, giving, and kind. These altruistic traits were shown to both counseling colleagues and students. Counselors appreciated their teammates who took the initiative in completing their daily tasks and aiding others with their work. Through actions and words counselors could sense those team members who cared about one another and were genuine about helping each other.

In addition to altruistic traits, participants of effective teams described having a working team "motto" which entailed serving students and each other. This vision (Gysbers, 1990) enabled the team to have a similar focus and work in the best interest of the student. The team's

shared belief also created group cohesion (Greenless, Graydon, & Maynard, 2000) and furthermore aided in settling disputes. Effective teams described their conflicts as minimal and being handled openly through communication.

Similar to Hinds, Carley, Krackhardt, & Wholey's (2000) research, counselors liked to work with others who possessed strong work ethics and were competent. This dedication to each other and students was shown both qualitatively and quantitatively to be of significance.

In addition to personal qualities of counselors it was important that counselors feel support through their leaders, both at the school level and central office. School administrators can aid schools counselors first by having open communication. Counselors appreciated school administrators keeping them abreast of need to know situations. Problem solving can be done informally or through a formal means of weekly meetings (Zetlin, 2000). It is also important that the duties and roles of counselors are understood and protected. School counselors will be better able to handle their various roles and have a greater self-efficacy knowing their duties are protected and they have administrative support (Sutton & Fall, 1995). Miscellaneous duties such as lunch duty, homeroom, coordinating tests etc. did not allow the team the time needed to meet with students and jeopardized their roles (Baggerly, 2002)

Finally, one of the most important findings from this study is the need to examine your expectations of the team. Through the ESCTQ counselors rated the effectiveness of their current team and their ideal team. The higher the team's global score, the less of a gap occurred between their current team and ideal team. It is important for school counselors to explore their expectations and how their expectations compare to their team's effectiveness. If a counselor had expectations in mind and they are not being met they feel ineffective. Furthermore, when their expectations are not being met counselors may feel unsatisfied.

The specific findings for the research questions are summarized below:

### Research Question One

1. What factors do counselors perceive contribute to their team's effectiveness?

Question one was addressed through the individual team interviews. As data coded, the responses were compared with categories and between categories. This constant comparative analysis (Anafara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002) led to the emerging qualitative themes. School counselors' team effectiveness themes emerging from the data were classified into internal, external, and interpersonal factors.

#### *Internal*

During the individual interviews effective teams described the internal qualities which they and their colleagues possessed. Counselors were described in two ways: who they are as a person and their work ethics. Effective teams described their colleagues as being competent through their past work experiences and in their trained counseling skills. Effective team members had their own strengths and used those strengths to complement one another, and offer their expert services to the team. Counselors appreciated learning and growing from each other's differences. Professionally, counselors had various areas of expertise and other work experiences that provided them alternate insights in aiding the team's effectiveness.

Personally, counselors on effective teams were seen as caring, giving, kind, committed, open, dedicated, and competent. Effective team members seemed to be dedicated to helping and serving others. This altruistic attitude not only frames the individual but the team and what they stood for. Over half of the teams referred to a motto that they stood by as "putting their students' needs first." This group goal (Gysbers, 1990) drove many decisions made by taking the individual out of the decision, and centering it on the needs of the student, putting the student's

best interest first. Counselors not only cared about their students and one another (Baker & Gerler 2004); they were also committed to working diligently to getting the job done.

### *External*

For school counselors external supports consisted mainly of school administration and central office supervisors. Counselors expressed their feelings towards external supports during interviews and with the questionnaire. During one interview I commented to a team member that I had difficulty arranging the team interviews, because there was no one at central office who served as the Director of Guidance. My follow up question was “who would this counselor contact to answer a question or solve conflict within the team?” The counselor could not respond because she had never contacted central office; she just handled questions and problems internally with her team. This strategy works well if you have a team that communicates and discusses problems. Two teams discussed how their effectiveness could be improved with central office support.

On the school level administrators, teachers, and parents can be a valuable support to the counseling team (Gysbers, 1990). Counselors spoke of the need to educate administrators on the role of the school counselor and what support would look like for them. Extra duties placed on the counselor not only constrict their time with students, but also place them in an awkward disciplinarian role. School counselors can best make use of their skills through individual and group counseling, being a resource to students, and advocating for them (ASCA, 2003; Beale, 2003). Out of the six teams interviewed, only one team was assigned lunch duty and homeroom advisory. While these duties are necessary, they should not be placed under the school counselor’s umbrella of assignments.

Ideally, school counselors should have an individual that exclusively is dedicated as the *coordinator of counseling* at the central office level. Among the criteria, this person should have experience and training in school counseling. Furthermore, this central office supervisor should be able to provide the counseling teams with emotional and physical support. One team interviewed referred to their central office as “downtown”, equating a distant feel to the location, and emphasizing how disconnected they felt. Central office support staff should be accessible and available to the school counseling teams, allowing school counselor access to this resource when questions or concerns arise. The supervisors should take the time to discuss duties and policies with the counselors prior to assigning them tasks. Depending on the team, different schools will be run differently according to the school principal, so coordinators cannot assume that the counselors in their district have the same tasks assigned to them.

An external theme which influences the internal and interpersonal factors mentioned was proximity. Counselors that were housed together, communicated more frequently, thus felt more connected to one another. Due to proximity they could exercise those altruistic qualities valued of helping one another, communicating, and sharing their work experiences. Even if counselors’ offices are not located in one area together, they can still think in terms of proximity of effort (Wesley, 2001). Physical proximity was seen in 5 out of 6 teams. The team interviewed that was not housed in a similar location also chose not to think in terms of proximity; no additional effort was made to collaborate on projects or duties.

### *Interpersonal*

Interpersonal factors were those occurring between team members. During the interviews team members described a variety of interactions, the most common being: helping one another with their work, having a pleasant personality, having a caring and giving attitude towards

others, being courteous, handling conflict openly, compromising and having open communication.

Those teams who considered themselves “highly effective” and rated their team above an 8 on a 10 point scale were very altruistic to one another. They not only possess the unwritten motto to put the students’ needs first, they also put each others’ needs first. For example, if the counselors were asked to make schedule changes, and one counselor finished their student group first, they would then ask a colleague if they could help with their changes.

Interactions witnessed between team members were pleasant, friendly, and jovial. A majority of the interviewees were happy with what they were doing and wanting to contribute to the team and the counseling profession. With their upbeat team mentality, members were able to compromise and work on their differences through doing what they deemed in the student’s best interest.

For the teams interviewed, meetings occurred both informally and formally. Having meeting times allowed the counselors an opportunity to collaboratively problem solve (Zetlin, 2000). These interactions not only enhanced the opportunity to exchange information (West & Markiewicz, 2004) but allowed the counselors to know each other better. Team members were able to see one another’s personalities and attitude toward each other. As the researcher I was also able to see their personalities through our meetings and by observing their interactions with each other.

#### *Additional thoughts*

From a research standpoint, I would classify 5 out of the 6 teams effective, when analyzing their internal, external, and interpersonal factors. One team did not particularly enjoy working with the other team members nor did they give a greater sense of well-being and

enjoyment from the team, which is inconsistent with the literature (Allen & Hecht, 2004; Carter, 2000; Wallin & Wright, 1986). Their social needs to interact were not being met due to proximity issues (Sundstrom, 1986) and thus they did not describe their job as satisfying (Allen & Hecht, 2004). Interestingly, their supervisor had recommended the team as effective and a good interview candidate. Due to the central office coordinator's perception, the team was viewed as effective; however, the team felt they had many areas in which they could grow. They discussed areas of communication, proximity, caring for each other, and planning to be areas that they were lacking in and would like to see improvement.

#### Research Question Two

2. Are the scores on the Effective School Counseling Team Questionnaire related to team effectiveness as described by school counselors?

This research question was answered by integrating the data from the individual interviews and the ESCTQ. This process triangulated the interviews with the questionnaire and allowed a more holistic understanding of effective school counseling teams (Anafara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). Creswell (2002) added that by using different types of data and methods, it “ensures that the study will be accurate because the information is not drawn from a single source, individual, or process of data collection”.

Each team was assessed and given a global team score based on their responses to the questionnaire items. This question was also addressed by analyzing the team's percentage agreement for their current team with the questionnaire items. The team's global score when compared to the questionnaire produced three items with 100% agreement: members are self-motivated, there is a willingness to put students' needs first, and serving students is the team's primary goal.

The first item fell under the personal qualities category, along with members having a pleasant personality (95.8%), trust and respect one another (89.6%), show courtesy toward one another (95.8%), and having a caring and giving attitude towards one another (89.6). Overall, the personal qualities category averaged to 94.16%, meaning that a high percentage of the counselors felt that their team possessed those personal qualities. Reflecting on the interviews this theme of counselor's internal and interpersonal traits was also discussed. Counselors felt their team was more effective when they showed those positive personal qualities.

Two out of the 3 personal qualities ranked 100% with the teams current rating (global score). The third item, pitching in to help with each others work, had a 91% agreement, overall giving "altruism" a 97.23% agreement.

Team Contributions (91.65%) was the third highest group for percentage agreement between the team's global score and the questionnaire items. Again, the majority of the teams surveyed (n=48) said member's unique knowledge, past experiences, competencies, and individual strengths were present with their current team.

The last two categories assessed: Interactions (83.74%) and External Support (67.2%) were not as present on the current teams. Interaction questions included areas of open communication, handling conflict, compromising, collaborating, and consulting. The teams did rate these areas as important for an ideal team (100 %); similar to the interviews, one team felt that because they did not talk regularly they were unable to handle conflict openly because they did not communicate. Due to the lack of communication, there was also inadequate resolution to problems. Problems either went unaddressed or the coordinator would assign duties in order to avoid a conflict. There was no mention of collaborating on projects or consulting each other. Perhaps a few counselors on the team would ask a colleague a question but usually this was not

practiced among the group. Due to lack of proximity, they did not consult besides weekly department meetings. It is impossible to be effective if teams do not have the opportunity to interact with one another.

Similar to the interviews, two teams did not feel supported by central office or their school staff as much as they wanted to be. In fact, central office support (47.9%), averaged out to have a response of 2.5, meaning that most teams felt unsupported by central office staff. From the interviews, testing support was followed up as an item on the ESCTQ. Those teams having testing support (n = 32, 66.7%) also had a lower test agreement percentage due to the fact most schools surveyed did not have a testing coordinator. Those with testing support either marked this question with a high response (3 or 4) or chose not to answer this question because it did not apply to their team. For the majority, this item was rated lower because of the great amount of time that standardized testing has taken of the counselor's schedule. Two teams interviewed had hopes that their districts would add support through testing coordinators as early as next year.

The main reason for choosing to look at effective teams with two instruments was to gain a fuller understanding of counselors' perceptions. The ESCTQ was used as a confirmatory instrument based on the information gleaned from the interviews. It was not surprising that the ESCTQ confirmed the interviews and added to the validation the instrument. This analysis indicated the survey validated what teams felt were needed for effectiveness. The high level of agreement between the team's global score and the questionnaire not only validated the questionnaire but showed areas that teams could improve through their ideal team views.

### Research Question Three

3. Is there a relationship between team characteristics (length of time on current team, years of personal counseling experience, gender, age) and team effectiveness?

This third research question was addressed by comparing the global team score and the team demographics from the questionnaire (items 30-39). Each team was given an average score based on the individual questionnaire items for their current team.

An ANOVA was run comparing the global team scores by degree, school level, setting, gender, and culture. Through the interviews and hearing the amount of work reported by the high school counselors, it is interesting that there were no differences between the middle school and high school groups and their perceptions of their team's effectiveness. For the first analysis of demographic questions there was no significant differences found.

When looking at the amount of time the teams had been configured, teams were relatively new with the mean years of 4.3, and median of 3. Similar to the interviews, 4 out of 6 teams had members on their current team for 4 years or less. According to Yalom (1995) stage 4 is the performing stage, in which team members being to work together successfully. Some teams will advance quickly through the stages and others will lag in an earlier stage, therefore there is no particular time frame given as a goal for teams to reach stage 4. So in this study even though teams were relatively new, they viewed themselves effective.

The average age for the counselors was 43 years ( $SD = 10.63$ ), which was within the range of other current studies (Lawson, In Press); most counselors were entering this profession later in life. This may help explain the weak correlation between the team's global score and teaching experience. Some counselors had prior teaching experience and others had made career changes later in life; counselors viewed their teams effective regardless of prior teaching experiences. Some counselors were comfortable in their identity as a counselor.

Overall, there was no significant difference between school counseling teams when compared by their demographic responses. This could be in part because analysis occurred using

the global *team* score and not assessing the individual counselor's data, however, this question addressed the counseling team and not the individual counselor. This question should be readdressed in future research by surveying a greater number of participants.

#### Research Question Four

4. Is there a relationship between the perceptions of members of effective and ineffective teams?

Whether a school counselor is on an effective or ineffective team, there was a marked difference between the global team ratings. Each team was assigned a global team score based on the average of the 21 ESCTQ items. Those teams in the top quartile were ranked highly effective and compared to the teams in the bottom quartile, which were relatively ineffective. Since the ESCTQ was developed from the interviews of perceived effective teams it was not surprising to find a significant difference between the groups.

This question in part addresses why team perceptions are so important. Findings from the qualitative interviews indicate that effective teams perceive the need to have strong personal qualities (ie. open and honest communication, caring individuals, a serving team motto), and strong administrative support both at school and at central office.

Comparing the global score to the gap score also indicated that as counselors perceived their team to be more effective they had less of a gap or discrepancy between their current and ideal team rating. As team members rated their current team higher, they are in essence saying that they feel their team is effective and they are more satisfied with their team results. Those feeling part of effective teams rated their team higher in areas of personal qualities, altruism, interactions, external support and their team contribution. It is understandable that a team cannot be perfect in all areas; but taking the time to discuss expectations will allow teams to improve up

on their internal, external, and interpersonal skills with one another. For team members that do not feel their team is effective their concerns should be addressed and discussion prompted. Having an instrument like the ESCTQ, can aid teams in seeing the gap between what member's desire for the team and what they actually feel about their current team. In addition to obtaining a clearer picture, the team will as a result be able to set goals moving them towards being a more effective team.

Information collected from participants pointed to the importance of effective teams having members who have favorable altruistic, personal qualities. Effective team members need to not only look out for their students' best interest but also the well being of other team members. This can be done through effective communication, willingness to serve others, being pleasant, and supportive. Ideally, if a school counseling team also receives support from their school administration and central office, they perceive their team to be even more effective. However, if they are not fortunate to have that support they can still maintain effectiveness if the team shares similar thoughts, feelings, and actions reflecting their service to others.

#### Implications for School Counselors

Several suggestions for school counselors resulted from this study:

1. First, know what qualities are needed for an effective team. Through this study you can educate yourself on what counselors feel make an effective team.
2. As a school counselor know your expectations of the counseling team. How closely do your expectations match up with the team? The closer these two align the more satisfied the counselor will be with the team.
3. When frustration arises from expectations not being met, know how to openly communicate with team members. By going to the source of the frustration, and

- openly communication, team members can not only listen to the problem but offer solutions. Do not get caught up in complaining about the situation but rather how to work through the problem effectively.
4. What experiences does each member bring to the team? Each member must know what counseling competencies other team members possess and how their experiences can enhance the team. Team members should also self-reflect on how effective they view themselves to be. Being on a team allows the counselor see others' view points and the ability to learn from each other's strengths and view points.
  5. What is the personality makeup of the team? The individual personalities and character of each counselor need to be reviewed thoroughly. Are they one to put the needs of others first? Would you characterize them as altruistic? How do they define a "team player"? This assessment may be done informally or through a standardized measurement.
  6. What is the team philosophy? Each team has a "motto" or a working philosophy. It is important that this motto is discussed and agreed upon by all members. For effective teams the motto was described as putting the student's needs first. All teams have a focus, whether it is discussed or not; make sure the team's focus is positive and generates team effectiveness.
  7. What external resources help support the counseling team? This could be support at the school level or central office. It is important for counselors to build relationships with school administrators and central office leaders.

8. School counselors must not only have a positive working relationship with administrators but they must also educate administrators to their duties and goals. Having strong positive relationships with administrators would reduce unnecessary duties that may otherwise be placed upon the counselors. Counselors can not be the most effective team, assuring that their student's needs are being met, when they have administrative or non-counseling duties taking precedence.
9. When looking at the team through interpersonal lenses, how is the communication among the members? It is important that situations are handled openly and honestly to reduce conflict. Interactions need to occur formally and informally. Teams will feel closer together when they spend time planning, conducting projects together, and socializing. This can occur by eating lunch together, collaborating on classroom lessons, and attending weekly department meetings.
10. What role does the team leader play? Does this individual enhance the team's effectiveness by fostering healthy relationships among the members? In many situations this individual not only leads the group in planning activities but aids in assigning duties; therefore team members need to feel valued by knowing their input is heard. Are duties assigned to counselors or are they able to use their interests and talents to assist the team? All of these areas need to be assessed by the counseling coordinator.
11. Is there time set aside to plan for upcoming events? Effective teams allow time to develop presentations. Through planning and establishing a well run guidance program, counselors have more time to devote to individual counseling and small

- groups. When counselors team up with one another they make better use of their time and are able to reach more students.
12. Look at location and set up of counseling area. Are the counselors located together fostering communication? Where are the counselor's locations in relationship to the administrative team? Does the counseling team experience interruptions or additional duties being placed too near the administrators? Are the students able to access their counselor easily? These questions relating to proximity must be answered.
  13. Encourage the counseling team to reflect and discuss characteristics of the team's effectiveness. Sometimes it is easy to focus on what is wrong with a team or their situation, and overlook all the effective strategies taken for granted. Teams will find in talking about their strengths they will have a greater appreciate and positive outlook toward their team.

#### Implications for Counselors working with School Administrators

Several suggestions for school counselors working with school administrators resulted from this study:

1. Administrators must be educated about the ASCA model for school counselors. It is imperative administrators know the function and duties of the professional school counselor. Counselors can do this through formal presentations to staff and administrators, education session or weekly meetings.
2. The team must know how to effectively communicate with the school administrators. There may be times that the counselor disagrees with the administration on their decision. Skills if not previously acquired must be practiced and learned to be used on

such occasions. The counselor must advocate for the student, yet remain professional regardless of the outcome.

3. School counselors can discuss realistic expectations with the administrative team. Through open communication school counselors can ask what administrators feel are the counselor's expectations and likewise they can clarify their expectations.
4. Teams must be allowed time to discuss pertinent issues. If allocated time is not set as a priority on the counselor's schedule then meetings will not occur. Administrators need to not only encourage this time but also avoid unnecessary interruptions.
5. School Counselors can encourage their administrator to have a clear line drawn separating their job duties. Counselors are not to partake in disciplinary tasks. This role if placed upon counselors puts them in an awkward position trying to advocate for the student yet being part of the disciplinary issue. This goes back to point one, counselors need to upfront with the administrator about their roles and responsibilities in order to best advocate for the students.

#### Implications for School Counselor Supervisors

Several suggestions for school counselor supervisors resulted from this study:

1. First and foremost is to equip school counselors with a supervisory person at central office from whom they can receive support. The person should have experience in school counseling, be familiar with the ASCA model, and understand the school counselor's roles and duties.
2. The Supervisor should communicate with the school counselors regularly. This may be accomplished through monthly meetings and yearly in-services. When the

- supervisor assigns tasks to be completed, they should consult the counseling teams for input, making sure both parties have clear expectations regarding the task at hand.
3. Similarly, counselors should be given time for open discussion. This would reduce the frustration and allow the supervisor opportunity to discuss possible solutions with the school counselors.
  4. School counselors should also be given time to confer with other counselors in the district. Through brainstorming and sharing ideas, teams can increase their effectiveness.
  5. The central office supervisor should provide specific training and in-services designed to strengthen the counseling team's effectiveness. Topics such as improving communication, collaboration, and putting others needs first would be helpful for the team to internalize. This would allow counselors reflection time; since they are so inundated with their daily duties, with little reflection time given to increase their team's effectiveness.
  6. As a supervisor, if a team is not feeling effective, investigate and make necessary changes to ensure a greater chance of effectiveness.
  7. When hiring school counselors use an instrument like the ESCTQ to gauge if the individual will be a good fit for the team. Do the counselor and the team's expectations correlate? It is important to look at their personality characteristics, expectations as well as their work competencies. Know where the counselor needs support.
  8. The ESCTQ is a great tool to use in evaluating counseling programs strengths and areas of improvement. Teams that rate themselves as highly effective and close to

their ideal team can with other team's strategies to increase their effectiveness. This tool is also helpful for a team that has a large gap score between their current team and their ideal team. The ESCTQ will provide the team with useful information on areas to improve.

9. Supervisors by discussing and assessing school counselors need and expectations can also divide up job duties based on the counselors' interests and strengths. This would benefit the counselor as well as the students that they are serving.

#### Implications for Counselor Educators

Several suggestions for those educating school counselors resulted from this study:

1. Teams are unavoidable in the school counseling setting. Many will participate with other school counselors on a team and must know what assets are needed for an effective team. Counselors must be educated as to what teams are looking for and allow counselors in training time for self reflection to better increase their competency in many areas.
2. Educators must teach counselors what personality traits would benefit them on the job. Discussions should include: flexibility, putting others needs first, positive attitude, problem solver, supportive to colleagues, trustworthy, and respectful.
3. School counselors must be educated as to their roles and duties as described in the ASCA model. There could come a time in their future where they are asked to make decisions upon their duties and they must know what duties are appropriate for school counselors. Some duties may cause the counselor to be put in a dual role and not in a position to advocate for the student.

4. School counselors must be able to work with all populations. They must be trained in communication skills and conflict resolution in order to improve their interactions with colleagues, administrators, students, and parents.
5. Allow future counselors to assess their own needs. What are their strengths with regards to internal, external and interpersonal characteristics? What are their areas that need improvement? Counselor educators can help them develop a plan to grow in areas that would benefit their future team.
6. Allow the counselors time to assess what their expectations are. For example, they may have expectations of a testing coordinator, and their district does not provide that person. How will this impact their effectiveness?

#### Limitations

Several limitations of this study should be considered when interpreting results and planning future investigations. First, the counseling teams selected for interviews were identified as effective by their supervisors; furthermore, supervisors chose effective teams for interviews based on their own perception. For the most part the supervisor picked effective teams, and if the school counselors did not feel their team was effective they knew areas in which they could improve.

The participants in this study only represented two cultural backgrounds. An advantage of replicating this study would be to include other cultural backgrounds. Similarly, a greater geographic range could enable a more generalizable study. The 6 team interviews took place in a small geographic location and would need to be replicated to increase validity and reliability.

Participants, who volunteered to complete the survey, were encouraged by their supervisor. In some cases, reminder notices were sent through the supervisors and they were

made aware of the nonresponders. For many counselors this may not have been a problem, but for some may have felt pressure to complete the survey and answer favorably.

Additionally, school counselors may have scored the questionnaire differently in order to make them or their teams reflect well. For some it may be difficult to admit that their team is not effective. In addition, some teams interviewed said they had not really thought about many areas that we were discussing in relation to their team and seemed surprised about their responses. Some left the interviews feeling good about how well their team worked together and others had a grave realization of how ineffective their team operated.

Finally, data were collected during the fall semester which may have influenced the return rate. Although a high return rate was generated through the questionnaire the fall is a busy time for school counselors. Even when obtaining interview participants, nine teams were asked until 6 consented. Length of time may also be a factor influencing participants. For some counselors an hour interview was difficult to manage, with their other pressing responsibilities.

#### Future Research

Recommendations for future research concerning effective school counseling teams are as follows. First, researchers might replicate this study on effective school counseling teams to assess changes in their findings of effective school counseling teams. Since there was little significance found between the groups, a larger participant pool may be assessed.

Other researchers may have suggestions and recommendations for improvement of the interview protocol or the questionnaire. Replication and evaluation of the instruments would help improve their validity and reliability. Also, with regard to the questionnaire, one improvement could include a question asking the participant to rate their current team's effectiveness on scale from 1 to 10, similar to the first question asked in the interviews.

Although validity for the ESCTQ was found high, due to the similar findings with the interviews; validity could be improved qualitatively by using member-checking to determine the accuracy of the findings. One way would be through discussing the final report with the participants. Quantitatively, the ESTCQ when re-administered can be compared to this research and scores can be discussed relating to reliability. Internal consistency and test-retest correlations could then be addressed. In addition, the questions on the ESCTQ were all phrased in a positive direction, and social desirability in respondents answers may have limited the variance and discrimination among questions. In future research efforts could be made for the questions to be more discriminating. In addition, some questions could be divided for greater specificity. For example, trust and respect may be viewed as two separate issues.

Also, future researchers may want to repeat the interviews and/or survey at different times during the school year (other than the fall), in order to increase the amount of data collected. Repeating the survey with a larger sample of school counselors representing diverse groups and settings would also make the results more generalizable.

Individual teams discussed the need for a testing coordinator. This resulted in adding a question to the ESCTQ regarding the support needed for effectiveness. Other alternatives that would have also been helpful to include would be a question in the demographics section asking if the counselor had a specific person in charge of testing and to also interview teams with testing coordinators. These ideas could have provided additional implications for effective school counseling teams.

An interesting follow-up study would be to assess if school counseling teams moved through the group stages quickly and were effective early in their experience together. It is also not known why the groups were fairly new; either due to their newness in the field or new to that

particular team. The average age for the counselors was 43 years ( $SD = 10.63$ ), perhaps, the counselors had career changes later in life or they were new to that particular school. This would need to be further assessed. School counselors in the interview valued their and their colleague's differences and experience including teaching. However, teaching experience did not reflect on the ESCTQ by a majority of the participants. Again, more research would need to be conducted in order to gain further insight into teaching experience and effective school counseling teams.

Finally, regardless of whether one belongs to an effective team or an ineffective one, teams can always improve. Specifically, when looking at individual team members, comparing their current team ratings and their ideal team ratings, for all 29 items. Likewise in the interviews 5 teams out of 6 unanimously felt they were effective, however, all 6 teams articulated ways their team could be even more effective. Due to the lack of research in effective school counseling teams it is imperative that this issue be reassessed.

### Summary

Chapter five included a discussion of the findings of the qualitative and quantitative aspects of this study. This study produced new data regarding the perceptions school counselors have regarding what makes an effective team. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected confirming what counselors perceive make an effective team. Discussion of the limitations of the study was included, followed by a section describing implications for school counselors, working with administrators, district counseling supervisors, counselor educators and recommendations for further research.

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## APPENDIX A: Informed Consent

**Title of Project:** Exploring what factors make an Effective School Counseling Team  
**Investigator:** Stacey Lilley, Doctoral Candidate for Virginia Tech, 6121 St. Ives Court, Roanoke, VA 24018, (540) 400-6898, [slilley@vt.edu](mailto:slilley@vt.edu)

### **Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this project is to explore secondary school counselor's views of effective teams

### **Procedures**

During the first phase of research, participants will complete a 45-60 minute interview with the researcher. The interview will be audio taped and a verbatim transcript completed. The interviews follow a semi-structured protocol. Questions are designed to assess perceptions of effective school counseling teams and guide in the development of the Effective School Counseling Teams Questionnaire. During the second phase of research, all participants will complete the Effective School Counseling Teams Questionnaire.

### **Risks & Benefits**

There are no more than minimal risks involved in participating in this project. Participants will contribute to the knowledge of administrators and school counselors.

### **Anonymity and Confidentiality**

Results will be kept confidential. Neither your name nor any other personal identifier will be associated with the information you supply. A person who has been briefed about procedures for ensuring confidentiality will transcribe interviews. Personal identifiers, such as proper names, will be removed from interview transcripts. Transcripts will be identified and stored by a number code. Tapes and transcripts from the interviews will be kept in a secure place. Only team members directly involved in data analysis will have access to interview transcripts. Tapes will be destroyed at the end of the project.

### **Compensation**

There is a small compensation given for participating. Lunch will be provided for the interviewee and personalized note cards with each questionnaire.

### **Freedom to Withdraw**

You are free to withdraw at any time. You may ask that the tape recorder be turned off at any time during the interview.

### **Informed Consent**

Participants will receive a copy of the consent form [generally electronically] prior to the interview and asked to indicate their agreement with the stated conditions.

This research project has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Tech.

**Participant's Permission**

I have read and understand the Informed Consent Form for Participants and the conditions of this project. I voluntarily agree to participate in this project. I have had questions I have about the project answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent to participate in this project.

---

Signature

Date

Should you have questions about this research project, contact the investigator listed at the top of this form or Dr. David Moore, IRB Chair, Research Compliance Office, 231-4991, [moored@vt.edu](mailto:moored@vt.edu)

## APPENDIX B : Interview Protocol

## Effective School Counseling Teams

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

Start time: \_\_\_\_\_ Stop time: \_\_\_\_\_

**Introduction:**

Thank you for taking time to participate in this interview. Do I have your permission to record this interview? The purpose of the interview is to hear what your insights are on effective school counseling teams. Effective teams are defined as those teams fulfilling their obligations. The answers from all the interviews, a total of 8 teams, will be combined to look at common themes among effective teams. Nothing you say will ever be identified with you personally. In order to maintain the confidentiality of this interview, I recommend that you use a pseudonym. Would you like to think of one now? Also, in order to maintain your confidentiality any other personal identifier, such as proper names, will be removed from the interview transcripts.

As we go through the interview, if you have any questions about what I'm asking, please feel free to stop and ask me about it. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes. Before we begin, do you have any questions about the interview process or the Informed Consent form that you signed?

**Interview questions:**

This pilot study will be looking at effective teams. There are three parts that I want to focus on: internal factors, external factors, and intrapersonal factors:

- As you reflect about your current team, on a scale from 1-10, 1 being ineffective and 10 being absolutely effective, how you would rate the effectiveness of your team?
- Specifically, what factors were you thinking of when you arrived at this number for your team?
- I would like to discuss internal factors that affect your team. Internal factors are qualities like competencies, individual difference and personality types. What personal qualities do you and other members of the team possess that you think influence the effectiveness of the team?
- Next, let's talk about external factors affect a team. By external I mean leadership, team goals or other external supports within the school. What external factors do you feel contribute to your team's effectiveness?
- Now I want to shift to interpersonal factors – meaning those factors concerning or involving relationships between people within the team. Examples would be

collaboration, meetings, interactions, dealing with conflict, etc. What interpersonal factors do you feel contribute to your team's effectiveness?

- What would you change about your team in order to facilitate effectiveness?
- As you reflect on your team today, what have been the most important factors in ensuring your team's effectiveness?
- Could you please describe a specific incident that you think captures the team operating at its very best?
- Let's go back to earlier key elements you mentioned about the team, now how does that apply?
- I would like to take a minute and look at this process for you. How do you feel about the questions as far as clarity? What other feedback would be helpful for me to know in order to better use these interview questions?

Thank you again for sharing your knowledge and time with me.

## APPENDIX C: E-mail Notice from Supervisor for interview participants

I am writing to let you know that you will be contacted this week by Stacey Lilley about a research project. Her research is looking at characteristics that make up effective school counseling teams. She will be contacting you to participate in an interview. It is necessary that the entire team participate in the individual interviews. I would greatly appreciate your participation. We are excited about the results from this research and will be sharing the data with you.

Sincerely,

(Insert Supervisors Name)

## APPENDIX D: E-mail Notice from Supervisor for questionnaire participants

I am writing to let you know that you will be contacted this week by Stacey Lilley about a research project. She will be sending you a questionnaire seeking your opinion on effective school counseling teams. I would greatly appreciate your participation. We are excited about the results from this research and will be sharing the data with you.

Sincerely,

(Insert Supervisors Name)

## APPENDIX D: Cover Letter with Questionnaire

Date

Address

Dear School Counselor,

School counselors have many duties placed on them daily by their administrators and district supervisors. State guidelines also define duties. It takes an effective team working together to get it all done; and then many days we still go home with work on our desk. Ironically, no one really knows what makes an effective school counseling team.

I am conducting a study about school counseling teams. The purpose of this study is to look at what secondary school counselors perceive make an effective team. Your opinion in this matter is very important. All counselors in your district will be asked to complete the questionnaire. It is imperative that every team member's opinions are represented in order to have a more accurate picture of the team dynamics.

You may be assured complete confidentiality. The questionnaire has an identification number for mailing purposes only. This is so that I may check your name off the mailing list when your questionnaire is returned. Your name will never be placed on the questionnaire or associated with any of your answers.

The results of this research will be made available to the counselors in your district. You may receive a summary of results by contacting me at [slilley@vt.edu](mailto:slilley@vt.edu). Please do not put any personal information on the questionnaire itself.

I would be most happy to answer any questions you might have. Please write or call.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Stacey C. Lilley, LPSC, LPC  
Ph.D. Candidate Virginia Tech  
(540) 400-6898  
[slilley@vt.edu](mailto:slilley@vt.edu)

## APPENDIX E: Follow up Postcard

Date

Last week a questionnaire seeking your opinion about effective school counseling teams was mailed to you. If you have already completed and returned it please accept my sincere thanks. If not, please do so today. Because it has been sent to only a small, but representative, sample of school counselors it is extremely important that your thoughts be included in the study if the results are to accurately represent the opinions of school counselors.

If by some chance you did not receive the questionnaire, or it got misplaced, please contact me immediately and I will get another one in the mail to you today.

Sincerely,

Stacey Lilley, M.Ed., LPC  
Licensed Professional School Counselor  
(540) 400-6898  
[slilley@vt.edu](mailto:slilley@vt.edu)

## APPENDIX F: Follow Up Letter to Nonrespondents

Letter to be sent three weeks after initial contact.

Date

Address

About three weeks ago I wrote to you seeking your opinion on effective school counseling teams. As of today I have not yet received your completed questionnaire.

I have undertaken this study as my dissertation because I believe that having an effective school counseling team would not only benefit the individual counselors but also the school that he/she serves.

I am writing to you again because of the significance that each questionnaire has to the usefulness of this study. In order for the results of this study to be truly representative of the opinions of school counselors, it is essential that each team member complete the questionnaire. I am not only interested in your opinions, but your entire team's thoughts.

In the event that your questionnaire has been misplaced, a replacement is enclosed. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Cordially,

Stacey C. Lilley, M.Ed., LPC  
Licensed Professional School Counselor

APPENDIX G: Effective School Counseling Team Questionnaire (ESCTQ)

The purpose of this questionnaire is to better understand what characteristics school counselors believe contribute to an effective team. A counseling team includes those counselors who share the same duties (i.e. academic, individual and group counseling, testing). There are two columns listed below; One to rate the characteristics of your current team and one to rate the characteristics of an ideal team. In the first column please indicate how strongly you agree that each characteristic exists in your current team. In the second column please indicate how strongly you believe each characteristic *should be* present in the ideal effective team. Scores for your current team and the ideal team may be the same or they may be different. Please answer all of the items as honestly as possible.

**Instructions:** Please circle a number 1 through 4, or Not Applicable, for each item in both columns

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
1	2	3	4	N/A

**Example**

On an effective counseling team . . . .	Current Team	Ideal Team
open communication is practiced among team members	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A

**Please begin:**

On an effective counseling team . . . .	Current Team	Ideal Team
there is a willingness to put student’s needs first	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
members pitch in to help with each others work	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
members demonstrate a non-territorial attitude	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
members’ personalities blend well together	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
open communication is practiced among team members	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
duties and responsibilities are assigned fairly among team members	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
each members unique knowledge, skills, and abilities are used	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
collaboration on projects is valued and encouraged	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
members trust and respect one another	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
members’ view each other to be competent	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
members’ past professional experiences (teaching or other fields) contribute to the team	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
members are self-motivated	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
members are willing to compromise to accomplish tasks and resolve problems	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
members show courtesy toward one another	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
members feel supported by school administration (e.g. principals)	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A

Please continue on the back

On an effective counseling team . . . .	Current Team	Ideal Team
members' individual strengths (counseling, organizational, etc.) are used to enhance the entire team	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
member handle conflict openly through discussion	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
members are interested in one another's personal lives	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
members spend time planning activities, events, and presentations	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
serving the students is the team's primary goal	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
members have a caring and giving attitude towards one another	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
members feel supported by central office	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
members consult regularly with each other	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
members feel supported by other staff members (e.g. secretaries, SAP counselors, career center managers, etc.)	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
members have a pleasant personality	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
members receive sufficient support to efficiently handle testing responsibilities	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
all members offices are located together (ie. counseling suit)	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
individual differences (gender, ethnicity) collectively make the team stronger	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
job expectations are clear	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A

**Please answer the following questions:**

31. What is your highest degree completed? \_\_\_\_\_
32. Where do you currently work?  
 1. Middle School (grade 6-8)                      B. High School (grade 9-11)
33. What is the setting of the school in which you currently work?  
 A. Rural    C. Urban  
 B. Suburban    D. Combination or not listed above
34. What is your gender?                      A. Male    B. Female
35. Are you biracial?                      A. Yes    B. No
36. What is the primary cultural background with which you most closely identify  
 A. Native American    D. Caucasian  
 B. Asian or Pacific Islander    E. Hispanic/Latino/Latina  
 C. African American
37. How long have you have been employed as a school counselor? \_\_\_\_\_ years
38. How long have you been on your current team? \_\_\_\_\_ years
39. How may years of prior teaching experience, do you have in the public schools? \_\_\_\_\_ years
40. Your present age: \_\_\_\_\_ years

## APPENDIX H: Analytical Matrix

		INTERNAL												INTERPERSONAL					EXTERNAL		
		Experiences	Personal Qualities						Altruism					Interactions					External Support		
	Current Team Rating	Competencies Whitney	Likes Job	Respect	Humor	Approachable	Personalities	Person Growth	School Spirit	Dedication	Share Duties	Care for each other	Same Motto	Interactions	Communication	Pre-Planning	Majority Rules	Personal Relationship	External Resources	Parent Support	Proximity
HS Tm 1	Whitney	9	X			X	X	X		X	X	X	1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	Elizabeth	8.5	X	X			X			X	X	1		X	X		X			X	X
	Sierra	8.5	X				X			X	1	1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	Sarah	8	X				X			X	1	1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	Sue	8	X		X	X	X			X	X	X	1	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
	Joe C.	8.5	1		X					X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	
	Sally	9	X	X		X	X			X	X	X	X	X	1	X	X	X	X	X	
MS Tm 2	Fred	8	X	X			X	X			X	X	1	X	X	X		X	X		
	Floyd	9	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X		1	X	X		X	X	X	
	Lori	9	X		X		X			1	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
HS Tm 3	Jay	6	X				X				X	1			X			X	X	X	X
	Liza	7.5	X	X			X			X	X	X		X	1	X		X	X		X
	Marilyn	4	X								X			X		1			X	X	X
	Brittany	5	X			X	X				X			X	1	X		X	X	X	1
	Ruffus	8	X	X		X	X					1		X	X	X		1	X	X	X
	Beth	6	X				X				X	X	X	X	1				X	X	X
	Nicole	7	X	X	X		X						X	X	1				X		X
MS Tm 4	Ellen	10	X	X	1	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
	Jerry	10	X	X	1	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
HS Tm 5	Grace	9	X			X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
	Dave	10	X	X	X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X					
MS Tm 6	Susan	10	X			X	X				X	X		X	1	X	X	X	X	X	
	Mandy	8.5	1			X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	Mary	8.5	1			X	X				X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	

Note. The "1" signifies the participant's view that this characteristic is the number one element needed for an effective team

## APPENDIX I: Current Team Values

### **Internal Current Team Value (9)**

- there is a willingness to put student's needs first
- members demonstrate a non-territorial attitude
- each members unique knowledge, skills, and abilities are used
- members' past professional experiences (teaching or other fields) contribute to the team
- members are self-motivated
- members' individual strengths (counseling, organizational, etc.) are used to enhance the entire team
- serving the students is the team's primary goal
- members have a pleasant personality
- individual differences (gender, ethnicity) collectively make the team stronger

### **External Current Team Value (7)**

- duties and responsibilities are assigned fairly among team members
- members feel supported by school administration (e.g. principals)
- members feel supported by central office
- members feel supported by other staff members (e.g. secretaries, SAP counselors, career center managers, etc.)
- members receive sufficient support to efficiently handle testing responsibilities
- all members offices are located together (ie. counseling suit)
- job expectations are clear

### **Interpersonal Current Team Value (13)**

- members pitch in to help with each others work
- members' personalities blend well together
- open communication is practiced among team members
- collaboration on projects is valued and encouraged
- members trust and respect one another
- members' view each other to be competent
- members are willing to compromise to accomplish tasks and resolve problems
- members show courtesy toward one another
- member handle conflict openly through discussion
- members are interested in one another's personal lives
- members spend time planning activities, events, and presentations
- members have a caring and giving attitude towards one another
- members consult regularly with each other

## APPENDIX J: 21 Qualitative Categories

### Personal Qualities

- members are self-motivated (*selfmotc*)
- members have a pleasant personality (*plsntct*)
- members trust and respect one another (*trustct*)
- members show courtesy toward one another (*curtct*)
- members have a caring and giving attitude towards one another (*carect*)

### Altruism

- there is a willingness to put student's needs first (*studct*)
- serving the students is the team's primary goal (*servct*)
- members pitch in to help with each others work (*helpct*)

### Interactions

- open communication is practiced among team members (*commct*)
- member handle conflict openly through discussion (*confctct*)
- members are willing to compromise to accomplish tasks and resolve problems (*compzct*)
- collaboration on projects is valued and encouraged (*colobct*)
- members consult regularly with each other (*consultc*)

### External Support

- members feel supported by school administration (e.g. principals) (*schadct*)
- members feel supported by central office (*cosupct*)
- members feel supported by other staff members (e.g. secretaries, SAP counselors, career center managers, etc.) (*stafspctct*)
- members receive sufficient support to efficiently handle testing responsibilities (*testingc*)

### Team Contributions

- each members unique knowledge, skills, and abilities are used (*knowct*)
- members' past professional experiences (teaching or other fields) contribute to the team (*pastct*)
- members' view each other to be competent (*compct*)
- members' individual strengths (counseling, organizational, etc.) are used to enhance the entire team (*strgthct*)

### Infrequently used items:

- duties and responsibilities are assigned fairly among team members (*dutyct*)
- all members offices are located together (ie. counseling suit) (*offproxc*)
- job expectations are clear (*jobexct*)
- members are interested in one another's personal lives (*perslvsc*)
- members spend time planning activities, events, and presentations (*planct*)
- members' personalities blend well together (*personct*)
- individual differences (gender, ethnicity) collectively make the team stronger (*diffct*)
- members demonstrate a non-territorial attitude (*territct*)

## APPENDIX K: Team Quantitative Demographic Categories

## Degree

M = 1  
M+ = 2  
PhD = 3  
Combo = 4

## School Level

MS = 1  
HS = 2

## Setting

Rural = 1  
Suburban = 2  
Urban = 3  
Combo = 4

## Gender

Male = 1  
Female = 2  
Both = 3

## Cultural Bkground

AA = 1  
Cauc = 2  
Both = 3

## VITAE

**Stacey C. Lilley, Ph.D., LPC, LPSC**

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**SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS AND SKILLS**

- Specialization in children and adolescents
- Experience as a counseling supervisor for Master's Students
- Over ten years experience counseling children and their families

**PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND****EDUCATION**

**Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University**  
Ph.D., Counselor Education, May 2007

**Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University**  
M.Ed., Counselor Education, May 1996

**Longwood College**  
B.S., Psychology, December 1993

**WORK EXPERIENCE**

Jefferson College of Health Sciences, Therapist, December 2006 – present

*Providing counseling to students based on academic as well as mental health issues. Specific duties include: individual, family, and group counseling; teaching a freshman seminar course encouraging personal growth; developing and implementing a college wide wellness program; and provide supervision to counseling colleagues. Other areas of duties included presenting educational counseling related topics as well as being a reference to faculty and students.*

Braley & Thompson, Therapist, April 2006 – present

*Provided individual and family counseling to children, parents, and adults. Developed treatment plans, completed weekly progress notes, and completed weekly paperwork to service the client. In addition, taught parenting workshops to foster care parents. Topics included creating family traditions, and working with your children and your foster care children together under one roof.*

Virginia Tech (VPI & SU), Graduate Assistant, August 2005- May 2006

*Provided supervision to practicum and internship students one hour a week. Activities included providing individual and group supervision, watching videotapes of sessions, providing feedback, evaluation, and skill building; facilitated the clinic during operating hours; provided live supervision to the Master's students; observed and provided feedback to personal growth group leaders.*

Roanoke County Public Schools, School Counselor, 1998-2004

*Provided individual and group counseling on academic, personal, and career related issues; guidance instruction; consulted with school and mental health professionals; established and provided crisis intervention; planned and facilitated parent and in-service training workshops; developed and analyzed needs assessments; developed and evaluated guidance programs; resolved scheduling conflicts; and coordinated registration and orientation activities at the high school level.*

Adams County 12 District, School Counselor, Colorado, 1996-1998

*At the elementary and high school level provided individual and group counseling on academic, personal, and career related issues; guidance instruction; consulted with school and mental health professionals; established and provided crisis intervention; resolved scheduling conflicts; and provided registration for individual caseload.*

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Internship Class (Spring 2005)

*Taught and supervised master's level school counselors in the translation of didactic knowledge and counseling skills into practice. Facilitated discussions, designed experiential learning activities, supervised casework, visited practicum site, and evaluated student performance.*

Human Growth & Development (Summer 2004)

*Developed and wrote curriculum for an on-line Blackboard Class. Facilitate discussions, encouraged optimum gain of knowledge in the area of human growth and development, graded assignments, consulted with head professor about students and their performance.*

Career Development (Summer 2003)

*Taught an on-line Blackboard Class. Facilitate discussions, graded assignments, fielded questions, challenged students in the area of career development, evaluated and changed the course based on the student's feedback and grades earned.*

## SUPERVISION EXPERIENCE

Virginia Tech, supervision of Master's Students, 2004-2006

*Provided supervision to practicum and internship students. Activities included providing individual and group supervision, watching videotapes of sessions, providing feedback, evaluation, and skill building.*

Roanoke County Public Schools, Supervision of Counselor Intern, Spring 1999 & 2002

*Provided supervision to a school counselor intern. Activities included providing weekly supervision of individual counseling and guidance program development responsibilities.*

Virginia Tech, Counseling Supervision: Theory and Practice (Ph.D. course), Fall 2002

*Provided one hour of weekly supervision to beginning practicum students. Received group supervision for consultation and case presentation. Activities included providing individual supervision, watching videotapes of sessions, providing feedback, evaluation, and skill building of supervisees.*

## **PRESENTATIONS**

Lilley, S. (October, 2004) Dealing with Grief. Session presented to Counselors at the annual Virginia Counselors Association; Roanoke, VA.

Epperson, A. & Lilley, S. (October 2004) The DSM. Session presented to Counselors at the annual Virginia Counselors Association; Roanoke, VA.

Lilley, S. & Dave Miller (February 17, 2006) An Exploration of Differences in Satisfiers and Dissatisfiers among Older and Younger Doctoral Students. Virginia Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (VACES) Graduate School Conference at William and Mary College; Williamsburg, VA.

## **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

Roanoke Area Counselors Association (ROACA)  
 Virginia Counselors Association (VCA)  
 Virginia Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (VACES)  
 American Counseling Association (ACA)  
 American School Counselor Association (ASCA)

## **SERVICE**

Roanoke Area Counselors Association (ROACA) Newsletter Editor for 7 years  
 Edgewood Christian Church's Children's Director

## **CERTIFICATION**

School Counselor preK-12: Virginia State Department of Education  
 (License Number PSS-518501)  
 Licensed Professional Counselor: Board of Counseling  
 (License Number 0701004040)

## **RELATED EXPERIENCES**

Hollins University Batten Leadership Institute (internship)

*Provided counseling support to university students in a prestigious leadership program. Activities included providing individual counseling sessions aimed to increase their personal growth, and facilitated a semester group holding students accountable and encouraging them with leadership projects.*

**REFERENCES**

Dr. Gerard Lawson, Associate Professor School of Education, Virginia Tech, 310 E. Eggleston, Blacksburg, VA 24061, (804) 647-1242, [glawson@vt.edu](mailto:glawson@vt.edu)

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