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Professional Advisor Practices For Student Identity Development

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PROFESSIONAL ADVISOR PRACTICES FOR STUDENT IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Due to COVID-19, the state of higher education has been transformed, including the way student services like advising are offered on college campuses. More importantly, current literature on Generation Z students articulated that they need advisors who will build trust by implementing practices that go beyond prescriptive approaches. Therefore, it was imperative that this research examined how current undergraduate professional advisors work with Generation Z students and the practices that they use. Previous advising literature indicates there is a lack of scholarship surrounding the practices of professional advisors. With little information on professional advising practices and approaches, higher education leaders have limited approaches to adjust their advising models beyond the faculty advisor approach.

To fill research gaps and advocate for professional advisors, the purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the advising practices employed by undergraduate professional advisors who work at medium-sized, New England colleges and universities in alignment with Chickering's (1969) student identity development theory. Demographic surveys and interview results established that professional advisors worked at institutions with a shared or centralized advising model which provided a unique platform to develop students by using cognitive, social, emotional, identity, and career-initiated practices. While specific practices aligned with Chickering's (1969) psychosocial theory for student identity development, many of the participants felt that they needed better strategies to support students establishing identity. These

findings suggest that professional advisors consistently interact with their students beyond prescriptive tasks. Future scholars should examine professional advisor experiences and practices to allow this advisor population to gain more recognition in the industry. Additionally, it is imperative to further investigate student perspectives about their experiences with professional advisors. Since COVID-19 has impacted students and educators, researchers should determine how students and professional advisors adjusted.

Keywords: Academic advising; professional advisor; shared advising model; centralized advising model; developmental advising

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Advising students is an important and challenging task in higher education. The higher education industry values academic advising because research has shown its connection to student success, satisfaction, and retention (Hart-Baldridge, 2020; Tinto, 2004; Zhang et al., 2019). To enhance student development within higher education, many colleges and universities guarantee students an academic advisor (Hunter & White, 2004; Williamson et al., 2014). High quality academic advising provides college students with an opportunity to develop as an individual, with a consistent relationship alongside someone from the institution (Drake, 2011; Hunter & White, 2004; Steele & White, 2019). As higher education institutions face financial hardship and significant structural challenges due to the consolidation of small and medium-sized institutions as well as setbacks related to COVID-19, academic advising services have become critical to increase enrollment and improve financial sustainability (Grites, 1979; Steele & White, 2019; White, 2020). Since academic advising is related to the persistence of students, and the stability of higher education institutions, it is imperative to continue to research this area. Furthermore, recent national trends in higher education suggested that academic advising is reaching a point where intentional, integrated advising approaches are preferred (Joslin, 2018; White, 2020).

According to a survey conducted by NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising, U.S. colleges and universities have, on average, one academic advisor for every 367 students (Marcus, 2012). This statistic depicted the increase of students assigned to advisors, leading to the inability of each student to have an individualized advising approach (Young-Jones et al., 2013). Many of these advisors are also faculty members who must teach courses, complete research requirements, and fulfill committee work. The faculty-only advising model is often used, especially in small, private colleges in the U.S. due to a lack of funding provided to hire undergraduate professional advisors (Pardee, 2004). However, small, medium, and large-sized institutions have already implemented a shared advising structure (Pardee, 2004). A shared advising structure has expanded advising by creating centralized units staffed with professional advisors who serve specific student groups including students on academic probation, and first-generation college students (Ireland, 2018; Kot, 2014; Pardee, 2004). According to Habley's (2004) survey on academic advising, 55% of four-year public and private institutions used a shared model of advising services, where 32% of four-year public and private institutions rely on a decentralized, faculty-only advising model. Thus, it is significant to identify the advising practices of undergraduate professional advisors since a shared advising structure is being used nationwide (Kot, 2014).

Beyond the type of advising model used by an institution, advising scholarship has emphasized two distinct advising approaches: prescriptive and developmental. Within that field of scholarship, Crookston (1994) was noted as the founder of both prescriptive and developmental advising. Crookston (1994) defined prescriptive advising as an approach that involves one-way communication and class registration. In comparison, developmental advising focused on student growth as well as their degree progression (Crookston, 1994; Snyder, 2018). These dominant advising approaches have been documented within existing literature; however, scholars argued that current advisors should have a developmental approach which includes integrating academic, career, and life planning (Bland, 2003; Crookston, 1994; Himes, 2014; Snyder, 2018). This study focused on student development within academic advising because of the overall dissatisfaction with prescriptive advising (Young-Jones et al., 2013).

Statement of Problem

Over time, the significance of advising has been argued as a service that needs to evolve with current student needs and expectations (Barber, 2020; Mohr & Mohr, 2016; Robbins, 2020; Seemiller & Grace, 2015; Steele & White, 2019). Currently, academic advising is one of the only structured services with a guarantee of communication with a representative of the institution (Hunter & White, 2004; Steele & White, 2019). Hart-Baldridge (2020) stated that when academic advising is provided effectively, student integration can be enhanced by making connections between academics and future goals, which increased student retention rates for the institution. For instance, Beal and Noel's (1980) survey noted that inadequate academic advising was the strongest negative factor in student retention, while high quality advising was the strongest positive factor in student retention.

Moreover, academic advising is relevant because of its focus on student development, which is an essential expectation of current college students (Barber, 2020; Giunta, 2017; Mohr & Mohr, 2016; Robbins, 2020; Seemiller & Grace, 2015). White (2015) stated that "the success of academic advising rests with acknowledging that it is as much a part of an institution's educational mission as its disciplinary instruction" (p. 272). Similarly, Lowenstein (2013) argued that academic advising is "a locus of learning; it is not a service that directs students to the place where they can learn" (p. 245). Since advising literature claims that advising should encompass student registration as well as developing the student, it is important to explore student identity development and its connection to advising (Lowenstein, 2013; White, 2015). Today, the dominant generation entering college are members of Generation Z (Giunta, 2017; Mohr & Mohr, 2016). This study's focus on Chickering's (1969) student identity development theory is significant because researchers state that Generation Z college students need a trusted mentor

(Giunta, 2017; Mohr & Mohr, 2016). Chickering (1969) argued that it is the responsibility of higher education institutions to ensure that college graduates can assume control over industrial, political, educational, religious, and military organizations. To guarantee those outcomes, higher education professionals must be concerned with developing each student beyond passing an exam or becoming a high-achieving professional (Chickering, 1969). Previous advising literature has not articulated the specific advising practices used in connection with Chickering’s (1969) seven vectors of student identity development. Therefore, this qualitative study aimed to address how current undergraduate professional advisors contribute to student identity development by using Chickering’s (1969) seven vectors.

According to Allen and Smith (2008), students are also concerned with the type of advising they are receiving. Previous literature that compared prescriptive advising and developmental advising approaches found that students’ rate of satisfaction was higher when the advisor practiced developmental approaches (Harris, 2018). On the other hand, when surveying academic advisors about their preferred advising approaches, the advisors frequently described an information-based approach even though they would prefer to use developmental techniques (He et al., 2020). Because of the advisors’ time constraints and lack of professional developmental opportunities, they felt unprepared to use developmental advising approaches with their students (He et al., 2020). Furthermore, existing literature on developmental advising is vast; however, little is known about how undergraduate professional advisors use developmental advising practices. Additionally, there is a lack of research detailing the specific practices used by undergraduate professional advisors to contribute to a student’s identity development.

The largest weakness of faculty advising is the lack of knowledge pertaining to student development theories; hence, there is a strong argument to increase advisor training and development (Gordon et al., 2011; He et al., 2020; Hutson & Hutson, 2017; King, 1993). Therefore, one of the current problems with advising students in higher education is the faculty-only advising model (Kot, 2014). To address this problem, it is imperative for higher education administrators to recognize that a decentralized, faculty-only advising model may not be satisfying their student body. To ensure that academic advising is adapting to new student expectations and industry-wide changes, higher education leaders should focus on new advising delivery models to improve student satisfaction with academic advising (Steele & White, 2019; Steingass & Sykes, 2008).

In short, the current problem that faces academic advising in higher education is the lack of knowledge surrounding undergraduate professional advisors and the practices they use to contribute to a student's identity development. Although the topic of advising is widely researched, there is a lack of documentation on specific advising practices that are used when advising undergraduate students. Because of the limited research that explains the practices that current undergraduate professional advisors employ, the development and education of advisors is not at the forefront (He et al., 2020). While advisors are the professional connection to the student, it is problematic that there is insufficient research about the practices utilized when meeting with students (He et al., 2020).

More importantly, previous literature was not found that focuses on the perspective of undergraduate professional advisors whose sole responsibility is to advise (He et al., 2020). Since there is little information about undergraduate professional advisors, a shared advising model may not be attractive to institutions that might benefit from having professional and faculty advisors support their student body (He et al., 2020). In short, this study addressed the gap in the academic advising literature by exploring the developmental advising practices used by undergraduate professional advisors, which will provide higher education leaders with better knowledge of professional advisor expertise.

As faculty demands increase, there has been a shift at some institutions from a decentralized, faculty-only advising model to a shared advising model with professional academic advisors (Pardee, 2004). According to King (1993) and Gordon et al. (2011), professional advisors have more knowledge of student development theories, advising specific student populations, and students dealing with personal concerns that are impacting their college experience. By focusing on undergraduate professional advisors, it ensures that the qualitative study explored the advising practices of advisors whose sole responsibility is to advise students without additional tasks. This qualitative study provided necessary insight into the practices of undergraduate professional advisors; an area that has not been well-researched.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to identify the advising practices employed by undergraduate professional advisors who work at medium-sized, New England colleges and universities in alignment with Chickering's (1969) student identity development theory. Academic advising is a powerful service that connects the student with an academic partner; however, national surveys articulated that advising is the service that receives a lot of student criticism (Allen & Smith, 2008; Young-Jones et al., 2013). Current college students are dissatisfied with the advising they are receiving from their faculty advisors (Beal & Noel, 1980; Marcus, 2012). For instance, in Young-Jones et al.'s (2013) study on student satisfaction with faculty advisors, the findings suggested that students are not satisfied because the faculty advisor cannot devote enough time to them. Without spending time with a student, it is difficult for the advisor to know the student as a person and future professional (Coll & Zalaquett, 2007; Fosnacht et al., 2017).

Previous studies have defined the role of a professional advisor as an advisor who uses only prescriptive advising practices (Gordon et al., 2011; King, 1993). Therefore, this study addressed previous research gaps by exploring the developmental practices of undergraduate professional advisors. While most research focused on a variety of advising models, the majority continued to reference the importance of student development within all advising practices (Cox & Naylor, 2018; Creamer & Creamer, 1994; Hande et al., 2018; He et al., 2020; Himes, 2014; Snyder, 2018). Scholarship surrounding advising continues to suggest that prescriptive advising approaches should not be heavily used in current advising practices because today's college student wants a more holistic advising approach (Bland, 2003).

Studies involving developmental advising practices are plentiful. Snyder (2018) and Himes (2014) explored the developmental advising attitudes and practices of faculty advisors, whereas Harris's (2018) quantitative study focused on comparing student opinions on prescriptive and developmental advising. This qualitative study filled current advising research gaps by investigating developmental advising practices that are used by undergraduate professional advisors, rather than focusing on other advising models. Overall, this qualitative study provided greater insight into the link between undergraduate professional advisors and student identity development.

Research Questions

To better understand which practices undergraduate professional advisors use to contribute to student identity development, qualitative data was gathered through survey and interviews by using Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of student identity development as a measurement tool. Studies revealed that college students seek developmental advising practices that focus on personal, career, and academic development (Snyder, 2018). While the topic of developmental advising is robust, it is important to note the lack of research which articulates and identifies the practices undergraduate professional advisors use to initiate student identity development. To better grasp the specific practices of undergraduate professional advisors, this study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ 1: Do undergraduate professional advisors at medium-sized, New England colleges and universities use advising practices that align with student identity development?

RQ 2: What advising practices do undergraduate professional advisors use at medium-sized, New England colleges and universities that align with Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of student identity development?

Conceptual Framework

Existing literature on the topic of academic advising focuses on the significance of incorporating student development theories into advising practices (Creamer, 2000; Hagen, 2008; King, 2005; Sullivan-Vance & Hones, 2009). Although academic advising is a practice that can exist without referencing theory, it is richer when integrating student development theories (Sullivan-Vance & Hones, 2009). More specifically, Hagen (2008) argued that academic advising cannot be performed without theory which can inform the ways advisors practice. As stated by Creamer (2000), "academic advising is an educational activity that depends on valid explanations of complex student behaviors and institutional conditions to assist college students in making and executing educational and life plans" (p. 18). Similarly, scholars discussed that academic advisors must understand student development theories to be effective when interacting with a student (Creamer, 2000; King, 2005).

Although current research described the importance of student development theories within academic advising, limited research explored how undergraduate professional advisors contribute to a student's identity development. Particularly, Creamer (2000) believed that the theoretical foundation of effective academic advising practices is rooted in student identity development. Within this study, Chickering's (1969) psychosocial theory of student identity development was used to understand the ways in which undergraduate professional advisors contribute to student identity development. Highlighting this theory of student development provides this study with a framework of the practices used to initiate changes in student thinking and decision-making as it pertains to their personal and professional future.

Chickering's (1969) psychosocial theory of student identity development has impacted the research done on college student development by arguing that student growth requires balance between challenge and support. According to Chickering's (1969) theory on education and identity, the identity development of a student during their college years is critical. Additionally, seven vectors of student identity development were detailed specifically for students enrolled at a four-year institution (Chickering, 1969). However, in 1993, Chickering and Reisser revised the original research by stating that the seven vectors could be successfully applied to any type of college student. The vectors included developing competence, managing emotions, developing autonomy, developing interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, clarifying purpose, and developing integrity (Chickering, 1969). Psychosocial theory of student identity development emphasized the importance of each student's individualized growth through different stages in life. This type of student development theory is applicable to the nature of academic advising because it is important for advisors to understand how students establish meaning in their lives based on where they are in their personal development (Creamer, 2000; Williams, 2007). More notably, it is essential for academic advisors to understand how students are changing with their identity to narrow their practices to service the current and future students.

Chickering's (1969) psychosocial theory of student identity development was implemented and referenced within the research design and data analysis process by intertwining the seven vectors in the research instruments and coding process. Furthermore, by questioning undergraduate professional advisors, the researcher recognized the advising practices used to help students access the seven vectors of development.

Definition of Terms

Academic Advising: "situations in which an institutional representative gives insight or direction to a college student about an academic, social, or personal matter. The nature of this direction might be to inform, suggest, counsel, discipline, coach, mentor, or even teach" (Kuhn, 2008, p. 3).

Professional advisor: "Professional advisors' primary role focuses on providing academic and support services for students. Professional advisors are generally housed in a central location, spend a full day in their offices and devote the majority of their time providing academic advising to students" (King, 1993, p. 51).

Shared advising model: "where some advisors meet with students in a central administrative unit (i.e., an advising center), while others advise students in the academic department of their discipline" (Pardee, 2004, para. 3). This model incorporates the use of both faculty and professional advisors (Pardee, 2004).

Decentralized advising model: “a faculty-only model where all students are assigned to a department advisor, usually a professor from the student’s academic discipline” (Pardee, 2004, para. 6).

Centralized advising model: “where professional and faculty advisors are housed in one academic or administrative unit” (Pardee, 2004, para. 3).

Prescriptive advising: Prescriptive advising consists of academic advisors who advise by doing course selection and signing forms (Crookston, 1994). This form of advising is the most traditional model where the advisor holds the authority and is the sole decision-maker (Crookston, 1994).

Developmental advising: “advising that goes beyond simply giving information or signing a form. Developmental academic advising recognizes the importance of interactions between the student and the campus environment, it focuses on the whole person, and it works with the student at that person’s own life stage of development” (King, 2005, para.1).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Scope

Several assumptions and limitations exist in this qualitative study. An assumption of this study is that the participants utilized practices that contribute to student identity development. It is important to note that the participants might not employ advising practices that contribute to development. Therefore, the assumption is that the participants responded to survey and interview questions truthfully and thoroughly. Additionally, an assumption within this study is that the participants answered questions without any personal or professional bias based on their lived experiences.

Another assumption is that the participants defined student identity development in the same way. There are varying perspectives as to the definition and initiation of student identity development (Bland, 2003; Crookston, 1994; Himes, 2014; Snyder, 2018). Since the participants had varying definitions of student identity development, this is considered both an assumption and a limitation of this study. Lastly, this study does not consider the specific advising mission of the institutions where they are employed. The advising mission and vision allow for advisors to align their practices, which is a significant assumption and limitation that could impact the study's findings (Habley et al., 2012).

This study is limited in that it does not account for the previous education or development of the participants, which could have played a role in the advising practices they discussed. King (1993) discussed the significance that education and professional development opportunities have on articulating specific advising practices. For instance, if some participants have been educated to advise with prescriptive methods, it may limit their ability to answer the research questions that focus on developmental approaches. Additionally, since this qualitative study included a small number of undergraduate professional advisors from medium-sized, New England colleges and universities, the findings may not be generalized to the large population of professional advisors in the industry. Advisors come from different backgrounds and work with different types of students, enabling them to have diverse perspectives on the research questions. As advising practices depend on the size and location of the institution, this study is limited because of the specific focus on undergraduate professional advisors who are employed by medium-sized, New England institutions.

Rationale and Significance

This research is timely because advising is a topic within the higher education industry that is connected to the retention and success of each student (Tinto, 2004; Zhang et al., 2019). A report from 2018 highlighted that 78% of returning college students met with an advisor, while

86% of those students reported discussing their academic and career goals with their advisor (Smith, 2018). Recently, advising has been discussed as a role that is not just for faculty or staff members. Instead, higher education administrators are recognizing the impact of investing in professional advisors within academic departments or advising centers (Kot, 2014; Ireland, 2018; Pardee, 2004). For instance, Ireland (2018) argued that faculty and professional advisors are now critical student support staff focused on teaching and learning rather than merely registration. Understanding the practices of professional advisors is noteworthy, as some leaders in higher education are acknowledging the substantial role advisors play in student satisfaction. According to Steele and White (2019), higher education leaders should seek the advice of advisors to understand the needs of students and their opinions on education policies and practices. Giving a voice to undergraduate professional advisors enables higher education administrators to understand why a shared or centralized advising model could be successful at their institution. Additionally, learning about professional advising practices that align with student identity development could allow educators and current advisors to reflect on their advising practices and consider new ways to advise their students.

Giunta (2017) and Mohr and Mohr (2016) found that Generation Z students are looking for a relationship with their advisor that extends to growth and development of themselves personally and professionally. These findings demonstrated the importance of exploring how undergraduate professional advisors contribute to student identity development since current college students are expecting advising that goes beyond prescriptive practices. Because this generation makes up the current students in higher education, this study's emphasis on advising practices that align with student identity development is relevant.

Conclusion

Cuseo (2007) described the role of an academic advisor as someone who assists college students with becoming more self-aware of their values and priorities, and how their academic and lived experiences can impact their future life plans. Since the significance of academic advising is documented within current higher education scholarship, it is imperative to highlight the problems within academic advising, as well. Students are dissatisfied with the lack of time and the prescriptive nature of faculty advising (Beal & Noel, 1980; Hutson & Hutson, 2017; Marcus; 2012). This study explored advising models which recognize the need for professional advisor participation in student identity development. Previous literature assumed that professional advisors are needed to carry out prescriptive tasks, which is why this study discussed developmental practices to address current research gaps (King, 1993). Additionally, King (1993) argued that professional advisors have more psychological experience by implementing student development theories within their advising practices. The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate what advising practices undergraduate professional advisors use to contribute to student identity development. The seven vectors of Chickering's (1969) psychosocial theory of student identity development were used to measure how undergraduate professional advisors develop their students. This qualitative study could enable current academic advisors to expand their advising strategies and higher education leaders to explore and develop the practices of professional advisors.

Chapter Two will probe further into literature about developmental academic advising and professional advisors in higher education.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the advising practices employed by undergraduate professional advisors who work at medium-sized, New England colleges and universities in alignment with Chickering's (1969) student identity development theory. Literature on advising in higher education is detailed as studies have focused on a variety of different approaches and issues surrounding the topic. The objective of this literature review is to draw upon the existing scholarly body of writing to provide a snapshot of academic advising in higher education and how student identity development theory is connected. The researcher examined peer reviewed journal articles, policy papers, books, and dissertations to establish a reliable foundation for this study. In short, the following sections intend to clarify the conceptual issues with academic advising and to motivate further research into areas where scholarship is limited.

This literature review begins with student development theories association to academic advising and an in-depth review of the study's theoretical framework, Chickering's (1969) psychosocial theory of student identity development. The conceptual framework is followed by an examination of literature that includes the history and varying definitions of academic advising, an overview of New England colleges and universities, the connection between advising and retention, types of advising models, and categories of advisors. Finally, the literature review is completed by detailing the most common advising approaches: prescriptive advising and developmental advising. This section demonstrates previous literatures comparison of the two approaches by referencing studies that articulate the need for developmental approaches in advising current students. From a synthesis of the existing literature shared in this review, a critical analysis reflects literature gaps that are addressed in the study.

Conceptual Framework

Of particular interest in this research is the term student development which many researchers claim is the essence and goal of academic advising (Abes, 2016; Crookston, 1994). Since there are many definitions of student development, this literature examined the specific domain of student development theories. Literature on how student development theory applies to the profession and industry of higher education is presented, especially as it applies to academic advising. More specifically, the connection between Chickering's (1969) psychosocial theory of student identity development and academic advising will be addressed.

Student Development Theory and Higher Education

According to Abes (2016), the origin of student development theories in higher education were introduced by researchers who emphasized that development of the entire student was the essential goal of higher education. Particularly, Gansemer-Topf et al.'s (2006) discussion on the development of graduate students argued that the research and theory associated with the development of college students is called student development theory. Today, student development theory is synonymous with the student affairs profession (Brown, 1972; Magolda, 2009). As noted, in 1970, the department of student affairs was the first to adopt the theory as its guiding principle (Brown, 1972; Magolda, 2009). Since researchers have articulated that student development is a common goal within the higher education industry, then those who work with students must have a thorough understanding of human development concepts as they aim to integrate theory and practice (Chandler, 1975; Nash et al., 1977).

Numerous psychosocial development theories exist; yet none have received as much attention as Arthur W. Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of student identity development (Goldman & Goodboy, 2016). According to Long (2012), Chickering's (1969) psychosocial theory of student identity development is one of the most widely known and applied theories of student development. This study focuses on Chickering's (1969) psychosocial theory of student identity development because previous scholars noted an individual's identity evolves considerably because of education (Pascarella & Terrenzini, 2005). More specifically, Widick (1977) articulated that an individual's experience in higher education acts as a filter for how they will perceive, organize, communicate, and evaluate events in the environment. Psychosocial theories of student development explained how people grow and develop over their life span (Long, 2012). More importantly, these theories emphasize that development is accomplished through tasks or stages (Long, 2012). Most theorists in this area focused on age-related development stages or major milestones in an individual's life (Long, 2012). When applying the theory to advising, Dillard (2017) discussed the importance of Chickering's (1969) seven vectors for advisors, faculty, and staff as they assist college students. Currently, there is limited scholarship on how an advisor applies Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of student identity development. Moreover, this study aimed to connect the theory with the advising practices of undergraduate professional advisors.

Chickering's Psychosocial Theory of Student Identity Development

Chickering's (1969) book, entitled *Education and Identity*, begins by discussing themes within adolescent development. After studying previous literature, Chickering (1969) stated that early adulthood development has been referred to as "growth trends," "developmental tasks," "stages of development," "needs and problem areas," and "student typologies" over time. Chickering (1969) noticed similar themes within areas of adulthood development, which was later named the seven vectors of development. The first four vectors occur during a student's first and second years of college, while the last three vectors occur during their third and fourth years of college (Chickering, 1969). More significantly, students move through the stages at different paces and may go forward or backward depending on a variety of factors (Chickering, 1969; Long, 2012). The seven vectors of development include: competence, emotions, autonomy, identity, interpersonal relationships, purpose, and integrity (Chickering, 1969). To understand the meaning of the seven vectors it is important to dissect how each vector connects to college student development.

Developing competence. Developing competence is detailed as a pitchfork which is made up of intellectual competence, physical and manual skills, and interpersonal competence (Chickering, 1969). Chickering (1969) emphasized the symbol of the pitchfork because each component is equally crucial when students are developing competence. Throughout education studies, the term intellectual competence is synonymous with being accepted into college and later graduating. Chickering (1969) plainly identified this component as the student's ability to critically think. Moreover, they argued that intellectual competence, when fully developed at the college level, can influence career choices. Additionally, physical and manual competence relates to areas that allow the student to use their body and hands (Chickering, 1969). When discussing this factor, Chickering (1969) noted the importance of athletic and vocational activities which enables the student to develop cognitively. Lastly, interpersonal competence is defined as the ability for a student to interact and work productively with others (Chickering, 1969). Chickering (1969) argued that when surrounded by family members, one does not need competence, however, once a student is in college, developing competence is a requirement.

Managing emotions. In this vector, a student's ability to understand certain social experiences is key. Areas like self-control as well as assessing those around you is essential to the ability to manage one's emotions (Chickering, 1969). When a student has developed these areas, they are able to recognize the appropriateness of certain emotions and reactions based on their environment (Chickering, 1969). More specifically, Chickering (1969) stated, “integrating emotions with the stream of ongoing decisions and behaviors requires tentative testing through direct actions or symbolic behavior, and reflection upon the consequences for oneself and others” (p. 11). Managing emotions can only be developed in a student who is able to reflect on their lived experiences and assess appropriate emotions.

Becoming autonomous. Chickering (1969) highlighted that students need to be independent during their college experience. “To be emotionally independent is to be free of continual and pressing needs for reassurance, affection, or approval” (Chickering, 1969, p. 12). Moreover, Chickering (1969) claimed there are two major components of independence which include the ability to: carry on activities by coping with problems and to be portable in relation to one’s needs or desires. Being autonomous highlights the need for reflection as the student cannot reach interdependence without realizing their own boundaries and motivations (Chickering, 1969).

Establishing identity. Chickering (1969) debated that without the development of the other vectors, a student’s ability to establish identity might not be possible. This vector takes place when a student acquires inner confidence through the knowledge of self (Chickering, 1969). Recognition of self means to be secure regarding physical appearance, gender, race, and sexual orientation (Chickering, 1969; Long, 2012). The potential outcome of attained identity is that the student can foster change in the other areas of development, making establishing an identity a catalyst for the development of interpersonal relationships, purpose, and integrity (Chickering, 1969).

Interpersonal relationships. Within this vector a student can tolerate a wider range of individuals (Chickering, 1969). In comparison to interpersonal competence, this vector focuses on how to deal with varying personalities that may not match the student's own outlook on life. This vector of development allows students to build relationships that are not based on societal stereotypes but in trust and individuality (Chickering, 1969). Furthermore, this stage of student development has a large impact on how the student will act in the greater community. By developing interpersonal relationships, the student can appreciate other ways of living and accept differences (Chickering, 1969; Long, 2012).

Clarifying purposes. Chickering (1969) associated this vector with vocational, recreational, and professional interests as the student progresses towards their future outside of college. As the student develops their competence, identity, emotion, and autonomy, they are able to derive what they are motivated by (Chickering, 1969). This stage of development is when students set career plans, personal dreams, and commitments to family and friends (Chickering, 1969; Long, 2012). This vector is important as students acquire life-style considerations and aim to integrate them through goal setting (Chickering, 1969).

Developing integrity. Chickering (1969) stated that this vector allows the student to clarify a set of values and beliefs which provide a guide for behavior. The vector incorporates three stages: humanizing of values, personalizing of values, and the development of congruence (Chickering, 1969). Within these stages, the student can connect morals with their purpose and act on the set of beliefs daily. Overall, this vector of development encompasses all the vectors to establish values and goals that align with complex thinking and morality (Chickering, 1969; Long, 2012).

In short, Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of student identity development are used in the research design of the study. The seven vectors were used to measure the practices of undergraduate professional advisors that contribute to student identity development. Furthermore, the interview instrument was created by asking questions that connect to each vector of student identity development.

Review of Literature

Understanding Academic Advising

Academic advising has received increasing attention within higher education literature over the past 20 years (Abernathy & Engelland, 2001; Gordon et al., 2011; Gutierrez et al., 2020; Light, 2004; Schreiner & Anderson, 2005). This section highlights the history of academic advising within the higher education industry as well as the various definitions of the term "academic advising." The evolution of advising is important to discuss to understand the growth of this topic and the value it has within the industry (Himes, 2014). The history of academic advising identifies the significance of such a service on college campuses while existing literature also addressed the flexibility and creativity institutions have when defining an advising philosophy on campus. Furthermore, this section highlights the collaborative nature of the advisor and advisee relationship which is a trait that is emphasized in present advising scholarship.

History of Academic Advising. The history behind the creation of advising as well as the role of an advisor is notable when discussing its prominence in the industry of higher education. According to Cook (2009) and Gillispie (2003), the history of advising also coincides with the creation of higher education. As college enrollments increased, the focus on advising continued to be at the forefront, reflecting the student personnel work that is evident in education

(Cook, 2009). Similarly, Gordon's (2004) research surrounding the evolution of advising, emphasized how the history of advising reflected the chronicle of higher education. Gordon (2004) concluded by highlighting the connection of higher education and advising, which argued the need for advising to be examined within a broader context.

As many researchers debated that the creation of advising and higher education was created simultaneously, Grites (1979) argued that in the beginning of higher education there was no need to have formalized advising. Grites (1979) stated that there was no need for advising mainly because of the inflexibility and structure of the student body and the limited course curriculum. Since course offerings were limited and class sizes were small, there was no need for the term of advising in or out of the classroom (Grites, 1979). Cook (2009) noted that once higher education became more diversified because of the students who were enrolling as well as the curriculum, institutions created new services. By initiating an industry wide change of accepting both male and female students to attend college, the institutional change created a need for new services (Cook, 2009). More specifically, positions were created such as the Dean of Women, which was tailored to specifically serve the female student body (Cook, 2009).

In 1877, Johns Hopkins University recognized the value of advising when faculty advisors were established (Cook, 2009; Gordon, 2004; White, 2020). In the coming years, institutions such as Boston University first created freshman seminar orientations for new incoming cohorts, then broadened the student-oriented events before full-time entrance into college (Cook, 2009). In 1889, Harvard University created a board of freshman advisors because the institution claimed, "size and the elective curriculum required some closer attention to undergraduate guidance than was possible with an increasingly professional faculty" (Rudolph, 1962, p. 460). Furthermore, as advising continued to gain traction, Edward Herrick Griffin who served as Chief of Faculty Advisors, was promoted to Dean (Cook, 2009). In his new role, he publicly requested for every institution to create a position of leadership that was solely dedicated to advising (Cook, 2009).

Researchers suggest that between 1940-1950, every college and university had an established faculty academic advisement system (Cook, 2009; Grites, 1979). In accordance with advising programs, college enrollments increased in the 1960s and 1970s because of the creation of community colleges and financial aid (Cook, 2009). Grites (1979) stated that with the growing popularity of earning a college degree, faculty advisors limited their focus on advising students because of a lack of time, space, development, and information. During this time in higher education, research universities were created which made faculty focus more on curriculum and research for developmental purposes (Grites, 1979). In 1979, as the industry of higher education grew, there was an increase in the need for advising, which led to the creation and founding of the National Academic Advising Association (Cook, 2009). This development in advising enabled institutions to develop their faculty advisors through trainings and research developed by the international association.

Defining Academic Advising. The term of academic advising has been used differently throughout education publications as it pertains to specific higher education institutions (Crecelius & Crosswhite, 2020; Himes, 2014; Houdyshelly & Kirk, 2018; Schulenburg & Lindhorst, 2008). Previous literature argued that there has never been a universal or corroborated definition of academic advising (Crecelius & Crosswhite, 2020; Larson et al., 2018). Larson et al.'s (2018) study found that those involved in the academic advising community do not share a common understanding or philosophy. Although many researchers aim to determine a singular definition of academic advising, other scholars have told campus stakeholders to create their own definition (Gordon et al., 2008). Some stated that when defining academic advising to a singular phrase, it could exclude what current advisors are doing (Larson et al., 2018). Furthermore, by allowing academic advising to be flexible, it enables educators and advisors to continue to transform their practices, which will not be measured by a single definition. However, researchers claimed that without a universally accepted definition the profession will never be appreciated or understood (Habley et al., 2012). More specifically, advisors could struggle with communication about specific advising practices as well as members outside the field identifying their skills as within the academic advising domain (Habley et al., 2012). Himes (2014) articulated the use of common terms such as development, teaching, and career counseling to describe attributes of academic advising. In short, it is evident that there are varying definitions of academic advising, and this review will highlight the vast perspectives on the term to inform the future study.

In 2006, NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising, articulated the concept of academic advising by stating “through academic advising, students learn to become members of their higher education community, to think critically about their roles and responsibilities as students” (para. 5). Similarly, after reviewing history and theory of academic advising, Schulenberg and Lindhorst (2010) declared three common purposes of academic advising: engaging students in reflective conversation about educational goals, informing students about higher education, and initiating student transformation of self-awareness and responsibility. More specifically, Kuhn (2008) highlighted the responsibility of the academic advisor as being a key component. Kuhn (2008) stated that academic advising is a situation where students are matched with an institutional representative who can give them direction academically, socially, and personally. Furthermore, Lowe and Toney (2000) defined academic advising as a term used to describe the essence of advising that pertains to higher education. Correspondingly, Hunter and White (2004) claimed that academic advising is a powerful strategy to aid when resources and expectations are changing in the industry of higher education. Therefore, academic advising programs are challenged to meet the increasing complexities of student needs as well as create a relationship between the student and college (Hunter & White, 2004; Lowe & Toney, 2000).

According to the NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising (2006), academic advising allows students to connect with a professional to engage in world views that go beyond their own views. Within Beal and Noel's (1980) research of 947 higher education institutions, they found that academic advising was one of the three main components that led to institutional satisfaction and retention. Similarly, D'Alessio and Banerjee (2016) stated that academic advising enables students to recognize their own individual values and motivations as they enter and exit college. Overall, academic advising services vary by institution and distribution to specific student groups (Himes, 2014; Hunter & White, 2004; Lowe & Toney, 2000). The distribution of academic advising services impacts student satisfaction with the advising process, making equal access to advising significant (Lowe & Toney, 2000).

Collaborative Relationship. Present literature on the varying definitions of academic advising shares a theme of collaboration between the academic advisor and the student. According to O'Banion (1994) and Crockett (1994), advising is a process in which the advisor and advisee enter a collaborative relationship. To initiate student development Crockett (1994) and O'Banion (1994) discussed how advising would not be successful without the dynamic relationship of the advisor and the advisee, which is built on trust and communication. Coincidingly, within the core values of academic advising, the NACADA: The Global

Community for Academic Advising (2006) stated, “As advisors enhance student learning and development, advisees have the opportunity to become participants in and contributors to their own education” (p. 1). McGill et al. (2020) determined that current advising is a relational process. They argue that academic advisors and students must create a rapport and build a positive growth-oriented relationship to have successful interactions (McGill et al., 2020). Moreover, current professional advisors declared that a solid relationship between an advisor and student forms the foundation of all interventions during the higher education experience (McGill et al., 2020). To initiate a developmental academic advising approach, Grites (2013) argued that both the student and advisor must contribute. Students must be open and honest so that advisors can learn and be proactive (Grites, 2013). While academic advising and collaboration are interconnected, it is imperative to understand the importance that academic advising has on the financial well-being of higher learning environments.

Retention

Within the history of higher education, retention was believed to reflect poor performance of the student (Tight, 2020; Tinto, 2012). If a student failed or left a college or university, it was looked at as the student’s fault (Tight, 2020; Tinto, 2012). Today, student retention is viewed as the responsibility of the higher learning environment and over the last decade, scholars argued that it is everyone’s responsibility to retain students (Dial & McKeown, 2020; Tight, 2020; Tinto, 2012). Current literature suggested that as the responsibility of paying for college has fallen to the student or family unit, student retention is the responsibility of the higher education institution (Tight, 2020). Retention is a vanguard of higher education as it pertains to the financial stability and success of all students. According to Kena et al. (2015), there has been a 46% increase in students enrolling in college since 1990. Currently, from 2000 to 2010, undergraduate enrollment has risen by 37%, however, current projections for 2024 estimated that the undergraduate population will reach 20 million (Kena et al., 2015). These statistics speak to the growing demands on colleges and institutions as the business of higher learning institutions becomes more competitive (Barbera et al., 2020; Kena et al., 2015). In the U.S., higher education has become a norm for certain student populations since President Obama set a high goal of cultivating the world's highest percentage of college-educated individuals in the workforce (Barbera et al., 2020).

As more students attend college every year, higher education studies demonstrated the importance that retention has on the financial health of colleges and universities (Barbera et al., 2020; Crecelius & Crosswhite, 2020). Within Barbera et al.'s (2020) analysis of retention factors, they concluded that a student-centered approach could be a predictor of retention and graduation rates. Moreover, they discussed two primary factors in achieving a higher retention rate: availability of student services and the quality of faculty (Barbera et al., 2020). Therefore, research believed that student retention is at an all-time premium as the demand for student services increases and student populations change, which puts academic advising on a pedestal for analysis and transformation (Barbera et al., 2020; Crecelius & Crosswhite, 2020).

Advising & Retention. Over time, the connection between student retention and advising has been explored. According to Gutierrez et al. (2020), academic advising is one of the most overlooked characteristics of a student support system within a college environment. Researchers stated that well advised students are more likely to enroll, enjoy college, take meaningful classes for their degree, and are more apt to graduate (Khalil & Williamson, 2014; Uddin, 2020). Additionally, 90% of advisors are also engaged in early alert initiatives, which are used to retain at-risk students (Dial & McKeown, 2020). More specifically, Dial and McKeown

(2020) found that retention efforts implemented by advisors increases the response rate to emails, call, and text messages. They argued that advisors should lead student success and retention efforts because they have built a strong rapport with their students that enables them to create student-specific retention strategies (Dial & McKeown, 2020).

Furthermore, previous research emphasized a connection between student withdrawals and poor advising practices (Khalil & Williamson, 2014; Uddin, 2020). Tudor (2018) and Lynch and Lungrin's (2018) conducted qualitative research on retention and advising, and argued that students should be advised not only on degree requirements but also towards their future career path. This new approach outlined developmental strategies for academic advisors to initiate career development in college students (Lynch & Lungrin, 2018; Tudor, 2018). Moreover, previous literature suggested that academic advisors who use career advising strategies increased student retention and graduation rates (Lynch & Lungrin, 2018; Tudor, 2018). In short, this section articulates the prominence of academic advising as it applies to the permanency and transformation of the higher education industry.

Advising Impact on Student Persistence. In today's competitive marketplace, student success and persistence are a goal of all higher education institutions (Crecelius & Crosswhite, 2020). This section highlights the previous literature which suggested that advising can lead to student persistence (Kot, 2014; Markle, 2015; Tinto, 2017; Tippetts et al., 2020). Previous literature on persistence associated a student's sense of belonging to the need for improved academic advising systems (Tippetts et al., 2020). The ability for students to continue at college is linked to the academic advising they are provided (Markle, 2015; Tinto, 2017; Tippetts et al., 2020). Previous literature stated that the impact of academic advising on persistence has only utilized qualitative research methods with observations and student interviews (Markle, 2015;

Tinto, 2017). Researchers, Tinto (2017) and Tippetts et al. (2020) argued that there is a relationship between advising and the likelihood of student persistence. Tinto's (2017) research examined key student motivations that are deemed vital to student persistence to graduate. More specifically, Tinto (2017) pointed out that academic advising can reduce the difficulty of decision-making for students by developing paths that feature the student's interest. By providing students an academic advisor, the institution aims to create a lasting relationship between the student and the institution (Tinto, 2017). On the other hand, Tippetts et al. (2020) used data from one large, public university and found that students enrolled in Spring 2018 who met with an academic advisor one or more times were 9% more likely to persist.

Particularly, within Uddin's (2020) survey of engineering advisors suggested that retention and persistence to graduate are improved with proactive and individualized advising. More importantly, the results also concluded that advisors who are passive and ignore student needs can lead to a decrease in retention and persistence to graduate (Uddin, 2020). Similarly, nursing advisors stated that it is essential to provide academic advising that helps alleviate stressors that can reduce student persistence (Chan et al., 2019). Chan et al. (2019) found that structured and individualized academic advising for nursing students improved their self-efficacy and loyalty to the institution, and increased the retention and student persistence to graduate.

Academic Advising Structures in Higher Education

An understanding of the basic organizational model is paramount to the discussion of academic advising. Higher education institutions all over the world structure their advising differently (Gutierrez et al., 2020; Habley & McClanahan, 2004; King, 2011). Some institutions develop their own advising structure based on their institutional mission while others develop the structure based on their advising philosophy (Gutierrez et al., 2020). Over time, advising structures have changed due to trends in educational standards and the advancement of technology (Gutierrez et al., 2020; Wiseman & Messitt, 2010). This section focuses on the prominent advising structures used in higher education to understand how advising is delivered to college students.

Within advising literature, the most common advising structures include decentralized, centralized, and shared (Barker & Mamiseishvili, 2014; Pardee, 2004). Not only does this section focus on delivery methods but also what type of representative of the institution is responsible for advising. As recognized by NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising, there are four dimensions of academic advising which includes who advises, the division of advising responsibilities, is the advising centralized or decentralized, and where does the advising take place (Miller, 2012). Variables that can impact the design of an advising structure includes the institution’s enrollment, academic policies, educational vision, national context, and the administrative structure (Barker & Mamiseishvili, 2014; Gutierrez et al., 2020; Pardee, 2004). More importantly, to determine the advising structure, the stakeholders must be recognized as well. The institution’s mission as well as the students, staff, and faculty must be taken into consideration prior to solidifying the permanent advising structure. Pardee (2004) argued that an advising organizational structure is the most important framework for an effective advising program. Moreover, Wiseman and Messitt (2010) and Gutierrez et al. (2020) claimed that current advising structures have been formed to focus solely on supporting students in their development.

Centralized Advising Model. Centralized advising typically involves an advising office or center (Barker & Mamiseishvili, 2014; Habley, 1983; Pardee, 2004). The centralized advising structure is also known as the self-contained model, where all advising is done by an advising center staffed with professional advisors (Pardee, 2004). Similarly, Barron and Powell (2014) characterize a centralized advising approach as a single campus-wide, administrative unit that manages and administers all advising. Based on a national advising survey, institutional adoption of this model has increased (Carlstrom & Miller, 2013; Habley, 2004). More specifically, in 2003, 14% of institutions used a centralized model, whereas 29% used a self-contained model of advising (Carlstrom & Miller, 2013; Habley, 2004). The benefit of a centralized advising model is that students can be advised by professional advisors whose sole focus is to advise their students (Pardee, 2004). Professional advisors continue to learn about institution wide policies as well as new advising approaches (Carlstrom & Miller, 2013; Habley, 2004). The disadvantage of having a centralized advising model includes a lack of specific connection to the students major or future career path (Carlstrom & Miller, 2013; Habley, 2004).

Decentralized Advising Model. Pardee (2004) identified a decentralized advising model as one where there is professional or faculty advisors who advise in respective academic departments. However, within this model there are two separate variations. The first being the faculty-only model where each student is assigned to a faculty member in their specific department or major and the second is professional advisor model where they are housed in the specific department as well (Pardee, 2004). The faculty-only model is a well-known approach, where students are advised by a faculty member typically from the students' major department (Barron & Powell, 2014). While students without a declared major are either randomly assigned to an advisor or advised by faculty who specialize in working with undeclared students (Barron & Powell, 2014). Typically, the faculty-only model is employed by private 2-year and 4-year institutions (Pardee, 2004). With this model, students articulated a lack of clarity and responsibility for advising on college campuses (Jaeger et el., 2018). Only 17% of campuses reported a faculty-only approach, down from 25% in the 2003 survey, and the satellite model was no longer reported as a major category, down from 7% in the 2003 survey (Habley, 2004). The benefits of this type of advising model includes that the organizational model and delivery system are congruent (McFarlane, 2013). However, this type of model does not offer a variety of perspectives such as a peer advisors or paraprofessional advisors (McFarlane, 2013). Furthermore, previous literature has concluded that this model can lead to prescriptive advising because faculty advisors often lack the time needed to get developed as advisors.

Shared Advising Model. A shared advising model is a combination of both centralized and decentralized advising structures, where a student has two primary advisors (Carlstrom & Miller, 2013; Habley, 1983). A shared advising model is comprised of faculty and professional advisors that can be housed in a department or central advising unit (Barker & Mamiseishvili, 2014; Pardee, 2004). Additionally, this model can be structured as faculty advisors advise students about their major and professional advisors advise students about their general-education and university policies (Carlstrom & Miller, 2013). Within the *2011 National Survey of Academic Advisin*g the results found that 56.2% of small colleges utilize a combination of faculty and professional advisors (Carlstrom & Miller, 2013). More specifically, a shared advising model enables students to switch between a faculty or professional advisor depending on their credits and selecting a specific major (Barker & Mamiseishvili, 2014).

King (2008) offered insight into the benefits of shared models and why they may be growing in popularity. They argued that because of the convolution of academic advising, it is impractical to expect any one group of people to be able to know everything (King, 2008). It is also important that there be sufficient personnel available to address students' advising needs without unreasonable delay and to accomplish the mission and goal of the advising program

(King, 2008). Furthermore, the benefits of a shared advising model are that the student is provided a faculty advisor within their specific major as well as the assistance of professional advisors (McFarlane, 2013). The disadvantages of this approach could include that the advising might not align since there are so many people involved in the advising process. Additionally, it could create confusion and a lack of consistency for the student.

Faculty Academic Advisors. *The 2011 National Survey of Academic Advising* noted that 83.5% of small colleges have faculty advisors (Carlstrom & Miller, 2013). More specifically, another advising survey determined that 89% of 4-year public institutions have faculty advisors while 93% of 4-year private institutions have faculty advisors (National Communication Association, 2019). Within Karr-Lilienthal et al.'s (2013) survey of advisor attitudes toward undergraduate advising, faculty advisors concluded that they do not feel properly rewarded and that many were not trained to advise. Raskin (1979) argued that assessing faculty advising is challenging since there is a lack of evaluation processes put in place by higher education administrators.

Professional Advisors. Since the population for the study focused on professional advisors, it is imperative to know the role that these advisors have as well as the development of the professional association NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising. NACADA was created in 1979 and has over 10,000 members, which represents advisors from the United States, Puerto Rico, and Canada (Thurmond & Miller, 2006). Before its creation, the college experience had grown to be complex, where academic planning became a role that needed professionals (Cook, 2009; Grites & Gordon, 2009). At the first NACADA national conference, the vision was established which articulated that it was a professional association that would focus on academic advising and those who provide this service and expertise (Grites

& Gordon, 2009). More specifically, "the purpose of NACADA was to promote the quality of academic advising in institutions of higher education, and to this end, it is dedicated to the support and professional growth of academic advising and advisors" (Grites & Gordon, 2009, p. 43). The association was created in hopes to create a professional platform where discussion, development, and innovation occurred. Over time, the association grew by increasing conference offerings, conducting research, and membership payments increasing (Grites & Gordon, 2009). During this time, the number of full-time professional advisors increased as specific advising structures did as well. Presently, NACADA has celebrated its 30 year anniversary which highlighted the creation and evolution of its core values, strategic plan, and its standards (Grites & Gordon, 2009).

In the 1970s, during the expansion of the college experience, academic advising was emphasized by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education (Grites & Gordon, 2009). At this time of development for academic advising, faculty advisors were the major conveyors of advising at the institutional-level (Grites & Gordon, 2009). Although faculty advisors were used heavily, the number of full-time professional advisors with a variety of academic backgrounds increased since advising became multifaceted (Grites & Gordon, 2009). Additionally, as institutions grew, the NACADA earned more academic popularity, which increased the visibility and profession of advising. In turn, this led to the increase in full-time professional advisors used within higher education as well as an increase to advising models (Grites & Gordon, 2009).

Recently, the National Survey of Academic Advising found that 15.5% of small colleges use only professional advisors within their advising structure (Carlstrom & Miller, 2013). A professional advisor is a staff member whose primary role is advising (Self, 2011). Within Krush and Winn's (2010) article discussing the collaboration between faculty and professional advisors, they advise that professional advisors take part in advising as a teaching process. Current literature on professional advisors and student retention advocated for the important role that professional advisors play in implementing meaningful student interventions (Dial & McKeown, 2020). Research claimed that professional advisors are well-suited to work with at-risk students based on the caseload nature of their role (Dial & McKeown, 2020). Furthermore, they detailed, "advisors may be the only full-time professional staff members on campus to whom students have a formal, assign relationships, rather than serving as one-off or walk-in practitioners (Dial & McKeown, 2020, para. 5). The scholars concluded that professional advisors are central to establishing meaningful student interventions since they are experts in guiding students through curricular complexities, as well as understanding factors of the college experience that could disrupt a student's path to completion (Dial & McKeown, 2020).

Common Academic Advising Approaches

As the creation and advancement of advising within the higher education industry is significant to highlight, examining prescriptive and developmental advising models depicts how advising approaches have grown over time to be more individualized. Within advising literature, the contrast between prescriptive and developmental advising is looked at as a spectrum that features course selection on one end and life and career planning on the other end (Grites, 2013). Previous researchers formulated specific advising models to improve student success for specific student groups. For instance, academic advising is typically defined as the route of all advising models (Lowe & Toney, 2000). As this theme aims to highlight the differences in advising approaches, it also suggests the similarities in strategies regarding advising. This section highlights developmental academic advising which continues to be one of the most fundamental approaches to academic advising (Grites, 2013). Developmental advising allows advisors to accept each student based on a three-dimensional continuum that assists them throughout a variety of experiences (Grites, 2013).

Prescriptive Advising. According to Crookston (1994), the relationship between a student and advisor is described as prescriptive. For instance, researcher DeLaRosby (2017) believes that academic advisors who advise by doing course selection is the model of prescriptive advising. Within Creamer and Creamer's (1994) overview of themes regarding advising, the findings suggest that students do not prefer advisors who have prescriptive responses to their questions. Prescriptive advising does not make connections between the student's academic motivations and the course selection process. Furthermore, Crookston (1994) claims that prescriptive advising is based on authority and power over an advisee. Prescriptive advising can be the most attractive to faculty advisors with research and teaching requirements because it does not require an extensive time commitment with their advisee (Crookston, 1994). Research indicated that students may prefer prescriptive advising because they want the advisor to make the advising decision, which makes the outcome a responsibility of the advisor (Crookston, 1994). Crookston (1994) and Creamer and Creamer (1994) argue that advice giving can be helpful, however, without understanding the student's motivations, the advice is not always successful.

Developmental Advising. Currently, the term "student-centeredness" has been a hallmark of learning (Gordon, 2019). Even during the colonial period, the development of a student's character was a priority of the first colleges (Gordon, 2019). In short, the emphasis on developing the whole student intellectually, personally, and socially was a goal of higher education institutions prior to its popularity in research (Gordon, 2019). The origin of developmental advising was created by Crookston (1994) and O'Banion (1994) as an alternative to prescriptive advising model. O'Banion (1994) formed a four-featured developmental advising process that was arranged vertically. The four-featured developmental advising process included the primary role of providing academic information; the professional role of career planning; the personal role of stress relief; and the programmatic role of engaging and retaining the student (Grites, 2013; O'Banion, 1994). Contrastingly, Crookston (1994) designed a four-step developmental advising process. This process featured a preview stage of recruitment, a planning stage for freshman seminars and advising sessions, a process stage for the review of student academic and social progress, and a post-view stage for the assessment of student satisfaction and learning (Grites, 2013; O'Banion, 1994).

In comparison to a prescriptive advisor, a developmental advisor will guide and facilitate as opposed to directing and controlling an advisee meeting (Bland, 2003). According to Snyder (2018) and Bland (2003), the developmental advising approach is characterized by a collaborative advisor-advisee relationship. This model focuses on personal, career, and academic development of the student (Bland, 2003; Snyder, 2018). Similarly, Himes (2014) refers to developmental advising as a relationship where the advisor sees the student as more than a learner, but as an entire person. Furthermore, Creamer and Creamer (1994) sets these developmental goals for advisors by stating, "setting career and life goals, building self-insight and esteem, broadening interests, establishing meaningful interpersonal relationships and enhancing critical thinking" opens students up to more than a prescriptive relationship with an adult on campus (p. 20). Himes (2014) highlighted that developmental advisors must understand their individual student by embodying self-awareness. Additionally, Winston et al. (1984) claims that a developmental advisor must explore student goals, values and interests, advocate for student support services, and be cognizant of institutional guidelines. Researchers claim that within developmental advising, students are partners in the advising process and should not totally depend on advisors (Bland, 2003; Creamer & Creamer, 1994; Crookston, 1994; DeLaRosby, 2017; Himes, 2014; McGill et al., 2020; Snyder, 2018). The approach of developmental advising is defined as an institutional lifeline where students can have successful experiences and prepare for future careers (Poison, 1994). Furthermore, developmental advising approach includes the development of the academic, career, and personal experiences of the student (Grites, 2013). The developmental approach takes students from the moment of entry using the student's current characteristics to assist them in moving positively along a continuum (Grites, 2013).

Light (2004) argued that the partnership between the advisor and the student should go beyond basic course picking and should be a plan that fosters personal growth and development. Similarly, Bland (2003) discusses that developmental advising enables students to have a successful college experience as well as plan for future professions. Furthermore, McGill et al.'s (2020) interviews of professional academic advisors found that the advisors believed that a strong advising relationship involves communicating in a manner that values the diversity of student experiences. Within their study they aimed to understand the current values of professional advisors. Their findings suggested that current professional academic advisors value developmental advising techniques that focus on integrity, empathy, inclusivity, equity, and empowerment for all students (McGill et al., 2020).

Grites (2013) discussed that the advisor of today integrates the common thread of the developmental approach to assist students in achieving their goals and maximizing their opportunities for success. After the creation of developmental advising, scholars created new advising theories, approaches, models, and styles to advise specific student populations (Grites, 2013). More specifically, Crecelius and Crosswhite's (2020) survey of current physiology advisors discovered that they spoke to advisees about complex personal and academic topics. Rather than focusing on prescriptive topics like adding and dropping courses, the advisors focused on career goals, personal evolution, stress levels, and academic issues (Crecelius & Crosswhite, 2020).

New England and Higher Education

This study explores undergraduate professional advisors who are employed at medium-sized New England colleges and universities, so it is important to understand background information on the location. New England is known as a highly saturated area where many institutions of higher education are located (The New England Board of Higher Education, (NEBHE, 2015). The region of New England is comprised of the following states: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island (NEBHE, 2015; Sullivan, 2020). Currently, New England has 208 public and private nonprofit colleges and universities, which are located in 119 cities and towns (NEBHE, 2015; Sullivan, 2020). Compared to the entire country, New England has more 4-year private nonprofit colleges and fewer 4-year private for-profit colleges (NEBHE, 2015). NEBHE (2015) reported that there are more than 800,000 undergraduates enrolled at colleges and universities in the region. More specifically, 58% of undergraduate students attended public institutions, whereas the majority of undergraduates enroll at 4-year private nonprofit institutions in New England than anywhere else. According to current literature, higher education in New England has an above-average importance for the regional economy (Sullivan, 2020). For the region of New England, higher education accounts for 3.4% of the total employment compared to nationwide which accounts for 2.5% (Sullivan, 2020). According to Sullivan (2020), within the communities of New England with the highest dependency on higher education, statistics showed that 38% of jobs in those communities were related to opportunities from the nearby colleges or universities. Beyond offering a large number of jobs in distinct communities, colleges and universities accounted for 44.8% of the total income in this geographic area (Sullivan, 2020).

Institutions of higher learning in New England are accredited by the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE). NECHE is the regional accreditation agency for colleges and universities in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont (NECHE, n.d.). The commission is recognized as an authority over the quality of education for the institutions it accredits (NECHE, n.d.). Furthermore, NECHE is within the Council for Higher Education Accreditation which has standards consistent with quality, and accountability expectations (NECHE, n.d.).

Medium-Sized New England Colleges and Universities. As noted previously, New England is highly reliant on the higher education industry. This study examines professional advisors who are employed at medium-sized New England colleges and universities. According to the *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System*, a medium-sized college or university is defined as having a fall enrollment of 2,001-15,000 degree-seeking students. Often, medium-sized institutions have a strong liberal arts focus, while also providing more academic options than a smaller college (IvyWise, 2016). In regard to student engagement, enrolled students have the opportunity to participate in clubs and activities that initiate growth (IvyWise, 2016). Furthermore, medium-sized institutions can create a close-knit experience, while also offering students various opportunities to engage with diverse students (IvyWise, 2016).

According to Hutson's (2010) study on the evaluation of a first-year experience course at a medium-sized university, the conclusion was a positive outcome. This article focused on the positive impact that first-year experience programming could have on a student's identity development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Hutson, 2010). Previous literature argued that the connection between self-efficacy and academic success has been well documented based on first-year student enrollment in a first-year experience course (Hutson, 2010). Within Hutson's (2010) evaluation of the first-year experience program at a medium-sized university, the appreciative advising approach was used to develop student wellness, sense of belonging and acceptance. Similarly, Renta's (2018) dissertation study on advising evaluated first-year advising revisions at a medium-sized university in the Northeast. The goal of the first-year advising revisions was to reduce the workload of faculty advisors and to provide new opportunities for academic coordinators to support first-year students. In short, the first-year experience program determined that there is a positive impact on providing students with specific advisors other than just their faculty advisors (Renta, 2018). In short, previous scholarship detailed the advising revisions that are taking place with medium-sized universities as they aim to provide more than a faculty-only advising model (Hutson, 2010; Renta, 2018).

Conclusion

The present conceptual framework and review of literature highlights the need of the future study. As previously noted, there is limited scholarship that details the use of Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of psychosocial student identity development. Since young adults go through arguably the most developmental years during college, it is imperative to understand how advisors contribute to a student's identity development. Furthermore, scholars have noted that using student development theory is essential for advisors and higher education leaders as they aim to relate to and challenge the students they advise (Chandler, 1975; Dillard, 2017; Nash et al., 1977).

While academic advising literature is robust, there are gaps that need to be addressed. Although the history and definition of academic advising is imperative to this study, scholars have yet to determine a general and solidified definition that encompasses all advising professionals and institutions. Similarly, there is limited literature that discusses the types of advising structures used and how the structures may impact students and advisors.

This chapter examined literature that is pertinent to this study. Chapter Three will delve into the methodology which includes a description of the participants, site, data collection and data analysis process.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Advising has always held significance in higher education, and the importance of its study is growing as the responsibilities and expectations of professional advisors have continued to increase (Heisserer & Parette, 2002). Researchers of current advising methods argue that advising is a practice that goes beyond prescriptive practices and instead, should aim to increase student development (Cox & Naylor, 2018; Creamer & Creamer, 1994; Hande et al., 2018; Himes, 2014; Snyder, 2018). Therefore, this qualitative study sought to identify advising practices employed by undergraduate professional advisors as they align with student identity development.

This chapter details the methodology of this qualitative study. The study's research questions and research design are outlined to show the connection to the topic of research. Since the nature of advising is based on high communication and asking questions, it is suitable to use instruments that probe current undergraduate professional advisors in the field. More specifically, this study determined themes found after surveying and interviewing undergraduate professional advisors who work at medium-sized colleges and institutions located in New England. Purposive and snowball sampling methods are discussed as they pertain to the gathering of participants. The instrumentation and data collection process explain how the survey and interview methods were organized to collect efficient and accurate data. For the data to be applied to the higher education industry, it was important to show how the researcher analyzed the data. Overall, this section describes the rationale for this methodology as it relates to the study's purpose and research design.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the advising practices employed by undergraduate professional advisors who work at medium-sized, New England colleges and universities in alignment with Chickering's (1969) student identity development theory. Since previous literature focused on creating and attesting that specific advising approaches were successful, it was important for future researchers to understand the practical approaches that were being used by current undergraduate professional advisors. This study expanded on previous literature by determining key advising practices utilized by undergraduate professional advisors using the theoretical framework of Chickering's (1969) psychosocial theory of student identity development. Beyond previous gaps within literature, the significance of this study was to provide an in-depth look at current advising practices that were utilized in connection with the growth and development of student's identity in college. The research findings provided a look into how undergraduate professional advisors initiated development in students during advising sessions. Additionally, the study addressed if student identity development was a goal that undergraduate professional advisors had when advising their students.

Research Questions and Design

After understanding the findings of previous literature about advising and student development, the purpose of this study was to identify the advising practices employed by undergraduate professional advisors in higher education as it applied to student identity development. The research questions allowed the researcher to collect data that articulated the practices undergraduate professional advisors used when meeting with their students. To better grasp the specific practices of undergraduate professional advisors, this study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ 1: Do undergraduate professional advisors at medium-sized, New England colleges and universities use advising practices that align with student identity development?

RQ 2: What advising practices do undergraduate professional advisors use at medium-sized, New England colleges and universities that align with Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of student identity development?

To answer this study's research questions, the research design was qualitative in nature. The rationale for choosing a qualitative study design was based on previous research. This specific design connected to the topic of advising because the nature of advising begins with dialogue. Additionally, to understand the practices used by undergraduate professional advisors, the research design must be one that allows the participants to speak openly about their own experiences. Employing a qualitative research design to explore advising practices used to contribute to student identity development, the researcher surveyed and interviewed undergraduate professional advisors to examine their practices when advising students in higher education.

Site Information and Population

Since the research questions explored the advising practices of undergraduate professional advisors at medium-sized, New England colleges and universities, it is important to define the sites of this study. Based on the *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System,* a medium-sized institution is defined as a college or university with fall enrollment of between 2,001-15,000 degree-seeking students, not just undergraduate students. This size was chosen for the site criteria in accordance with a 2013 study which stated that medium-sized institutions hired more undergraduate professional advisors, where small and private campuses report employing more faculty advisors (Self, 2013). Furthermore, Self (2013) found that medium-sized institutions utilized undergraduate professional advisors to replace or supplement faculty-focused advising models. Since studies have found that medium-sized institutions employ undergraduate professional advisors, the selection for this study's sites was valid with previous and current research.

The researcher chose to focus on undergraduate professional advisors who work at medium-sized colleges or institutions in New England based on the high saturation of colleges that fit that description. Statistically, New England has more than 250 colleges and universities (New England Board of Higher Education, 2015). The specific population of undergraduate professional advisors was chosen because this type of advisor focused solely on advising college students. According to Krush and Winn (2010) and White (2015), a professional advisor is someone whose first priority is the advising of students through individual meetings. Also, undergraduate professional advisors work on areas like retention, outreach, service, career development, and training faculty with an underlying goal of successful advising for all students (Krush & Winn, 2010). Instead, of focusing on faculty advisors who also have teaching requirements, the researcher surveyed and interviewed undergraduate professional advisors who do not have other institutional commitments to fill a gap within previous literature. By selecting this population, the researcher received responses that discuss practices that increase student development.

Sampling Method

The participants in this study included undergraduate professional advisors who worked at medium-sized, New England colleges or institutions with a student enrollment of 2,001-15,000 which emphasized the characteristics that were required for the sampled population. To gather this specific population, the researcher used purposive sampling method and snowball sampling method.

More specifically, this study utilized purposive sampling to acquire participants that aligned with the purpose of the study. Purposive sampling method is the process by which the researcher uses a sampling technique that is a deliberate choice to include a specific participant (Etikan et al., 2016). This sampling method focused on the purpose of the study and what type of experiences the participants must have to participate (Etikan et al., 2016). The idea behind purposive sampling is to concentrate on people with characteristics who will better inform the relevant research topic and purpose (Etikan et al., 2016). Therefore, this type of sampling method was utilized to guarantee that the participants were undergraduate professional advisors who were employed as professional advisor and not a faculty advisor. Furthermore, the purposive sampling technique confirmed that the undergraduate professional advisors worked at medium-sized colleges or institutions in New England. Also, non-probability sampling method was used since it does not involve random selection, but it focused on the subjective judgment of the researcher (Etikan & Bala, 2017). This type of sampling method is one where the odds of any member being selected for a sample cannot be calculated (Etikan & Bala, 2017). Additionally, the researcher used a snowball sampling method by inviting participants who received the email invitation to share with others who meet the research criteria. The snowball sampling enabled the researcher to potentially access a greater number of participants through their organic advising network. This recruitment technique allowed participants to assist the researcher by identifying other potential subjects (Etikan et al., 2015).

Using purposive sampling and snowball sampling did not allow the study to represent the entire population of undergraduate professional advisors from medium-sized colleges and institutions in New England (Etikan et al., 2016). Furthermore, by being selective of the population, the findings cannot be generalized to all advisors from different geographic locations and different institution sizes.

Instrumentation and Data Collection Procedures

To locate undergraduate professional advisors, the researcher used the method of open directory. The researcher used the *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDs)* to identify higher education institutions that qualified as medium-sized New England colleges or universities. After identifying medium-sized, New England colleges and universities that have 2,001-15,000 students enrolled, the researcher created a list (Appendix A), which outlined the names of all the medium-sized, New England colleges and universities. Using the list, the researcher went to each medium-sized, New England college or university's website to identify members of the advising staff through an online staff directory. The online staff directory provided the researcher with individual email addresses as well as job titles that were used to ensure that the potential participants match the research criteria. To match the required population criteria, the researcher located job titles that used the term professional advisor. The definition is someone whose, "primary role focuses on providing academic and support services for students. Professional advisors are generally housed in a central location, spend a full day in their offices and devote the majority of their time providing academic advising to students" (King, 1993, p. 51). To broaden the search, the researcher also looked for job titles that included "staff advisor," "advising administrator," "academic advising staff," "full-time advisor," and "Director of Advising," or "Assistant Director of Advising." By including other job titles beyond professional advisor, the researcher was able to email a diversified population as it applied to their role in advising at their institution. Beyond looking at specific job titles, the advisor also had to be meeting with undergraduate college students regularly to discuss course registration, degree progression, and career development throughout the week. More importantly, the participants had to be advising a currently enrolled undergraduate student. Furthermore, the researcher used the online staff directory to identify departmental email addresses that could be used to generate more survey responses. This process was done until the researcher conducted the open directory process for each medium-sized, New England college or university on the list. During this process, the researcher kept track of how many people were identified at each medium-sized, New England college or university to track the response and engagement rate.

After gathering email addresses from the online staff directory, the researcher emailed a notice (Appendix B) to undergraduate professional advisors who worked at medium-sized, New England colleges and institutions. The researcher sent an original email to the participants that outlined the topic of the study and the requirements needed to participate in the demographic survey (Appendix C) beginning on the first day of the standard work week. Additionally, the researcher invited people to share the email invitation with those on their team who meet the study's population criteria. Moreover, the survey link was embedded within the original email to provide ease of access and to produce a large number of responses. To generate more survey responses, and remind participants about the study, the researcher sent a reminder email 2 weeks after the original email was sent. Based on the total survey responses and interview participants, the researcher sent a reminder email every other first day of the standard work week until the total survey and interview participants were identified. Specifically, the researcher sent reminders a total of 4 times after sending the first email invitation.

To gather information that detailed the practices that undergraduate professional advisors used to contribute to student identity development, the study used a demographic survey (Appendix C) and an interview questionnaire (Appendix E) as research instruments. To review the survey and interview instruments, the researcher had informed colleagues review them prior to conducting the research for validity. More specifically, the researcher utilized a survey instrument to get many responses and to get diversity in responses. Demographic surveys are utilized in studies that aim to understand the specific background of the population (Jansen, 2010). This survey asked demographic questions to focus the study prior to the interview portion. Using a demographic survey enabled the researcher to collect insight into the population as well as understand the role of the undergraduate professional advisors. The survey was uploaded and displayed using the software, REDCap. REDCap allowed the researcher to create, post, store, and analyze the survey data within their control. In addition to storing the data on REDCap, the researcher also stored the data on their personal laptop that was password protected.

Additionally, this study included a follow-up interview for survey respondents who volunteered to be interviewed. The researcher asked detailed questions surrounding the professional advisor's practices that aligned with Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of student identity development. Using this instrument, in addition to the survey, allowed the researcher to gain greater insight into the advising process. The method of interview allowed the researcher to ask questions that went deeper into the meaning of what the participants previously responded. The interview questions were created based on Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of a student's psychosocial identity development. More specifically, the interview questions aimed to measure how undergraduate professional advisors contributed to the development of a student's competence, emotions, autonomy, identity, interpersonal relationships, purpose, and integrity (Chickering, 1969). To gain insight into the participant's survey responses, the interview questions were different. Furthermore, the interview questions asked why undergraduate professional advisors used certain strategies and how they determined what specific strategies work best for their students.

To receive interview participants, the researcher used a concurrent process. By using a concurrent process, the researcher conducted the survey first. At the end of the survey, a question asked the participant if they would like to participate in a follow-up interview which would allow the researcher to receive more in-depth responses. The concurrent process enabled the researcher to build the interview sample by using the same participants from the survey. Additionally, the concurrent process enabled the researcher to begin the interview process while the survey was still open for responses. The goal was for the researcher to receive more responses by using the survey instrument and to receive more detailed information through the interview.

Due to COVID-19 safety protocols, all interviews were conducted through the video conferencing software, Zoom. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher received verbal consent to record the interview through the Zoom software. The verbal consent was recorded through Zoom's transcribing software as well. After conducting the interview, the researcher transcribed it by using Zoom's transcription capability which saved the interview audio file to the researcher's device. Once the interview was successfully transcribed, the researcher stored the transcription on a personal laptop and a backup storage drive to ensure security of the confidential information. After the interviews were stored and transcribed, the participants had the opportunity to review the interview transcripts. While reviewing the transcripts, the participants were encouraged to note anything they disagreed with. Additionally, the research checked the transcript for accuracy and validity.

Possible limitations in the use of these instruments and the data collection procedure were that the researcher did not receive many survey or interview participants. Additionally, the formation of the survey and interview questionnaires could be based in potential bias from the researcher's experience as an advisor in higher education. Since this study employed both survey and interview as data collection methods, there could be a lack of consistency between responses found from the survey and the follow-up interview. However, the researcher aimed to limit bias through the data analysis procedure.

As noted previously, COVID-19 impacted the way in which the interviews took place and how they were recorded. COVID-19 was important to highlight as it pertained to possible limitations of this study. Due to the current global pandemic which has caused a shift in the economy, many institutions of higher education have kept a tighter budget and have made budget cuts. These issues could have caused limited staffing of undergraduate professional advisors as some positions could have been cut or the individuals could be overwhelmed by performing many duties. In turn, this could have limited the number of potential participants because undergraduate professional advisors could have been cut due to staffing constraints or because they could have been given additional responsibilities. Furthermore, the data could be skewed, in that undergraduate professional advisors could have responded to questions in an unprecedented way by highlighting the impact of the pandemic on the strategies they used that contribute to student development.

Data Analysis

To analyze the survey and interview data, the researcher began by organizing and preparing the data. The researcher reviewed the survey responses stored and sorted in REDCap. To prepare the interview data, the researcher examined the transcripts and notes. Since the goal of this study was to understand what strategies undergraduate professional advisors used to contribute to student identity development, the researcher analyzed the survey responses and interview transcripts to create themes. Therefore, a thematic analysis method was utilized to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns of meaning from the qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Typically, a thematic analysis is used to analyze qualitative data by generating codes and themes (Clarke & Braun, 2017). To create themes, the researcher manually coded the qualitative data. Highlighting themes within the qualitative data was significant because it provided a framework for organizing and reporting the research observations (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Furthermore, the goal of thematic analysis was to summarize data content that was guided by the research questions, and can evolve throughout the coding process (Clarke & Braun, 2017).

According to Clark and Braun (2017), codes are composed of the building blocks that create a specific meaning, which is underpinned by a central organizing concept. Similarly, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that when beginning the data analysis process, the researcher should generate tentative category names to the data called codes that apply to more than one interview or set of notes. Therefore, the researcher used manual coding, which highlighted common language and specific advising strategies amongst undergraduate professional advisors (Clark & Braun, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Additionally, manually coding the data enabled the researcher to focus on patterns and insights that were related to the study's purpose or framework (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The manual coding occurred while the researcher read the interview data set, and made marks that were related to a specific theme (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This type of coding is called open coding where the researcher identified words or phrases that connected to the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Once the codes were formed, the researcher organized the data by creating folders on a personal computer, which enabled the researcher to filter the data into accurate theme names. Throughout this process of coding, it is important to note that the coding themes were revised and refined as the researcher continued to write the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This data analysis procedure allowed the data to be analyzed in a timely and accurate manner.

Limitations of the Research Design

Every research design has limitations which are important to address as they influence the interpretation of the results. The most noticeable limitation to this research design was the potential for bias when conducting the research as well as during the data analysis procedure. Since all researchers have an undeniable bias, it is important to state that the researcher is the Director of Advising at a small, private college in New England. The potential bias in this research design lies in the way the survey and interview questionnaires were formulated as well as how the researcher framed the questions to the participants. Additionally, the topic of advising created automatic bias since the researcher might have previous opinions on successful versus unsuccessful advising strategies. To avoid potential bias, the researcher had a colleague check the survey and interview questionnaires for leading questions before beginning the research process.

Another limitation of this research design was the small sample size and the sampling methods. Although the goal was to survey many undergraduate professional advisors, since the undergraduate professional advisors were sampled through a purposive and snowball method, it did not allow for random selection. This study’s population was specific to the size of the institution they were employed by and the area of the United States. By choosing a specific population, the results cannot be generalized to a variety of undergraduate professional advisors across the country who work at different types of institutions.

Specific limitations that were applicable to the qualitative nature of this study included less control and less reliability of the results. Since the research instruments had open-ended questions which allowed the participants to answer based on their own experiences, the researcher had less control over the results they received. For instance, a quantitative study can conduct research that is measurable by quantity. Therefore, the current research design is not as accurate since it is based on personal interpretation which may not be applicable to other populations.

Trustworthiness

To establish trustworthiness and ultimately credibility, the researcher checked transcripts for errors, defined the future codes during the data analysis process, and cross checked the results (Creswell, 2019). Additionally, the researcher upheld the quality of the research, the lack of bias in the study, and the confidentiality of the participants to establish trustworthiness. For credibility purposes, the researcher utilized the process of member checking. This study confirmed the credibility of the results by giving the transcripts and conclusions to the participants to check for accuracy of their own experiences. After interviews were transcribed and analyzed, the researcher emailed participants for a review of trustworthiness of interpretation. The participants were asked to comment on areas that they agreed or disagreed with. If the participant agreed with the transcript and results, it was noted. If the participant disagreed with transcript and results, the researcher revisited the data with a new perspective toward further analysis.

The internal credibility of the study was achieved by interviewing undergraduate professional advisors from medium-sized, New England colleges and universities. The researcher established external validity through confidentiality and the use of consistent research instruments. By instilling confidentiality throughout the data collection process, the study minimized the ability of the responses to be impacted by outside influences. Moreover, the researcher consistently used the research instruments to ensure that the interviews did not include any personal bias.

Along with credibility, transferability was important to generalize the study's findings to future advising situations. Furthermore, by establishing that the findings apply to other industries, populations, occupations, and circumstances, the transferability was found. For instance, the strategies used by a professional advisor are applicable to occupations within the business, psychology, marketing, and political industries. Additionally, the role of an educator is transferable to family dynamics as well as experiences that individuals have throughout their life. To increase the potential for transferability, the researcher provided an in-depth account of the experiences during the data collection process. Discussing where the interviews were conducted and how the surveys were sent provided a deeper context regarding the research setting.

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), dependability involves participants' evaluation of the findings and recommendations of the study that are supported by the data. Dependability was significant to this study because it established the consistency of the data collected. To ensure dependability of the results, the researcher had the results reviewed by the participants to validate any findings that may have been biased or overly assumed.

Lastly, to guarantee confirmability of the results, the researcher wrote an audit trail. An audit trail is a technique where the researcher details the process of data collection, data analysis, and the interpretations made of the data. More significantly, the researcher was open about the way the data were coded and why. Providing this detail allowed the researcher to verify that the findings were shaped by the participants' responses and not by the researcher.

Ethical Issues in the Study

To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, it was important to establish the credibility of this research design. Within a qualitative research study, credibility means that the researcher linked the research findings to the industry of study. Doing this demonstrates the ability to apply the findings to previous advising research. More importantly, the researcher guaranteed credibility of this study by documenting the agreement between the participants and the researcher. The researcher developed an informed consent agreement (Appendix D) for the participant to read and fill out. The informed consent outlined the goal of the study as well as the risk factors involved if they were to participate. This agreement also ensured that the participant was not influenced to provide certain responses that impacted the results of the study. To confirm credibility, this process and document also ensured that the participant's responses were not changed during the data analysis process.

Ethical concerns surrounding this specific population included the professional advisor's confidentiality as well as their right to withdraw from the survey or interview process at any time. In terms of confidentiality, the undergraduate professional advisors could have been concerned that their place of work was divulged in the data analysis as well as judgments made towards the advising strategies they used. Since the participants were be selected from institutions that the researcher has no affiliation with, there was limited bias towards the settings.

To address possible conflicts of interest it was important to recognize the researcher's interest which mitigated any potential conflict of interest in the future. Since the researcher was an advisor and the Director of Advising at a New England institution there was a possible conflict of interest based on the researcher's professional concentrations. In short, the researcher did not receive any financial benefit, professional promotion, or sponsorship by conducting this study to receive specific results. The processes outlined above allowed the researcher to avoid any possible conflicts of interest in the future.

Conclusion and Summary

Overall, this chapter articulated how the researcher examined advising strategies used to contribute to student development. The purpose of answering the research questions was to fill gaps related to the lack of current literature that details advising strategies used by undergraduate professional advisors that contributed to student development. Additionally, the purpose of this study was to understand the practices that undergraduate professional advisors used when meeting with students. This study used a qualitative research method to understand the practices of undergraduate professional advisors who worked at medium-sized higher education institutions in New England. This site was chosen based on the hiring of undergraduate professional advisors at medium-sized institutions. The specific location of New England was chosen based on the high saturation of higher education institutions as well as the easy access of the geographic location. To form this participant pool, the study used purposive and snowball sampling methods to guarantee that the population was from the New England area, was a professional advisor, and worked at a medium-sized institution.

To explore the professional advisor practices, this study used both survey and interview research instruments. The survey and interview questionnaires were developed to explore the professional advisor demographics and to ask questions surrounding the strategies used and why they were used. Prior to beginning the research, all participants were given an informed consent agreement which outlined their human rights, the purpose of the study, confidentiality, and the risks involved with participating in the study. Once each individual voluntarily agreed to participate, they were asked to take the survey through the software REDCap. Concurrently, the survey participants were also asked if they wanted to participate in a follow-up interview that would be recorded and transcribed through Zoom. By using both REDCap and manual coding, it enabled the results to be stored, secured, and analyzed. Once the results were analyzed, the researcher discussed the thematic findings and how they could be implemented in the future.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This study aimed to identify the advising practices employed by undergraduate professional advisors in alignment with Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of student identity development. Today, the higher education industry is facing challenges due to COVID-19, rising tuition rates, lack of support from the government, high saturation of colleges and institutions, and low graduation and retention rates (White, 2020). According to White (2015), academic advising is the first solution that can fully impact the way students experience higher learning environments. Furthermore, within Flaherty's (2020) survey taken by 57,000 first-year students and 58,000 seniors, the findings suggested that academic advisors should be actively listening and showing respect to their students. Therefore, understanding how undergraduate professional advisors contribute to a student's identity development is evermore significant as the higher education industry looks beyond the pandemic. Since graduation and retention rates are crucial to colleges and institutions financial health, this study was designed to highlight how undergraduate professional advisors implement practices when meeting with diverse student populations (Flaherty, 2020; White, 2015). More specifically, by assessing undergraduate professional advising practices to Chickering's (1969) seven vectors, the findings detail how the advisors are developing their students. In short, as colleges and institutions continue to evolve their advising models as their student population changes, this study emphasizes the importance of having full-time undergraduate professional advisors.

This study was designed to address the overarching research questions through a demographic survey and interview. The following research questions guided this research:

> RQ 1: Do undergraduate professional advisors at medium-sized, New England colleges and universities use advising practices that align with student identity development?

RQ 2: What advising practices do undergraduate professional advisors use at medium-sized, New England colleges and universities that align with Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of student identity development?

The demographic survey allowed the researcher to get an overview of the specific study's population. The survey responses informed the research questions by providing specific background information needed to interpret the data. Specifically, the first research question sought to inquire if student identity development was present in the practices of the undergraduate professional advisors. The interview questions were structured to determine if the professional advisors were using philosophies and practices that aimed to develop students. Furthermore, the second research question looked at the specific practices used that align with Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of student identity development. By asking interview questions on each of the seven vectors, the findings were able to assess if the participants' practices aligned with student identity development. This chapter provides an overview of the methodology used for this study, a description of the participants, and the presentation of the demographic survey and interview data.

Analysis Method

This qualitative study was determined to be the most appropriate study design to capture the practices of undergraduate professional advisors who work at medium-sized, New England colleges and institutions. Qualitative data collection was conducted in two segments. First, data were collected through a demographic survey, which was followed by an interview protocol. The researcher utilized purposive and snowball sampling methods. To create the email list of undergraduate professional advisors, the researcher employed an open directory approach by generating a list of medium-sized, New England colleges and universities from the *Integrated*

Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDs) (see Appendix A). Using that list, the researcher located individuals who matched the study's criterion from the college or institution directory to add to the study's email list. An email was sent that enclosed a request for participation and contained the invitation link to take the study's demographic survey (see Appendix B). The embedded survey link brought participants directly to the demographic survey in REDCap (see Appendix C). REDCap was used to send and store the demographic survey and to secure the survey responses on a password protected site. The researcher sent four rounds of reminder emails with the survey link to garner more responses which enabled the survey link to remain active for up to 30 days.

The final question on the demographic survey was a branching question that asked participants if they were willing to participate in a follow-up interview. If they indicated "yes," they were directed to input an email address for the researcher to contact them. If they answered "no," they were given a "thank you" message. The researcher sent an email to the first 15 survey participants who stated they were willing to be interviewed to schedule a date and time for each interview. Each potential participant was individually contacted using the email address they provided. A virtual interview was scheduled at a mutually convenient time once the researcher received a response from the potential participant. Prior to conducting the interviews, the researcher obtained electronically signed consent forms from the participants, which were stored on a password protected computer device. The interviews were recorded and transcribed through the video web-conferencing software, Zoom. The duration of each interview ranged from 30–60 minutes. Once the transcription was downloaded, the researcher shared the transcription with each of the participants to initiate the process of member-checking, which ensured that the transcript represented their true responses (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). After the validity of the transcriptions was confirmed, the researcher read through the interviews entirely.

Qualitative data analysis was conducted on 14 interview transcripts, which were analyzed by applying Creswell's (2019) 5-step process. To begin the data analysis process, the researcher organized the data which involved arranging the transcripts. Then, the researcher read through all of the interview data to get a general sense of the information and to reflect on the meaning behind the responses. After reviewing the data, the researcher started the coding process by organizing data into chunks based on common language or definition. Additionally, the researcher was able to code by reviewing the data and writing down categories that describe each transcription. After creating categories for each transcription, the researcher combined them to reduce repetitiveness, which resulted in themes. Lastly, the researcher used color coding to identify which narrative passages would apply to specific categories and themes. This qualitative data analysis enabled the researcher to address the study's research questions.

Presentation of Results

The demographic survey data is outlined (see Tables 1.0-2.0) to provide a more robust understanding of the backgrounds of undergraduate professional advisors from medium-sized, New England colleges and universities. The survey focused on receiving diverse participation to better establish the credentials of current undergraduate professional advisors. The survey data enabled the researcher to be informed on the population especially as it pertained to interpreting and analyzing the interview data. After reviewing the survey data, the interview data (see Table 2.2) were coded to answer the study's research questions. This section outlines the data from both phases of the research design.

Demographic Survey Data

At the end of the data collection period, the demographic survey received 54 responses from undergraduate professional advisors from medium-sized, New England colleges and universities. The sample consisted of 54 out of 204 (26.4% of the population) undergraduate professional advisors that were generated from open directory method. For the study, the demographic variables of the participants were categorized based on the survey questions.

Table 1.0 depicts the years of experience the respondents have as an undergraduate professional advisor. Of the advisors who completed the survey, 31.5% (n=17) have 9 or more years of experience, 29.6% (n=16) have 3-5 years of experience, 22.2% (n=12) have 0-2 years of experience, while 16.7% (n=9) have 6-8 years of experience. Overall, the study's population has varying years of experience, while the majority has over 9 years of experience as an undergraduate professional advisor.

Table 1.0

Years of Experience as a Professional Advisor

Years of Experience Category	*n*	%
0-2 years	12	22.2%
3-5 years	16	29.6%
6-8 years	9	16.7%
9+ years	17	31.5%
Total	54	100%

As shown in Table 1.1, 87.0% (n=47) of the advisors have worked at 1 or 2 institutions. Of the 54 respondents, 11.1% (n=6) have been employed at 3 to 5 institutions while 1.9% (n=6) have been employed at 6 to 8 institutions. The majority of the sample population has not had many experiences working at other institutions.

Table 1.1

Number of Institutions Employed as a Professional Advisor

Number of Institutions	*n*	%
0-2 institutions	47	87.0%
3-5 institutions	6	11.1%
6-8 institutions	1	1.9%
9+ institutions	0	0.0%
Total	54	100%

Table 1.2 illustrates the ages of the undergraduate professional advisors that were collected. Of the 54 participants, 27.8% (n=15) indicated that they were between the ages of 16 to 31 years old, 46.3% (n=25) responded that they were between the ages of 32 to 47 years old, while the rest of the participants were above the age of 48 years old.

Table 1.2

Age

Age Category	*n*	%
0-15	0	0
16-31	15	27.8%
32-47	25	46.3%
48-63	10	18.5%
64+	4	7.4%
Total	54	100%

Table 1.3 depicts the gender identity of the participants. Of the undergraduate professional advisors, 70.4% (n=38) identified as female, 25.9% (n=14) identified as male, 1.9% (n=1) identified as gender neutral, and 1.9% (n=1) identified as transgender.

Table 1.3

Gender Identity

Gender Identity Category	*n*	%
Female	38	70.4%
Male	14	25.9%
Non-binary	0	0
Gender neutral	1	1.9%
Transgender	1	1.9%
I do not wish to specify my gender identity.	0	0
Total	54	100%

Table 1.4 represents the highest level of education of the undergraduate professional advisors. The results indicated that 88.9% (n=48) of the sample population has a master's degree and 5.6% (n=3) has a bachelor's degree. Additionally, of the participants who earned a master's degree, 75% (n=36) focused their degree in higher education theory or leadership; while 25% (n=12) concentrated their degree in areas like organizational management and communications.

Table 1.4

Highest Level of Education

Highest Level of Education Category	*n*	%
High school diploma	0	0
Associate Degree	1	1.9%
Bachelor's Degree	3	5.6%
Master's Degree	48	88.9%
Doctoral Degree	2	3.7%
No Diploma	0	0
Total	54	100%

Table 1.5 shows the type of higher education institution at which the participants are currently employed. The results suggested that undergraduate professional advisors are currently employed at private colleges, private universities, and public universities, more than public colleges. Within the population, 25.9% (n=14) work at public universities, 25.9% (n=14) work at private universities, 27.8% (n=15) work at private colleges, and 20.4% (n=11) work at public colleges.

Table 1.5

Type of Higher Education Institution Employed

Type of Higher Education Institution Category	*n*	%
Private College	15	27.8%
Public College	11	20.4%
Private University	14	25.9%
Public University	14	25.9%
Vocational School	0	0
Other	0	0
Total	54	100%

As shown in Table 1.6, the most popular advising model that the respondents use at their current institution is the shared advising model. Of the 54 participants, 66.7% (n=36) use a shared advising model which is defined as "where some advisors meet with students in a central administrative unit (i.e., an advising center), while others advise students in the academic department of their discipline" (Pardee, 2004, para. 3). This model incorporates the use of both faculty and professional advisors (Pardee, 2004). Additionally, 24.1% (n=13) use a centralized advising model which is defined as "a model where professional and faculty advisors are housed in one academic or administrative unit" (Pardee, 2004, para. 3). Only 5.6% (n=3) use a decentralized advising model which is "a faculty only model where all students are assigned to a department advisor, usually a professor from the student's academic discipline" (Pardee, 2004, para. 6). Advisors who selected the "other" category noted that they use an intrusive model or the care model as their advising structure.

Table 1.6

Advising Model of Current Institution

Advising Model Category	*n*	%
Shared advising model	36	66.7%
Decentralized advising model	3	5.6%
Centralized advising model	13	24.1%
Other	2	3.7%
Total	54	100%

As demonstrated in Table 1.7, 72.2% (n=39) of the participants are employed at a medium-sized institution with an enrollment of 0 to 5,000 students. Additionally, 20.4% (n=11) of the participants indicated that they work at medium-sized institutions with an enrollment of 5,001-9,999 students, while only 7.4% (n=4) work at medium-sized institutions with an enrollment of 10,000-14,999.

Table 1.7

Size of Higher Education Institution

Size of Higher Education Institution Category	*n*	%
0-5,000	39	72.2%
5,001-9,999	11	20.4%
10,000-14,999	4	7.4%
15,000-19,999	0	0
20,000-24,999	0	0
25,000+	0	0
Total	54	100%

Table 1.8 illustrates the number of students that the respondents advise per semester. Of the population, 42.6% (n=23) advise over 130 students, 20.4% (n=11) advise 90 to 129 students, while the remainder of the respondents advise 0 to 89 students per semester. This data demonstrated that the professional advisors typically have large caseloads.

Table 1.8

Number of Students Advising Per Semester

Number of Students Category	*n*	%
0-30 students	6	11.1%
31-59 students	8	14.8%
60-89 students	6	11.1%
90-129 students	11	20.4%
130+ students	23	42.6%
Total	54	100%

According to Table 1.9, 35.2% (n=19) of the advisors spend 26 to 30 minutes per advising session, 16.7% (n=9) spend 16 to 20 minutes per advising session, while 14.8% (n=8) spend 31 to 35 minutes per advising session.

Table 1.9

Average Time of Individual Advising Appointments

Average Time Category	*n*	%
0-10 minutes	0	0
11-15 minutes	1	1.9%
16-20 minutes	9	16.7%
21-25 minutes	6	11.1%
26-30 minutes	19	35.2%
31-35 minutes	8	14.8%
36-40 minutes	6	11.1%
41-45 minutes	5	9.3%
45+ minutes	0	0
Total	54	100%

Table 2.0 illustrates the various advising approaches that the advisors use. Both prescriptive and developmental advising approaches are used by 51.9% (n=28) of the population, while 46.3% (n=25) use a developmental advising approach. The remainder of the population employs a prescriptive advising approach, while those who indicated “other” used an appreciative advising approach or holistic advising approach.

Table 2.0

Advising Approaches Used

Advising Approaches Category	*n*	%
Prescriptive advising	3	5.6%
Developmental advising	25	46.3%
Both approaches	28	51.9%
Other	5	9.3%
Total	54	100%

Interview Data

During the data collection, 14 qualitative interviews were conducted with undergraduate professional advisors employed at medium-sized, New England colleges and universities. All interview participants agreed to engage in an interview through the voluntary signing of a consent form. Since the interviews were recorded and later transcribed, the researcher was able to answer the research questions by coding the data into categories that generated specific themes. The first research question aimed to evaluate how undergraduate professional advisors use practices that align with student identity development. The questions from the first half of the interview protocol enabled the researcher to answer this question by exploring the advisors' philosophies and practices. The second research question was designed to specifically discuss each of Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of student identity development and the practices advisors use when initiating that type of development within their students. The research questions aligned with the themes and drove the thematic groupings for each category. Participant descriptions are detailed in Table 2.1 and the emergent interview themes are detailed in Table 2.2 before the in-depth review of the data.

Table 2.1
Interview Participant Descriptions

Participant	**Gender**	**Degree Level**
1	Male	Master's Degree
2	Male	Master's Degree
3	Female	Bachelor's Degree
4	Female	Master's Degree
5	Female	Doctoral Degree
6	Female	Master's Degree
7	Female	Bachelor's Degree
8	Male	Master's Degree
9	Female	Master's Degree
10	Female	Master's Degree
11	Male	Master's Degree
12	Female	Master's Degree
13	Female	Master's Degree
14	Male	Doctoral Degree

Table 2.2
Breakdown of Research Questions, Categories and Themes

Research Questions	**Categories**	**Themes**
Do undergraduate professional advisors at medium-sized, New England colleges and universities use advising practices that align with student identity development?	Advising Philosophy	Student-Focused
		Developmental
	Advising Practices	Sense of Safety
		Establishing Rapport
		Connectedness
		Empower
	Developing competence	Role Play

What advising practices do undergraduate professional advisors use at medium-sized, New England colleges and universities that align with Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of student identity development?		Ownership
	Managing Emotions	Validation
		Reflection
	Developing autonomy	Vulnerable
		Identify Resources
	Establishing identity	Acknowledge & Listen
		Find Community
	Interpersonal relationships	Feedback
		Perspective
	Clarifying purpose	Goals
		Expectations
	Developing integrity	Cultivate Individual Potential
		Reevaluate

Categories and Themes

Advising Philosophy. This category was identified through the initial interview questions highlighting the participants' advising philosophy and the approaches or theories that have informed their practices. Of the interview participants, 100% (n=14) spoke about how there is no singular or well-articulated advising philosophy that they abide by every day. Additionally, 100% (n=14) articulated that they have beliefs and values that support a student-focused outlook that they consider to be incorporated into their advising philosophy. When asked about advising approaches or theories that informed their advising practices, the participants did not articulate specific theorists, however, 71.4% (n=10) of the interview participants declared that a developmental advising approach is present within their current advising practices with their students.

Student-Focused. The terms “student-focused,” “student-centered,” “personalized,” and “individualized” were commonly used by professional advisors when describing their advising philosophy. Of the respondents, 100% (n=14) shared that their advising philosophy is focused on the “student” or the “individual.” Participant 4 explained,

> It’s always going to be student-focused; it’s going to be solution-focused as well as it’s going to be compassionate and that comes from my counseling background. On my email signature and the first thing I tell students when I meet them is you’re never alone.

Similarly, Participant 1 stated, “It’s always about the student and what they need immediately, but also how it’s serving their need in the long term.” Not only did the respondents articulate their philosophy as student-focused but they also do specific research to inform this philosophy. For instance, Participant 6 specified,

> I usually will ask well what do you want to focus on today or what do you want to talk about, and I just really let it be all about the student. Before I meet with them, I usually do look on the advising system to check out their transcript. I see where they’re at and all. And then I let it be student driven so where do they want to go.

Furthermore, Participant 9 detailed,

> My advising philosophy, I don’t have a formal philosophy, but I would say it’s founded in understanding my advisees as individuals. So really taking the time to have those conversations about their background, about interests, both professional and academic, and the sort of going from there in a very individualized way.

100% (n=14) of the advisors believe that a student-focused philosophy enables advisors to build trust with their students as well as give them the opportunity to articulate their own strengths with a professional. Participant 8 described,

> So, my advising philosophy is really supporting students and giving them the tools that they need to be successful. I really take an appreciative advising or an asset-based approach, where I help student recognize their own strengths and leverage them to be successful.

Participant 3 articulated a parallel response by stating, “Over the years, I have sort of evolved to you know meet them wherever they are.” Lastly, Participant 7 articulated how being student-focused can allow students to discuss their goals while being supported and guided by their advisor. Participant 7 illustrated,

> A lot of it is student-driven just based on what questions they have, but then also on what we’ve identified based on questions that a previous student had. Like discussing how to have them achieve their career goals, based on what they hope their academic goals are and how to find that pathway. I explain that it’s not a straight line and that it’s more of a messy scribble.

Developmental. Developmental advising approach is one of the most well-known approaches within advising research. According to Crookston (1994), developmental advising is “concerned not only with a specific personal or vocational decision but also with facilitating the student’s rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavioral awareness and problem-solving” (p. 5). When asked what advising approaches or theories have influenced their advising practices, 85.7% (n=12) of the respondents emphasized that developmental advising is at the core of their practices. Many of the advisors referenced this approach by using terms like “entire student,” “whole student,” “come into their own,” “holistic approach,” and “developmental advising.” This component is significant when aiming to understand how advising practices align with student identity development. For example, Participant 14 indicated,

> I typically don't say 'hey just grab a form and do x,y,z.' I typically want them to come in discuss it with them make sure that it's the right decision for them, and so I do try and be as developmental as possible.

Additionally, Participant 11 articulated,

> I believe very strongly in developmental advising and I work with students from freshman year through senior year so I'm a lot more hands on. It sometimes starts with explaining policies in hopes that, as they reach junior and senior year, they are asking me large picture questions less about process. I think it's just that idea of being developmental and helping students come into their own and really find what their personal path is as opposed to just following the route that everyone else takes.

The respondents noted that a developmental approach within the higher education industry has to encompass more than prescriptive tasks like degree audit discussions and filing student forms. They continued to stress that using developmental approaches is all about being available and genuine to hear a student share their story. Participant 5 stated,

> It's important to let every student, no matter what stage they are developmentally, that they have something to offer, and you can't make assumptions about what the potential is for a person until you really hear their story and really get to know them.

Those who use developmental approaches also mentioned the specific student populations that initiated using the approach. Of the advisors, 64.2% (n=9) highlighted that they used developmental approaches more often when they worked with academic probation, transfer students, international students or first-year students. Specifically, Participant 3 said, “When I meet with transfer or academic probation students the more developmental advising I use.”

Advising Practices. This category included questions surrounding the advisors’ specific experiences with their students as it pertained to topics within their sessions, and strategies they used to develop their students. Advisor practices was a focus of both research questions because there is a lack of research highlighting what professional advisors do during student sessions. This research asked the professional advisors to discuss the specific practices they use to better understand how they are intentionally working with their students. Themes were found across all the interview responses that demonstrated various practices that the undergraduate professional advisors use that align with student identity development. The themes included sense of safety, establishing rapport, connectedness, and empower. Within the research themes, the advisor practices focused on building an intentional relationship with their student, which was initiated by using the common four themes that are highlighted. 100% (n=14) of the participants consistently referenced that practices were based off what the students needed as well as a constant goal of developing them.

Sense of Safety. When participants brought up this theme, many of them used phrases that depicted how life and a college environment can make students feel scared and unsafe. About a third, or 35.7% (n=5) of the advisors, noted how high school can impact a student’s mentality by making them “guarded” or “disingenuous.” Additionally, 64.2% (n=9) of advisors felt that it was their responsibility to ensure that their students feel safe and comfortable. More specifically, when discussing advising practices there was a consistent discussion surrounding mental health. Participant 13 illustrated,

> I've seen students who feel trapped and lonely. I've worked with suicide and violence before. It can be a scary place to be so to create an environment of safety is essential. If you are not feeling safe, if your basic needs aren't being met, then you really can't focus on anything else.

To help students to feel safe, the advisors discussed how they ask students to speak about the new or current environment that they are in. For instance, Participant 14 explained, "I typically ask my first-year students what they think of the college environment. Like describe it to me and describe how it makes you feel. Do you feel safe? Then, answer the same questions myself." The interview participants consistently referenced that there needs to be a balance when making students feel safe. Participant 4 continued to say, "I always offer some of my own experiences to ensure that the student doesn't feel like I am prying or pushing too hard." Correspondingly, Participant 5 mentioned,

> I don't want my students to feel like as soon as they walk into my office that I'm going to get right down to business. That is not me. You have to talk about yourself a bit to give the student a sense of safety so that they can tell you what is going on with them.

Establishing Rapport. Another theme that was brought up when discussing advising practices were the importance of always entering an advising session to establish rapport with a student. Of the participants, 100% (n=14) felt that establishing rapport is critical to creating and retaining a successful advising relationship. Participant 3 declared, "I have students typically come into my office and I like to spend time establishing rapport. I think it's critical." Not only is establishing rapport critical but it is significant for college retention rates as well. Participant 2 explained, "The relationship the advisor has the opportunity to build with the student will say a lot about that student's experience at the College and if they have a good advising experience, their experience as a whole might be better."

The ways that advisors aimed to establish rapport was to ask questions but to also share their own story with their students, whether it be about their educational experiences or their personal struggles. Participant 6 articulated,

> To start if it's somebody I have not worked with before the first thing I like to do is to find common ground by balancing things about me and the student. I try to get to know the student by asking questions about COVID-19, how they are dealing with isolation and then their academics.

The advisors used many phrases when discussing how to establish rapport. The phrases included "being genuine," "initiating a more personalized relationship," "going beyond academics," "learning about student interests," and "initiating a balanced conversation that is not just you asking them questions." Participant 4 specified,

> I always tell my students, colleagues, and faculty you are never alone. If you feel like you have no one else, I hope that my name pops into their head. Whether its academic or not you can call on me if it's something I can't help you with I will find you someone or a resource that can.

Connectedness. Of the common advising practices, 57.1% (n=8) of the respondents also included connectedness. Many of the advisors discussed how it is their responsibility to build connection between the college or institution and its students. Additionally, the advisors claimed that the ways to instill connectivity to the campus is to create a trusting relationship with the student, and to introduce them to other connections on campus. For example, Participant 11 stated, "I try to help the students grow and learn and connect with others on campus. That is a passion of advisors, to make others feel connected." Participant 11 continued, "There is kindness that comes with being a part of a college community and being on this Earth." By helping students navigate through college, the advisors feel that they are ensuring that students have found their support system on campus. Participant 8 described,

> Helping them navigate through college is part of my job. I have the expectation that I assist students with areas that they are not familiar or comfortable with. Creating connection provides students direction as well as a sense of safety.

To establish a sense of connection on a college campus comes with challenges. Forty-two point eight percent (n=6) of the advisors noted that social connections between roommates and classmates come up as an concern quite often. Similarly, forming connections with faculty members has led students to feel intimidated initially. Fifty percent of the professional advisors articulated that faculty and student relationships can be problematic especially when students do not feel respected or valued. More specifically, half of the professional advisors believed that COVID-19 has put added stressors on the faculty-student connection because of a lack of in-person meetings, which creates more opportunities for miscommunication. For those reasons, the advisors mentioned how connecting students with more people allows them to practice their communication skills.

Empower. The final theme that arose from the interview responses was that 85.7% (n=12) of them aimed to empower their students to take control and to initiate action. Some of the advisors said that one of their primary responsibilities is to ensure that students are reminded of their own power. Participant 1 illustrated, "I always want them to know what is within their power to do in the moment and in their life. I want them to be active participants in their degree completion and in their experience as a college student. To empower students to build their confidence enough so that they can take control of their choices." Participant 1 continued by declaring,

> I like to remind them that they can make a choice and that it's still something within their power. And also remind them what is their goal, why are they here because they could lose sight of that. I just have to ask the question what are you hoping to get from this, why are you here again. Sometimes they need to hear themselves say it out loud.

When discussing the theme of empowerment, the advisors also brought up conversations they have with their students regarding course selection and general education requirements. Many students feel like they do not have control over the classes they are taking and paying for. Participant 14 explained,

> Students do not feel empowered when they are put into a class that no one gave them a reason to take. They have a difficult time understanding that this is their education and that they have the authority to own it.

More specifically, advisors aim to empower their students to help them navigate through their decision-making in regard to their choice of major and their career exploration. Participant 8 clarified, "I really focus on helping students understand how to navigate the university and how to explore their strengths and their interests to help them find the right major. My advising practices are focused in giving them a voice."

These categories and themes answered the first research question by articulating the philosophies and practices that undergraduate professional advisors use that align with student identity development. Since the advisors employ a student-focused and developmental philosophy when working with students, it is evident that their goal is to initiate student identity development during their interactions with students. More specifically, initiating a sense of safety, establishing rapport, creating connectedness on campus, and empowering the student describes how the advisors contribute to student identity development.

Developing Competence. The following categories originate from Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of student identity development theory. This theory was used to form specific interview questions that measured if the advisor practices align with the particular vectors. The first vector from Chickering's (1969) psychosocial theory is developing competence. The interview participants were asked to describe a time when they developed competence within an undergraduate student. More specifically, they were asked to describe the practices they use to develop competence. Chickering (1969) defines developing competence as student's ability to critically think and the ability to use their body and hands. This definition was used as a framework to generate the interview themes within this category. The researcher found that when developing competence in a student, the advisors used role playing and established ownership.

Role Play. When asked about the practices that advisors used to initiate critical thinking, 50% (n=7) of the respondents referenced role playing. The advisors used common phrases to depict this vector such as "acting out," "scenario worksheets," "discussing all possible outcomes," and "reframing and refocusing." More specifically, the advisors believed that role playing is a practice that can be used to help students communicate and to handle difficult situations. Participant 5 stated, "I have had to role play many, many times how to have a conversation, you know with a faculty member. I would say role playing is very important in terms of being a good mentor for the competence piece." To establish critical thinking in students, the advisors often mentioned that the students needed an adult to talk through a problem. Participant 12 illustrated, "When I try to initiate critical thinking, I have found that I usually see this in my first- or second-year students. Typically, they are facing some sort of problem and they come to me to vent about it." For many of the advisors, problem-solving was discussed when aiming to developing analyzing situations with their students. "Problem-solving is something their parents usually tackle for them. Many of my students are not used to thinking about solutions on their own. Because they are dependent on others, I reframe and refocus it to role playing." When the advisors would discuss what their role playing consisted of, some mentioned role-playing scenarios that they had formed over years of service and training. Other advisors discussed how role playing can enable the student to have enough time to think over a situation before reacting. Participant 1 answered,

> So critical thinking is also about reframing and refocusing them on the problem they are facing. Maybe they need to drop a class, or they need to pass in late assignments in order to pass a class. I always try to say if you drop this class what will happen after that, what will you do differently. If you pass in those two late assignments, how will this impact your future. Sometimes they need to take a look at it in a different way. So, helping them kind of refocus on those ideas helps them to analyze future situations differently.

Correspondingly, Participant 13 role played by asking these questions, "Okay, so this happened, and you can't go back in time. What would you do differently moving forward?" Beyond using role playing with first- or second-year students, respondents connected critical thinking to career exploration as well. Participant 9 said, "We usually practice doing informational interviews and we develop questions together for them to ask, and then the next step is discussing how to implement this process in their academics and in future interviews."

Ownership. When the advisors were asked about critical thinking, 57.1% (n=8) discussed that students do not understand this concept because they do not take ownership of their education. Beyond valuing their education, the advisors responded by questioning if students even know the definition of critical thinking. Participant 9 exclaimed,

> It's a conversation that I have with students a lot around what is critical inquiry. I've initiated this with a student early on in my engagement with them when I am sort of trying to get to the core of their purpose, wither academic or professional or personal, and just sort of really trying to analyze and get to the root of that.

Participant 11 explained, "My first-year and academic probation students believe that college is about checking things off of their to-do list rather than investing time into questioning and analyzing what they are reading." Additionally, Participant 2 agreed by maintaining, "Critical thinking is a challenging concept to any student who doesn't understand the value of it in their education and in their future." For students who were struggling with their academics, the advisors aimed to initiate ownership. To them, the value of creating ownership is allowing the student to connect to their education, and to see that this is an opportunity. Participant 3 clarified,

> I want them to take ownership of the journey they are on by discussing the courses they are taking and the work that they are completing. I go through each course and have them tell me the value of taking it and doing the work. Students find this challenging especially if they are not interested in the course. But even having the conversation makes them understand that this is their journey, and they have to make the most of it.

Similarly, Participant 7 articulated,

> I have my students take ownership when they are beginning to think about their classes for the upcoming semester. And not being passive to what the requirements are. I think it is important for them to think critically about the classes they are paying for.

Managing Emotions. Chickering's (1969) second vector of student identity development is managing emotions. The interview participants were asked to describe a time when they managed emotions within an undergraduate student. More specifically, they were asked to describe the practices they use to help students manage emotions. This vector is defined as a student's ability to understand certain social experiences through self-control as well as assessing those around them (Chickering, 1969). This definition was used as a framework to generate the interview themes within this category. The researcher found that when managing emotions in a student, the advisors used the practices of validation and reflection.

Validation. When asking interview questions surrounding a student's ability to handle social experiences, 71.4% (n=10) emphasized the practice of validation. Additionally, many of the advisors discussed topics like "mental health," "resilience," "lack of listening," and "no support system." They explained that many of their students are dealing with anxiety or behavioral disorders that can make this vector challenging to develop. Participant 4 illustrated,

> Many of my students get overwhelmed when they begin to feel uncomfortable or pressured. Their levels of anxiety consume them so much that they can't seem to see that there is a solution that they can find within themselves. I always listen to their concerns first and then validate them.

Participant 10 mentioned the same practice,

> Advisors never assume that what the student is going through is not serious. We really have no idea what students are going through. So, I always listen and validate that what they are going through is not small it is real.

The advisors brought up the emotions that students have when they are going through a challenging academic or personal experience. Participant 9 explained, "Students often reach out and they are angry or confused and they have a whole plethora of emotions. Once they are meeting with me, I always start by validating to help them understand that I am here to listen."

Reflection. After validating their students, 92.8% (n=13) of the advisors responded by initiating reflection within their students. Participant 9 continued by stating,

> Then, I allow my student to understand that you're here to discuss solutions. I always start by giving them a scenario like 'Okay, do you want me to listen or provide solutions?' Again, I start with validation and then reflective listening to let them hear what they are saying to me.

Specifically, 50% (n=7) of the respondents used similar questioning strategies to create reflection within their students. Participant 4 asked, "How could this experience have been different for you? Can we write down other ideal outcomes?" Participant 2 exclaimed, "How did you get here? What led you to these academic decisions? Do you realize how they are impacting you?" Additionally, Participant 1 said, "I ask my students 'Why do you think this? What has brought you to this conclusion? What has made these feelings come up?"

Due to COVID-19, 35.7% (n=5) of the advisors brought up the feeling of isolation potentially triggering more emotions from their students. Participant 5 declared, "We had this discussion recently about how our students are not managing their emotions during this pandemic." Additionally, Participant 7 acknowledged this by answering, "When managing emotions, I try to understand their own motivations and if we can come to an agreement. I see this less now with the pandemic because students are not as open."

Developing Autonomy. This category is the third vector within Chickering's (1969) psychosocial theory for student identity development. This vector is defined as a student's ability to be independent, which includes the ability to carry on activities by coping with problems and to be portable in relation to one's needs or desires (Chickering, 1969). The interview participants were asked to describe a time when they developed autonomy within an undergraduate student. More specifically, they were asked to describe the practices they use to help students be independent. The researcher found that when developing autonomy, the advisors practiced vulnerability and identified useful resources.

Vulnerable. To develop independence in students, 92.8% (n=13) of the advisors emphasized vulnerability. This theme was key to showing their students that everyone is human, and that everyone has specific needs. More importantly, the advisors continued to share their story with their students to role model that moving forward with one's own needs is a realistic accomplishment. Participant 4 explained,

> I tell my story and then ask my student to share their story. I think it allows them to advocate for themselves because they are more comfortable talking about their strengths and weaknesses. Modeling vulnerability makes me look human which is really important to them.

Participant 3 also stated,

> Getting the student to feel like they could have that conversation it took at least two terms so that is like eight months. To have them feel like they had the tools to be independent and face whatever consequences come their way. Listening to them articulate their dreams by being vulnerable myself is powerful.

As a mentor, they believed that establishing trust by sharing their story was essential to initiating autonomy in their students. Participant 12 exclaimed,

> Sometimes I think students believe they are independent because they are away from their parents and on their own. However, they don't recognize that now that they are on

> their own this is their time to define themselves. The college environment can be hard to become autonomous because a lot of students model themselves off of others who they feel are succeeding. I always tell them about my struggles and weaknesses because I feel as though everyone needs to find that person they can relate to.

Identify Resources. To initiate autonomy within students, 57.1% (n=8) of the advisors identified the appropriate resources so that students can feel confident in their decision-making. Many of the advisors connected autonomy to the student seeking resources on their own. They discussed how it is their responsibility to discuss these resources with their students, but it is up to them to use them appropriately. Participant 1 identified,

> Helping students understand what tools they have at their disposal and I tell them that I use a lot of the same tools in my everyday work. I remind them that using the tools is within their abilities. That they always have these options, they just need to navigate them consistently.

Similarly, Participant 6 articulated,

> That is a huge component. I would say that's definitely something I am doing right now with students. I show them resources and show them how to use them in the way they can. Learn that skill and do it themselves.

The practice of identifying resources with students was also correlated to never giving students the solution to every problem. Participant 7 exclaimed,

> I help them realize that I'm not going to give them the answer that they need. I can give them pros and cons and we can walk through the options. But that they are going to have to come up with what the right thing is especially for them.

After discussing resources, advisors also discussed the significance of following up with their students. Participant 8 illustrated, “I expect them to do it on their own and I’ll follow up and say ‘hey did you meet with your department chair.’ I try to facilitate and keep the ball rolling.”

Establishing Identity. This category is based on the fourth vector of Chickering’s (1969) student identity development theory. This vector is defined as a student’s ability to acquire inner confidence through the recognition of self, which means to be secure regarding physical appearance, gender, race, and sexual orientation (Chickering, 1969). The interview participants were asked to describe a time when they established identity within an undergraduate student. More specifically, they were asked to describe the practices they use to help students acquire inner confidence.

Acknowledge & Listen. Within this vector, 50% (n=7) of the advisors discussed the impact of acknowledging that their students were going through unprecedented times. Since this vector highlights a student’s ability to acquire enough confidence to articulate their identity whether it be through their gender, race, or sexual orientation, 50% (n=7) advisors consistently emphasized the power of listening. Over the pandemic, many students were going through massive experiences that challenged their identity as a college student and their identity as it pertained to specific social identities. Participant 10 explained, “Many of my students saw marginalized individuals finally getting the opportunity to speak out. I would always acknowledge what was going in the world before diving deeper into their academic progress. I never wanted to ignore it.” Additionally, Participant 10 acknowledged that conversations surrounding social identity resulted in a lot of venting. Because the student was opening up and expressing personal issues for the first time, the professional advisor listened to their concerns and feelings.

Participant 9 had a similar experience,

> I had a student recently who disclosed to me regarding their personal gender identity and I think the whole conversation was around expressing my support. I showed support both for the student as an individual who was looking for academic and personal growth.

This vector enabled advisors to recognize that the students are going through a pivotal moment in their lives. Participant 7 stated, “When bringing this up to my students, I always said you are going through a lot even if you don’t recognize that. I have to acknowledge that with them because others might not be willing to do that.” Additionally, advisors consistently created an environment safe enough for their students to vent and speak about what they were witnessing. Participant 2 responded,

> Many of my student sessions revolved around pushing through this time. Many of them didn’t want to really sit with their thoughts. They just wanted to move on and complete their degree. But then there were a few who needed to hear their voice. I think it helped them to actually understand themselves better.

Finding Community. This theme arose when advisors sought to provide their students with a realistic solution. Of the advisors, 64.2% (n=9) appeared overwhelmed with having these conversations with their students. Participant 14 declared,

> I don’t think I am trained to have these conversations with my students. It was hard for me to hear them in distress and not provide them a solution. Often times, I think they rely on me to make life better or easier. Issues surrounding race and gender, is something I can’t fix.

Other advisors felt the same way but wanted to find their students a community where they could relate and share their experiences. Participant 9 stated,

> I think a big topic that we had in that conversation was exploring ways and resources that the student could feel supported in. Then, just offering myself as an example of support.
>
> If they did have questions or if they needed something I could be that safe space.

Participant 2 agreed by maintaining, “I connect them with multicultural affairs on campus or maybe they want spirituality. I try to make sure they know that the support they are looking for is on campus.” Although the interview questions surrounding this vector asked the advisors to speak about how they initiated this type of identity development, 50% (n=7) of the advisors felt that the pandemic was a catalyst for this growth. Participant 13 exclaimed, “This past year was the perfect opening to ask students about deeper thoughts about themselves. It actually gave me more confidence to bring it up.” Beyond trying to help their students find the appropriate outlets, advisors wanted to educate themselves. Participant 4 declared, “You know, we don’t live on an island. We live with other people. How do we educate ourselves; how do we educate others? How do we come together and create that dialogue and move it forward for our students?”

Interpersonal Relationships. Chickering’s (1969) fifth vector of student identity development is interpersonal relationships. This vector is defined as the student’s ability to deal with varying personalities that may not match their own outlook on life (Chickering, 1969). The interview participants were asked to describe a time when they developed interpersonal relationships within an undergraduate student. More specifically, they were asked to describe the practices they use to help students deal with varying personalities. The researcher found that when developing interpersonal relationships, the advisors provided feedback and perspective.

Feedback. When developing interpersonal relationships, 64.2% (n=9) of the advisors mentioned the practice giving their students feedback to grow into a better communicator. Many of the advisors reflected on how their students are not recognizing that they are closed off to other viewpoints. Participant 9 articulated, “I wanted to give the student feedback so that they felt empowered as somebody who could add to a conversation but also have the opportunity to listen to possible varying viewpoints or differing viewpoints.” The advisors felt that being open and real with their students would only help as they advance in their academic and personal careers. Participant 14 explained,

> When a student is telling me about a controversy that they experienced, and I feel as though they could have communicated better. I always think it is my responsibility to provide them feedback, whether it be good or bad. I don’t want to enable behavior that could be improved upon.

For instance, some of the advisors provided feedback that might have been too harsh. Participant 5 admitted that behavioral development is a topic that gets brought up frequently during student meetings. During moments when the student was discussing an issue they are dealing with, the professional advisor described being too transparent because they wanted to see a change or realization in the student. Participant 5 and Participant 9 acknowledged how as a professional advisor, they need to provide feedback while also understanding that the student is still growing.

Most of the feedback that advisors gave their students included making sure they understood that life is about meeting those who are different than you. The feedback encompassed picking your battles appropriately by speaking to those who support you about a concept that you see differently. More importantly, the feedback aimed to create confidence in the student and to celebrate that having an opinion is not a bad thing. Participant 7 stated,

> Our students often believe that no one is on their side. It is important for me to let them know that I am here to support them. But no one in life is always going to smile and nod their head. Our relationship has to be built on honesty and growth. I always want to build

them up with the goal of understanding that it is okay to see areas where you can improve your reactions.

Perspective. Of the advisors, 57.1% (n=8) pointed out that feedback was only useful when they could also give their students some different perspectives. The practice of giving their students some perspective was not an easy task. Participant 4 stated,

> Giving someone some perspective about a controversy isn't something you can do with the snap of your fingers. I believe this is something that is long-term. Just like forming relationships is a work in progress, the students opening up to different perspectives is the same thing.

Guiding students through varying perspectives allowed the advisors to discuss the scenarios they used on their students to develop their interpersonal relationships. Participant 8 asked students,

> Remove yourself from this situation so that you can gain some perspective. Usually, a best friend is someone they love and care about. That's like my magic question. So, I ask 'What would you tell your best friend in this situation?' It gives them perspective and gives them a sense of acceptance.

Participant 7 added, "How do we frame this in a different way, in a way that is respectful but also advocating for your opinion in a positive way?" This approach was consistent throughout the responses. However, many advisors recognized that students can be so upset that there is no way that they will listen to another perspective until they feel heard. Therefore, advisors would calm students down by validating their concerns but also bringing them back to reality. Participant 4 said,

> You know it's kind of like talking them off of a ledge sometimes because they often end up in your office pretty heated. And so, it's calming them down a little bit not always

taking them through the opposite side, but just talking them through the situation as a whole.

Clarifying Purpose. This vector is defined as the student's ability to set career plans, personal dreams, and commitments to family and friends (Chickering, 1969). The interview participants were asked to describe a time when they helped to clarify purpose within an undergraduate student. More specifically, they were asked to describe the practices they use to help students set career and personal plans.

Goal setting. To clarify purpose, 100% (n=14) of the advisors consistently referenced the practice of goal setting with their students. Goal setting was a practice that they used throughout the semester especially for first-year students, international students, and academic probation students. More specifically, to set career plans, the advisors typically engaged in conversations surrounding a student's strengths and weaknesses. Participant 11 articulated,

> Talking about a student's purpose can feel extremely overwhelming so I don't necessarily give it that much power. I usually start by discussing their strengths and weaknesses. That topic can also change into what classes do you enjoy? When are you an active participant? When are you a passive participant?

The advisors started off with a standard strategy to initiate a conversation around their personal and professional goals. Participant 13 explained,

> Sometimes just talking about strengths and weaknesses isn't enough to inspire students to articulate specific goals. I think the most powerful conversation to have is one that talks about their relationships with their family and friends. Then, I try to connect that to their personal interests. I feel it is important to watch how they connect the two together.

Goal setting practices consisted of creating worksheets with their students as well as goal reminders on their learning management tools. Participant 5 described,

> Whenever I discuss goals with a student, even if they don't initially intend to declare their interests, I always write it down on our shared Canvas page. I think me writing it down allows them to really read it and take it in. I also ask them to add to their goals over time. It is so important for the students to see the goals they started with and the one's they ended up moving forward with.

Outside Pressures. Although goal setting is an inspiring task for students to participate in, many advisors noted that clarifying their purpose is challenging when many students feel pressured to accomplish plans for their family members. As a trusted mentor, 92.8% (n=13) of the advisors attested that their students struggle with defining their own path without the influence of other expectations. Participant 7 detailed,

> One of my students struggles with making sure that she can make a life for her entire family. However, I can tell that the purpose of staying in the major is to make money. The student is not happiest in this plan and she has openly admitted that to me.

Additionally, Participant 3 stated,

> Students can find it easier to continue to live in their parent's wishes rather than to define their own path. That is where I try to build confidence in why they question the current path they are on. I try to have a discussion about what their future would look like if they decided on a path that was not for them.

Within the past year, the advisors also pointed out the outside pressures are also related to financial pressures related to the pandemic. Participant 2 exclaimed, "My students are in search of stability. They will ask me what is an occupation where I can make money and where I will keep my job?"

Develop Integrity. The last vector of Chickering's (1969) psychosocial theory of student identity development is developing integrity. Developing integrity is defined as a student's ability to clarify a set of values and beliefs which provide a guide for behavior (Chickering, 1969). The interview participants were asked to describe a time when they helped to develop integrity within an undergraduate student. More specifically, they were asked to describe the practices they use to help students to clarify a set of values and beliefs. The researcher found that when developing integrity, the advisors worked on cultivating individual potential and reevaluating with their students.

Cultivate Individual Potential. Overall, 78.5% (n=11) of the respondents believed that the only way to allow students to form their own belief system is to give them the respect and confidence they need to create it. More specifically, the advisors continually practice building students up so that they can believe in their own potential. Participant 1 exclaimed, "I think that helping students to cultivate their own potential to see how that potential not only can serve others but is necessary. They need to know that their voice is important and really matters." Additionally, Participant 1 continued to articulate the value of describing their role in the greater community. "I want them to see their role in the much larger story you know and really reiterate that they have something to offer no matter where they are they offer something that others can't." To enable students to see the value of their potential is to allow them to respect themselves fully. Participant 6 declared,

> It kind of starts with respecting and valuing yourself above others. If I can instill that in my students, then they will value their own opinion and path. This allows them to be confident in their beliefs and to let them guide their future plans.

Participant 3 also said, "The best feeling is when they believe. I had a student recently who said I can't believe I did it. I said of course you did you worked really hard." As advisors try to instill confidence in their students, they also want to make sure their students are realistic about the challenge of developing integrity. Participant 7 explained,

> I always let me students know that creating their own beliefs that are not determined or influenced by others will always be challenging. Others will always try to sway you one way. I try to remind them that it is okay to struggle in this area. It is an area that everyone continues to grow in.

Reevaluate. The last theme that came from the advisors' responses was to have their students challenge their previously created values and beliefs. Of the advisors, 50% (n=7) acknowledge that this stage in development should also enable their students to reevaluate their previous choices. Participant 2 said,

> Often times I have this talk with my students. I will say originally you thought this path was for you, what changed, what made you say this isn't for your anymore. And what will be the right direction. I think we are seeing a lot this right now. The pandemic has forced students to reevaluate their beliefs.

Additionally, Participant 3 felt the same way by stating,

> My students' personal beliefs have been shifted by the pandemic. This has impacted their academic beliefs. We have seen many students have an interest in the health sciences

> now. It is apparent that they are connecting what they are going through with a newfound value.

Other advisors outlined the impact the study aboard can have on students as they develop integrity. Participant 7 described, “When I speak with students who are returning from studying abroad their understanding of who they are and what their goals are have changed. Their experience has impacted who they are and what their goals are.” Other advisors mentioned the value of reassuring their students that change is inevitable. Participant 4 exclaimed, “After an academic experience, I always tell my students it is okay to allow yourself room to question what you thought was your future path. Life is about possibilities so that is okay.” Similarly, Participant 8 responded,

> I always ask them to think of different paths. You should always provide yourself room to grow. Sometimes I think students are so comfortable with one path that they get anxious about the thought of something else lingering. I want them to reevaluate what they want to contribute to the world. They can do this by talking to me and being open to alternatives.

Summary

To answer this study’s research questions, 54 undergraduate professional advisors from medium-sized, New England colleges and institutions completed a demographic survey. The results from the survey illustrated detailed background information surrounding the specific population. After taking the survey, 14 undergraduate professional advisors from medium-sized, New England colleges and institutions were interviewed to determine the practices they use that align with student identity development. More specifically, the interview questions aimed to measure the practices advisors use that align with Chickering’s (1969) psychosocial theory for student identity development. Categories and themes emerged from the data that enabled the researcher to answer the research questions. The emergent themes present a common road map that the population used to develop their students.

Overall, the survey responses depicted the current backgrounds of undergraduate professional advisors. The population was mainly female professional advisors with master's degree in higher education leadership or organizational management concentrations. The results found that the majority of participants work at institutions that employ a shared advising model while using both prescriptive and developmental approaches. Additionally, of the population, most of them work at private colleges or public universities, with an average caseload of over 130 students per semester.

This background information also informed the interview themes. After coding the data, it is evident that the themes illustrate that professional advisors use practices that contribute to student identity development by using a student-focused and developmental philosophy. More importantly, the results also found that professional advisors use practices that align with Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of student identity development. For instance, when developing competence, the advisors employed practices like role playing and ownership to initiate critical thinking skills. To help students manage their emotions, the advisors typically practiced validating their students and asking them to reflect on their behavior. When developing autonomy in their students, the advisors consistently used vulnerability while identifying resources that would allow them to act independently. Due the pandemic, many advisors noted that establishing identity with their students surrounded practices like acknowledging and listening to their current fears and thoughts. To help their students build interpersonal relationships, the researcher found that advisors provided feedback and a differing perspective to allow them to understand the value of different viewpoints. The partnership between the advisor and the student was powerful as the respondents discussed helping their students to set personal and professional plans. The advisors utilized practices like goal setting and recognizing outside influences. Lastly, when the advisors aimed to develop integrity within their students, they did this by building allowing them to cultivate their own potential while also reevaluating their previous goals.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine how undergraduate professional advisors used practices that align with student identity development, specifically Chickering's (1969) seven vectors. By surveying and interviewing undergraduate professional advisors who are employed by medium-sized, New England colleges and universities, the researcher was able to categorize themes that answered the research questions. This chapter presents the interpretation of the findings from the distinct themes. Moreover, it introduces the findings to previous literature as well as future recommendations for the higher education industry.

Previous student advising literature has a lack of research regarding professional advisor practices (Gordon et al., 2011; He et al., 2020; Pardee, 2004). This researcher aimed to provide a detailed perspective of current undergraduate professional advisors as it pertained to developmental advising. Although there are extensive discussions regarding advising approaches like prescriptive and developmental, this study emphasized the unique practices of this specific advisor population in relation to student development throughout their college experience (Crookston, 1994; O'Banion, 1994; Snyder, 2018). Additionally, the participants were surveyed and interviewed during COVID-19 in February of 2021. Therefore, this study provided an exclusive discussion into the approaches of the undergraduate professional advisors during an unprecedented time in the world, and in higher education. Current studies on the global pandemic have found that COVID-19 has exacerbated college students' mental health as well as students' academic outcomes (Lederer et al., 2021). Thus, this chapter will dissect the current findings as they are significant to current students who have experienced COVID-19. The interpretation of the findings aimed to connect the results to greater themes and previous literature. Using the overarching research themes, the research articulates implications for educational policies, practices, and approaches. In addition, this chapter recommends actions that academic administrators, advising leaders, advisors, and researchers should focus on in the coming years to continue to challenge the field of advising to innovate.

Interpretations of Findings

After an analysis of the themes that came from the survey and interview results, five overarching themes emerged that provided insight into the current practices of undergraduate professional advisors as it pertained to student identity development. This section discusses and highlights the overarching themes and how they contribute to or challenge existing literature. After interpreting the results, the researcher identified that specific advising models are significant to the way advising is provided on college campuses. Next, the researcher concluded that for the professional advisor practices to initiate student identity development there must a balanced relationship between the advisor and the student that is grounded in trust. Since the study specifically highlighted professional advising practices that aligned with Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of student identity development, it is imperative to note that student identity development is an important theory of advising. Since advising and retention are interconnected, this study's findings articulate how professional advisor practices align with previous retention and student persistence literature. Lastly, it is evident that professional advisors have extensive experience in helping their students develop cognitively, and emotionally, while improvement and training is needed in areas pertaining to social identities.

Significance of Advising Models

By aiming to determine if professional advisor practices align with student identity development, this study highlighted the variety of advising models that medium-sized colleges and universities in New England utilized. Based on previous literature, the advising model employed at a college or institution can set the framework for the types of advising support that students receive (Barker & Mamiseishvili, 2014; Carlstrom & Miller, 2013; Pardee, 2004). The advising model details the advising philosophy of the institution as well as those who are responsible for advising students (Barker & Mamiseishvili, 2014; Carlstrom & Miller, 2013; Pardee, 2004). Within this study, professional advisors were asked to detail the advising model at their workplace as well as the advising theories and approaches used. Since higher education institutions are continuing to move towards shared or centralized advising models to offer more than one advisor on campus, this study investigated the advising models to inform future decisions (Kot, 2014; Pardee, 2004). The results indicated that professional advisors work in either a shared advising model or a centralized advising model.

Advising models were discussed frequently due to the structure that they create on a college campus. Based on the specific advising model used, students could have one advisor, or more than one advisor. Previous literature articulated that there are benefits and challenges within each model (King, 2008; Pardee, 2004). However, this study determined that professional advisors worked at mainly private or public colleges that use a shared model where a student had a professional advisor and a faculty advisor (Pardee, 2004). Additionally, professional advisors worked in a centralized model where the professional advisor worked in a central unit or center (Barker & Mamiseishvili, 2014; Habley, 1983; Pardee, 2004). These findings challenge Pardee's (2004) conclusion that private colleges typically employ a faculty-only advising model.

Since professional advisors work in a shared or centralized advising model, medium-sized, New England private and public colleges and institutions are currently providing their students with more advising support from staff who are trained and educated in a plethora of student developmental theories and strategies. In addition, these findings could confirm that, in future, colleges and universities need to understand why a shared or centralized advising model has been implemented at medium-sized New England colleges and universities (He et al., 2020). Overall, it is clear that advising models play a large role in deciding how advising is carried out at an institution. For institutions that are looking to utilize the expertise of professional advisors, this study's findings suggest that a shared or centralized model should be implemented.

Balanced Advising Relationship

The professional advisor interview responses clearly indicated the prominence of the advisor creating a relationship with their student that is built on a variety of qualities and characteristics. To establish these practices, the professional advisors highlighted that it is their responsibility to ensure that students buy-in to the relationship by being active and engaged participants. Some of the professional advising accounts heavily stated that providing a safe space for students is essential to creating more than a transactional relationship. Also, the professional advisors believed that empowerment could enable students to see that their college experience is something that they are in control of. These findings are significant practices to implement prior to initiating student identity development.

Since professional advisors aim to create safety and empowerment, those themes align with current literature on Generation Z student needs (Barber, 2020; Giunta, 2017; Mohr & Mohr, 2016; Robbins, 2020; Seemiller & Grace, 2015). For instance, studies on Generation Z described that students are looking for a trusted mentor before developing a relationship (Giunta, 2017; Mohr & Mohr, 2016). These professional advisor practices connect to current Generation Z student needs which includes a relationship with an advisor that extends to personal growth and development (Barber, 2020; Giunta, 2017; Mohr & Mohr, 2016; Robbins, 2020; Seemiller & Grace, 2015). Specifically, since professional advisors use developmental approaches like safety, empowerment, and connection, this study argued for the expansion of these advisor positions as Generation Z students continue to enter environment of higher learning.

Due to COVID-19, students' mental health and academic abilities have been challenged due to a lack of personal interaction with academic leaders and mentors (Son et al., 2020; Lederer et al., 2021). For these reasons, professional advisors who practice creating an environment built on safety and connection should be hired and valued to assist students with the new challenges that the pandemic created for students everywhere (Son et al., 2020; Lederer et al., 2021). In addition, since the results emphasized a balanced advising relationship, professional advisors will be able to instill a renewed sense of confidence in student's social, emotional, and academic abilities. The current study concluded that professional advisors aim to be equal partners during a student's educational journey, which makes them suitable support mentors for current and future college students.

Chickering's (1969) Student Identity Development in Professional Advising

Although Chickering (1969) created a framework for student identity development, there is little known research on how educators or advisors try to initiate this development within their students. Specifically, literature has not examined each of Chickering's (1969) seven vectors and the thoughts that current advisors have when meeting with their students. Therefore, the themes that were found suggested that current undergraduate professional advisors employ practices that align with the seven vectors which include developing competence, managing emotions, developing autonomy, establishing identity, interpersonal relationships, clarifying purpose, and developing integrity (Chickering, 1969). This study found a unique correlation between the practices of current professional advisors and Chickering's (1969) psychosocial theory. When focusing on the second research question, which asked how professional advisor practices align with Chickering’s (1969) student identity development theory, the themes that were found uniquely aligned with each of the seven vectors. Since this study found that professional advisor practices are developmental, it confronts Gordon et al. (2011) and King’s (1993) declaration that professional advisors only use prescriptive practices when meeting with students. However, the findings also affirm that professional advisors in this study have knowledge of student development theories (King, 1993; Gordon et al., 2011). These practices in connection with Chickering’s (1969) seven vectors align with previous findings that found that students’ rate of satisfaction was higher when the advisor practiced developmental approaches (Harris, 2018).

Previous scholars noted that using student development theory is essential for advisors as they aim to form long lasting relationships with their students (Chandler, 1975; Dillard, 2017; Nash et al., 1975). The alignment of professional advisor practices and Chickering’s (1969) seven vectors is novel in comparison to the literature reviewed because those scholars have yet to connect Chickering’s (1969) theory to the everyday practices of professional advisors. Since there is a link between advising and student identity development it argues for the significance of advising students beyond academic pursuits or concerns. Chickering (1969) created this theory to detail and outline a college student’s developmental cycle throughout their entire experience by requiring higher education administrators to be responsible for taking students through the seven vectors. Although Chickering’s (1969) student identity development theory is dated, it is evident that professional advisors connect with the vectors in relation to their practices as mentors.

Since professional advisors use a student-focused theory, they are committed to leading their approaches solely based on the needs and desires of the student. Since a college experience is framed by professors and other academic administrators, it is important that professional advisors provide their students with confidence to lead their own developmental experience

(Fosnacht et al., 2017; Marcus, 2012; Young-Jones et al., 2013). These results also emphasize previous studies that focus on the lack of satisfaction student have with faculty advisors because of little student focus (Allen & Smith, 2008; Beal & Noel, 1980; Coll & Zalaquett, 2007; Fosnacht et al., 2017; Marcus, 2012; Young-Jones et al., 2013). In comparison to professional advisor philosophies, previous student feedback surveys reported dissatisfaction with faculty advisors because they lot of competing commitments which results in a lack of time with each student. These findings articulate that professional advisors do have practices that are student focused. Also, this result confirms that current undergraduate professional advisors are focused on developing students holistically through their advising relationship. This result is significant to current advising literature, since little was known about the specific approaches of professional advisors. This study's findings highlight that professional advisors are intentionally meeting with students to initiate development in partnership with them.

More specifically, within the qualitative interview results the professional advisors were the most knowledgeable about cognitive, social, and emotional student development. These findings are novel in relation to current advising literature as well as student development theory research because articulating intentional approaches to develop a student's critical thinking, social, and emotional skills have yet to be discovered (Chickering, 1969). Moreover, these findings related to Kot's (2014) findings that professional advisors contributed to an increase in student grade point averages in comparison to other students who did not meet with professional advisors. These findings suggested that professional advisors aim to contribute to how students are developing cognitively through the practice of communication. Additionally, it is evident that professional advisors understand the importance of their students personally connecting and taking power over their current and future academic journey.

Professional Advisor Practices & Student Persistence

Academic advising and student persistence have been connected throughout higher education literature (Barbera et al., 2020; Crecelius & Crosswhite, 2020; Tinto, 2017; Tippetts et al., 2020). Since this study on professional advisor practices identified specific practices that align with student identity development, it is imperative to understand how the findings apply to student persistence. Previous literature articulated that a student-centered approach plays a key role in higher retention and graduation rates (Barbera et al., 2020). After interviewing 14 professional advisors, 100% (n=14) of the professional advisors articulated that they have a student-centered or a student-focused approach. According to Melander (2002), to have a student-centered advising philosophy, advisors can no longer just pass on advice or information, but the sessions should be focused on preparing the student toward the development of attitudes, skills as a student, person, and community member. Since professional advisors use a student-centered approach that focuses on development, this study's findings correlate to previous student persistence literature that argues that student and advisor interactions can lead to a higher retention rate and a higher likelihood that students persist (Tinto, 2017; Tippetts et al., 2020). Moreover, since professional advisor practices consisted of establishing rapport and connectedness, the findings connect with current persistence literature that suggested that retention is correlated to creating a long-lasting relationship with a student (Tippetts et al., 2020). Similarly, when asked about developing independence within their students, professional advisors noted that they do use practices like vulnerability and identifying resources. These practices are important to student persistence since Tinto (2017) found that academic advising is vital to student persistence since the experience should allow them to have confidence making their own decisions.

Within the interviews, there was no mention of retention or student persistence as a driving catalyst for why the professional advisors chose to develop students beyond academic progression or interests. Since student development and professional advisor practices were the focus of the survey and interview, little is known about professional advisor feelings and thoughts in regard to retention and student persistence.

Inexperience with Social Identity Development

The results from this study suggest there are many strengths of professional advisor practices, however, it is essential to highlight weaknesses that were found. When discussing helping a student to initiate recognition of self, regarding their physical appearance, gender, race or sexual orientation, the professional advisors declared a lack of experience and education surrounding these topics. This theme correlated to previous literature which discussed that there is a critical need for social justice education for academic advisors (Edwards, 2006; Selzer & Rouse, 2013). They articulated that since academic advisors are gatekeepers for students transitioning to college communities, they play a pivotal role in a student's first impression of college culture (Edwards, 2006; Selzer & Rouse, 2013). More specifically, previous scholars have identified a connection between developmental and holistic advising approaches since advisors aim to support students as they are developing through various identities (Edwards, 2006; Selzer & Rouse, 2013).

Therefore, since this study emphasized the lack of confidence that current professional advisors have in initiating these meaningful identity developmental interactions, this topic needs to be expanded upon in future studies. Although many of the professional advisors stated that they made their students feel heard, they did not feel comfortable discussing areas of diversity, equity or inclusion. Many of the professional advisors discussed that they would try to find students a community where they could have those types of discussions. In short, this theme highlights a key insight into an area in which professional advisors need professional development (Edwards, 2006; Selzer & Rouse, 2013). As professional advisors connect with diverse students every day, it is the organization's responsibility to put social justice education at the forefront of their development (Edwards, 2006; Selzer & Rouse, 2013).

Implications

The current study has practical implications for advisors and higher learning institutions. The research advocating for the critical nature of academic advising in higher education is widespread. Today, current advising literature has yet to focus on professional advisor perspectives and practices. This study's focus and findings inform the professional advising community by arguing for the significance of the role that they have when interacting with college students. More specifically, it highlights the depth of knowledge they have regarding student development. Beyond prescriptive tasks such as registration or course withdrawals, professional advisors intentionally initiate discussions surrounding student cognitive, social, emotional, identity, and career development. This study enables current and future higher education leaders to define the clear difference between the benefits of having a professional advisor versus a faculty advisor. In short, these results require academic administrators to ask themselves about if environments of higher learning are currently developing their student through their advising structure and philosophy. This study will force colleges and institutions to challenge their own way of thinking about advising, and how it can be more connected to developing the whole student as a person, and future professional.

Since this study focuses on the expertise and approaches of professional advisors, higher education leaders must continue this research. Without continued investigation into the topic, current practices could continue to negatively impact student satisfaction rates on advising.

An impactful implication of this research is that current leaders must recognize that institutional policies should not continue to utilize a faculty-only advising model. Although this study did not focus on a faculty-only advising model, previous researchers articulated issues surrounding faculty-only advising policies (Kot, 2014; Steele & Wykes, 2019; Steingass & Sykes, 2008). Due to decreases in faculty advisor satisfaction rates, higher education institutions have shifted from a decentralized advising model to a shared or centralized advising model (Gordon et al., 2011; He et al., 2020; King, 1993; Pardee, 2004). This study emphasized the need to challenge advising models to provide current and future students with more advising options. Since the professional advisors were educated on all the important developmental stages of college students, it is imperative that colleges and institutions adjust their advising policies to incorporate highly trained advisors who are committed to their own education as well as the growth of their students.

Lastly, if current colleges and institutions continue to rely on faculty advisors, it is critical to provide professional development opportunities. For instance, surveys concluded that the largest weakness in faculty advising is the lack of knowledge pertaining to student development theories (Gordon et al., 2011; He et al., 2020; Hutson & Hutson, 2017; King, 1993). Therefore, there is a strong argument for policymakers to ensure that faculty advisors receive the appropriate training prior to interacting with students. Previous literature articulated that faculty advisors would like to use developmental approaches; however, they do not feel that they are prepared to have those discussions with their students (He et al., 2020). In short, this study emphasized the value of having advisors who are educated on various levels of student growth and development. In the future, it is crucial that policymakers place professional development at the forefront of future advising initiatives.

Recommendation for Action

After reviewing the results, it is crucial for the higher education industry to shift their mindset onto the work and experience of professional advisors. Specifically, when colleges and institutions start to adjust previous structures to support the future incoming classes who experienced over a year of online learning due to COVID-19, it is essential to assess their advising structure and model. Conducting thorough assessments could enable leaders in higher learning environments to question if their advising philosophy, advising outcomes, advisor trainings, and who has the responsibility of advising is positioned accurately. Moreover, academic administrators must assess advising by speaking with high school administrators and current college students to better establish the advising support they need.

Beyond assessing current advising structures, hiring managers must see the value in creating more opportunities for professional advisors to connect with students. According to Lederer et al. (2021), higher education institutions need to make an investment in student success by allocating funds to student support services like academic advising. More importantly, academic administrators should recognize that students need highly trained advisors who can identify students in need and the resources that are essential (Lederer et al., 2021). Based on the findings of this study, professional advisors are highly trained educators who are well-versed in student development theories and more importantly, how to apply those theories in practice.

In the future, academic administrators should focus on creating advisor trainings that detail theories and how they can be applied to advisor practices. For instance, future trainings should be based on Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of student identity development. Academic administrators should use the themes created through this study to generate a framework to educate future advisors. It is necessary for advisors to be educated on student identity development as well as other student development theories, to examine the variety of ways that these theories can be incorporated into the work they do with their students.

Moreover, as articulated within the overarching themes, higher education administrators should concentrate on educating faculty and professional advisors on social identities. Specifically, they need to focus on investing in training programs like intergroup dialogue to prepare advisors with knowledge on how to have a dialogue with students surrounding challenging areas like diversity, equity, and inclusion. This recommendation for action is critical as current and future Generation Z students are living through controversy surrounding racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation diversity (Barber, 2020; Edwards, 2006; Seemiller & Grace, 2015; Selzer & Rouse, 2013; Tippetts et al., 2020). It is critical that students are paired with well-educated and unbiased advisors who have confidence to help students establish their identity as they grow during their college experiences.

In relation to specific student populations, this research advises that higher education leaders hire professional advisors to work with student populations such as those who are on academic probation, first-generation, first-year, and transfer students. These actions are recommended based on the educational expertise of professional advisors. Additionally, since the professional advisor practices align with the seven vectors that span through a student's social, emotional, cognitive, identity, and career development, it is evident that professional advisors are more knowledgeable about specific practices to use based on student needs.

Lastly, it is recommended that the higher education industry recognize the professional nature of academic advising. The history of the higher education industry has typically left advising to be a second responsibility to faculty who also have competing commitments. This study argues for the emphasis on how academic advising is a professional career, one which requires specific education and experience. Therefore, higher education leaders should recognize that advising needs to be a service from the college or institution that employs professional advisors who are fully committed to helping students throughout their academic journey. This includes investing money in implementing new advising structures like centers or units to emphasize that advising is an important aspect of every student's experience.

Recommendation for Further Study

Although this study filled a gap within current advising literature, the results highlight significant areas that need to be investigated in the future. Based on this study's results as well as current advising literature, future researchers should continue to focus on professional advisor populations (Gordon et al., 2011; Kot, 2014; Pardee, 2004). This advisor population continues to lack approaches to diverse student groups. Since this qualitative study aimed to determine the practices of undergraduate professional advisors, future studies should understand professional advisor practices that are grounded in other theories. For instance, many of the professional advisors noted approaches such appreciative inquiry, career development, and cognitive development that have yet to be connected to the practices that they use with students. Therefore, by incorporating different theories into future studies, it will enable advising literature to discover the various approaches that professional advisors use with their students and why. Furthermore, understanding how they apply theories to their advising work could enable professional advisor trainings to emphasize specific theories based on future study's findings.

Based on this study's theoretical framework of Chickering's (1969) psychosocial theory for student identity development, it is recommended that perspective studies survey professional advisors on the most significant vector they use consistently throughout their interactions with students. Determining the most significant vector that professional advisors focus on could create a new advising approach grounded in Chickering's (1969) psychosocial theory. Additionally, it could highlight specific developmental areas where advisors need the most support. Moreover, Chickering's (1969) student identity development theory was initially created to distinguish vectors of development that students should move through based on their cohort-level. Chickering (1969) originally believed that age and development was correlated, and the vectors could be used as a roadmap for educators. Thus, researchers should measure if professional advisors believe that age is connected to a student's development through the vectors or if it is a continuous development cycle. This potential study topic could allow researchers to discover if current professional advisors believe that student identity development is a fluid process where students should be continually revisiting each vector throughout their academic journey.

Beyond specific professional advising practices, it is significant that future scholars determine the decision-making process of academic administrators as it pertains to the advising structure of their institution. For instance, this study's current findings highlighted that professional advisors are used at medium-sized, New England private and public colleges and universities. It is imperative that advising literature understands how and why certain advising structures are used at higher education institutions. Additionally, qualitative studies should be used to establish why specific advising models were selected. For instance, academic administrators should be interviewed to clarify why they implemented a centralized, decentralized, or shared model at their institution. These future studies could allow other institutions to initiate this type of transformational and strategic decision-making to better evolve their advising structures and models to suit their advisors and students.

Since this study articulates the extensive developmental practices of professional advisors, it is imperative to study if specific advising models are connected to retention rates. To better emphasize the innovation and significance of adjusting advising structures and models, it is essential that future researchers initiate a longitudinal study during institutions' transition from one advising model to another. Quantifying how an advising model can negatively or positively impact an institution's retention rate allows college and universities to allocate funding to enhance advising. Also, future findings could suggest the importance of making meaningful change that is grounded in student needs.

When generating more research surrounding professional advising, it is significant to include student perspectives. Future research should focus on professional advising outcomes and how they connect with student ratings. Future assessments would benefit from this approach because they would highlight the connection between the professional advisors' intentions, with the way that students react to the information. Additionally, the perspective of the students is helpful in establishing areas where professional advisors could improve upon. For instance, students could articulate if professional advisors are too prescriptive or too developmental in approach. By ensuring that the student perspective is effectively communicated within professional advising literature, it guarantees that advisors are always evolving with current student needs. Future studies should investigate student perspectives of their experience with professional advisors in comparison to faculty advisors. Understanding the student's perspective will enable institutions to see the benefits of certain types of advisors as well as what current students need. This study topic is critical, as advising should always be based on the evolution of what students are expecting from their mentors during their college experience. Without the continuous examination of student desires, it will be challenging to always have an advising structure that aligns with the key stakeholder, the college student. Future research should understand how professional advisors advise them, as well as what type of development they feel they need.

Previous retention and advising literature emphasize the need for specific advising approaches based on specific student populations (Gutierrez et al., 2020; Heissrer & Parette, 2002; McGill et al., 2020; Robbins, 2020). However, research fails to identify how professional advisors advise specific student populations like first-generation, first-year, academic probation, student-athletes, graduate, or doctoral candidates. Future research should focus on specific student populations as it pertains to the advising practices that professional advisors use.

Finally, future advising studies should focus on how COVID-19 impacted professional and faculty advisor practices and interactions with students. As stated previously, COVID-19 has impacted the ways in which students develop mentally, emotionally, and physically. Because of this unprecedented time, advising and higher education researchers have a responsibility to initiate studies based on how advisors and students adjusted during this time. It is critical to discover how advisor practices were impacted, as well as the new ways advising was delivered.

Conclusion

This qualitative study highlighted critical practices that current undergraduate professional advisors use at medium-sized, New England colleges and universities. Based on the themes found after surveying and interview professional advisors, the findings suggested that when professional advisors meet with students that they intentionally focused on initiating identity development within their students. More importantly, this literature filled previous gaps within advising research that articulated the specific application of Chickering’s (1969) seven vectors of student identity development. According to Hu et al. (2020), due to COVID-19, professional advisors must respond innovatively to provide alternative approaches to ensure student learning and development. Therefore, since this study exemplified how professional advisors develop and partner in a student’s cognitive, social, emotional, identity, and career development process, it is imperative that higher education leaders adjust advising models to promote student success, satisfaction, and retention (Hart-Baldridge, 2020; Tinto, 2004; Zhang et al., 2019). To enhance student development within higher education, colleges and universities need to guarantee students a professional advisor who has experience implementing developmental practices (Hunter & White, 2004; Williamson et al., 2014).

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Appendix A: List of Medium-Sized New England Colleges & Universities

Connecticut
Central Connecticut State University
Eastern Connecticut State University
Fairfield University
Goodwin College
Post University
Quinnipiac University
Sacred Heart University
Southern Connecticut State University
Trinity College
University of Bridgeport
University of Hartford
University of New Haven
University of Saint Joseph
Wesleyan University
Western Connecticut State University
Yale University

Maine
Husson University
University of Maine
University of Maine at Augusta
University of Maine at Farmington

Massachusetts
American International College
Assumption College
Babson College
Bay Path University
Bentley University
Berklee College of Music
Boston College
Brandeis University
Bridgewater State University
Cambridge College
Clark University
College of the Holy Cross
Curry College
Emerson College
Emmanuel College
Endicott College
Fitchburg State University
Framingham State University
Lasell College
Lesley University

MCPHS University
Massachusetts College of Art and Design
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Merrimack College
Mount Holyoke College
Quincy College
Regis College
Salem State University
Simmons University
Smith College
Springfield College
Stonehill College
Suffolk University
Tufts University
University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth
Wellesley College
Wentworth Institute of Technology
Western New England University
Westfield State University
Williams College
Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Worcester State University

New Hampshire
Dartmouth College
Franklin Pierce University
Granite State College
Keene State College
New England College
Plymouth State University
Rivier University
Saint Anselm College

Rhode Island
Brown University
Bryant University
Johnson and Wales University
New England Institute of Technology
Providence College
Rhode Island College
Rhode Island School of Design
Roger Williams University
Salve Regina University

Vermont
Castleton University

Champlain College
Middlebury College
Northern Vermont University
Norwich University
University of Vermont

Appendix B: Email to Potential Participants

Subject: Research Study Participant Search

Dear Professional Advisor,

I am a doctoral student at the University of New England. I am working on my dissertation, "Professional Advisor Practices for Student Identity Development." I am looking for volunteers to participate in a survey and potentially a follow-up interview. The criterion to participate in this study include:

- Current Professional Academic Advisor
  To qualify for this criteria, a professional advisor is defined as, "Professional advisors primary role focuses on providing academic and support services for students. Professional advisors are generally housed in a central location, spend a full day in their offices and devote the majority of their time providing academic advising to students" (King, 1993, p.51).
- Currently academically advising undergraduate students enrolled at a college or university
  To qualify for this criterion, the advisor must be meeting with undergraduate college students regularly to discuss course registration, degree progression, and career development throughout the week. More importantly, the professional advisor must be advising a currently enrolled undergraduate student.
- Currently employed at a medium-sized, college or university in New England
- Eighteen years of age or older

A survey will be conducted through an online software called REDCap that is linked here. REDCap will used to show the survey questions as well as store the survey responses. Moreover, I would like to invite you to share this survey link with your team or other colleagues who match the research criteria. Additionally, interviews will be conducted through an online communication platform such as Zoom and are expected to last approximately 30 to 90 minutes. The researcher will discuss and review a consent form at the beginning of the interview, at which time volunteers will be asked to sign the form. For online interviews, an electronic signature and emailed consent form will be accepted. Also, volunteers will have an opportunity to review a transcript of the interview and compiled data to ensure that information was accurately captured. The identity and privacy of all participants will be protected.

I'd very much appreciate your help, and your input will benefit other advisors and students in the future.

Thank you,

Brittany Potter

Appendix C: Demographic Survey Questionnaire

1. Are you a current member of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA)?
    a. Yes
    b. No
2. How long have you been a professional academic advisor?
    a. 0-2 years
    b. 3-5 years
    c. 6-8 years
    d. 9+ years
3. How long have you been an undergraduate professional academic advisor at your current institution?
    a. Less than a year
    b. 0-2 years
    c. 3-5 years
    d. 6-8 years
    e. 9+ years
4. How many institutions have you been employed at as a professional academic advisor?
    a. 0-2 institutions
    b. 3-5 institutions
    c. 6-8 institutions
    d. 9 or more institutions
5. What is your age?
    a. 0-15
    b. 16-31
    c. 32-47
    d. 48-63
    e. 64+
6. What is your gender identity?
    a. Female
    b. Male
    c. Non-binary
    d. Gender neutral
    e. Transgender
    f. I do not wish to specify my gender identity.
7. What is your highest level of education?
    a. High school diploma
    b. Associate’s Degree
    c. Bachelor's Degree
    d. Master’s Degree
    e. Doctoral Degree
    f. No diploma

    g. Other: (please describe)
8. Please write in the concentration/field of study of your highest level of education.
9. What type of higher educational institution do you work at?
    a. Private college
    b. Public college
    c. Private university
    d. Public university
    e. Vocational school
    f. Other (open response)
10. What type of advising model does your institution have?
    a. Shared advising model: "where some advisors meet with students in a central administrative unit (i.e., an advising center), while others advise student in the academic department of their discipline" (Pardee, 2004, para. 3). This model incorporates the use of both faculty and professional advisors (Pardee, 2004).
    b. Decentralized advising model: "a faculty only model where all students are assigned to a department advisor, usually a professor from the student's academic discipline" (Pardee, 2004, para. 6).
    c. Centralized advising model: "where professional and faculty advisors are housed in one academic or administrative unit" (Pardee, 2004, para. 3).
    d. Other: (please describe)
11. What is the total size of the undergraduate student body at your institution?
    a. 0-5,000
    b. 5,000-10,000
    c. 10,000-15,000
    d. 15,000-20,000
    e. 20,000-25,000
    f. 25,000+
12. How many undergraduate students do you approximately advise each semester?
    a. 0-30
    b. 30-60
    c. 60-90
    d. 100-130
    e. 130+
13. On average, how much time do you spend advising a student in individual appointments?
    a. 0-10 minutes
    b. 10-15 minutes
    c. 15-20 minutes
    d. 20-25 minutes
    e. 25+ minutes
14. When advising, what approach(es) do you use?

    a. Prescriptive advising: Prescriptive advising consists of academic advisors who advise by doing course selection and signing forms (Crookston, 1994). This form of advising is the most traditional model where the advisor holds the authority and is the sole decision-maker (Crookston, 1994).

b. Developmental advising: advising that goes beyond simply giving information or signing a form. Developmental academic advising recognizes the importance of interactions between the student and the campus environment, it focuses on the whole person, and it works with the student at that person's own life stage of development" (King, 2005, para.1).
c. Both
d. Neither
e. Other: (please describe)

15. Would you be interested in taking part in a follow-up interview?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. I would like more information.

Appendix D: Consent for Participation in Research

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND
CONSENT FOR PARTCIPATION IN RESEARCH

Project Title: PROFESSIONAL ADVISOR PRACTICES FOR STUDENT IDENTITY DEVELOPME

Principal Investigator(s): Brittany Potter, Graduate Student, University of New England
Email: bpotter3@une.edu Phone: (603)714-9022

Introduction:

- Please read this form. You may also request that the form is read to you. The purpose of this form is to give you information about this research study, and if you choose to participate, document that choice.
- You are encouraged to ask any questions that you may have about this study, now, during or after the project is complete. You can take as much time as you need to decide whether you want to participate. Your participation is voluntary.

Why is this research study being done?

This study seeks to identify the advising practices employed by undergraduate professional advisors as it applies to student development.

Who will be in this study?

To be selected the participant must meet the following requirements:

- Current Professional Advisor

To qualify for this criteria, a professional advisor is defined as, "Professional advisors primary role focuses on providing academic and support services for students. Professional advisors are generally housed in a central location, spend a full day in their offices and devote the majority of their time providing academic advising to students" (King, 1993, p.51).

- Currently advising undergraduate students enrolled at a New England college or university

To qualify for this criterion, the advisor must be meeting with undergraduate college students regularly to discuss course registration, degree progression, and career development throughout the week. More importantly, the professional advisor must be advising a currently enrolled undergraduate student.

- Currently employed at a medium-sized college or university in New England
- Eighteen years of age or older

What will I be asked to do?

- The researcher will discuss and review the consent form at the beginning of the interview, at which time the participant will be asked to sign the form. For online interviews, an electronic signature and emailed consent form will be accepted.
- Participate in an in-person or online communication platform interview (30 to 90 minutes).
- Review the typed transcript of the interview (30 to 60 minutes), and comment or make changes to transcripts via telephone, video call, email, or through an in-person interview.

What are the possible risks of taking part in this study?

- There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.
- You may skip or refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason.

What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?

- Although it is not expected that the participant receives any benefit from participation, the participant may acquire an understanding of professional advising strategies that contribute to student development.
- Your participation may also help educators understand the perspectives of professional advisors.

What will it cost me?

- There are no associated costs. In-person interviews will be conducted at a location that is local and convenient for the participant, and if this is not possible, online interviews will take place through a free communication platform.

How will my privacy be protected?

- Pseudonyms will be assigned to both the college and all participants
- Paper documents including the consent forms and transcripts will be stored in a locked file cabinet that only the investigator has access to. Documents will be maintained by the investigator for five years after the study is completed; after which they will be destroyed.
- Electronic documents will be stored on the password protected personal laptop of the investigator.
- Audio recordings of the interviews will remain with the principal investigator and erased after completion of the study.
- Transcripts will be sent to participants for review and information may be shared with the faculty advisor.

What are my rights as a research participant?

- Your participation is voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no impact on your current or future relations with the University.
- Your decision to participate will not affect your relationship with Brittany Potter.
- You may skip or refuse to answer any question for any reason.
- If you choose not to participate there is no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.
- You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason.
    - If you choose to withdraw from the research there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.
- You will be informed of any significant findings developed during the research that may affect your willingness to participate in the research.
- If you sustain an injury while participating in this study, your participation may be ended.

What other options do I have?

- You may choose not to participate.

Whom may I contact with questions?

- The researcher conducting this study is Brittany Potter. For more information regarding this study, please contact her at bpotter3@une.edu or via phone at (603)714-9022.
- If you choose to participate in this research study and believe you may have suffered a research related injury, please contact
- If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call Mary Bachman DeSilva, Sc.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board at (207) 221-4567 or irb@une.edu.

Will I receive a copy of this consent form?

- You will be given a copy of this consent form.

Participant's Statement

I understand the above description of this research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I agree to take part in the research and do so voluntarily.

______________________________________ ____________________

Participant's signature or Legally authorized representative — Date

____

Printed name

<u>Researcher's Statement</u>

The participant named above had sufficient time to consider the information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.

Researcher's signature | Date

Printed name

Appendix E: Structured Interview Protocol

1. What led you to become a professional undergraduate professional academic advisor?
2. Can you describe your experiences as an undergraduate professional academic advisor?
3. What kind of professional development have you received?
4. As an undergraduate professional advisor, what is your advising philosophy?
    a. Probe 1: What advising experiences led you to create this advising philosophy?
5. What type of advising approach do you use with your students?
    a. Probe 1: Why do you use that approach?
    b. Probe 2: How do you implement that approach with students?
6. Tell me about advising models or theories that inform your advising practices.
7. Can you describe what advising practices you use with your students?
    a. Probe 1: Can you describe what a standard advising session looks like for you and your students?
    b. Probe 2: Can you describe the types of topics you go over with your students during an advising session?
8. More specifically, can you describe what developmental advising practices you use?
    a. Probe 1: Additionally, can you describe what prescriptive advising practices you use?
9. Could you describe why you use certain advising practices with your students?
10. What practices do you use to develop a student's identity?
11. How familiar are you with Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of student identity development?
12. Do you utilize Chickering's (1969) seven vectors of student identity development when you advise?
    a. Probe 1: If yes, why do you use it?
    b. Probe 2: If no, what theories inform your advising practices?
13. Describe a time when you developed competence within an undergraduate student you advise. *Developing competence is defined as the student's ability to critically think and the ability to use their body and hands (Chickering, 1969).*
    a. Probe 1: What advising practices did you use to develop competence within the student?
    b. Probe 2: Why did you try to develop competence within the student?
    c. Probe 3: How did the student respond to this specific advising practice?
14. Describe a time when you managed emotions with an undergraduate student you advise. *Manage emotions is defined as a student's ability to understand certain social experiences through self-control as well as assessing those around them (Chickering, 1969).*
    a. Probe 1: What advising practices did you use to manage emotions within the student?
    b. Probe 2: Why did you try to manage emotions within the student?
    c. Probe 3: How did the student respond to this specific advising practice?

15. Describe a time when you developed autonomy within an undergraduate student you advise. *Developing autonomy is defined as the student's ability to be independent, which includes the ability to: carry on activities by coping with problems and to be portable in relation to one's needs or desires (Chickering, 1969).*
    a. Probe 1: What advising practices did you use when developing autonomy within the student?
    b. Probe 2: Why did you try to develop autonomy within the student?
    c. Probe 3: How did the student respond to this specific advising practice?
16. Describe a time when you established identity with an undergraduate student you advise. *Establishing identity is defined as a student's ability to acquire inner confidence through the recognition of self , which means to be secure regarding physical appearance, gender, race, and sexual orientation (Chickering, 1969).*
    a. Probe 1: What advising practices did you use to establish identity within the student?
    b. Probe 2: Why did you try to establish identity within the student?
    c. Probe 3: How did the student respond to this specific advising practice?
17. Describe a time when you developed interpersonal relationships with an undergraduate student you advise. *Interpersonal relationships is defined as the student's ability to deal with varying personalities that may not match their own outlook on life (Chickering, 1969).*
    a. Probe 1: What advising practices did you use to develop interpersonal relationships within the student?
    b. Probe 2: Why did you try to develop interpersonal relationships within the student?
    c. Probe 3: How did the student respond to this specific advising practice?
18. Describe a time when you clarified purpose within an undergraduate student you advise. *Clarifying purpose is defined as the student's ability to set career plans, personal dreams, and commitments to family and friends (Chickering, 1969).*
    a. Probe 1: What advising practices did you use to clarify purpose within the student?
    b. Probe 2: Why did you try to clarify purpose within the student?
    c. Probe 3: How did the student respond to this specific advising practice?
19. Describe a time when you developed integrity within an undergraduate student you advise. *Develop integrity is defined as a student's ability to clarify a set of values and beliefs which provide a guide for behavior (Chickering, 1969).*
    a. Probe 1: What advising practices did you use to develop integrity within the student?
    b. Probe 2: Why did you try to develop integrity within the student?
    c. Probe 3: How did the student respond to this specific advising practice?
20. After using advising practices that align with Chickering's (1969) student identity development, tell me what the student outcomes were.
    a. How did the student participate?