UNDERSTANDING ONLINE MILLENNIAL GENERATION STUDENTS' RELATIONSHIP

PERCEPTIONS WITH ONLINE ACADEMIC ADVISORS

By

Luke Anthony Hobson

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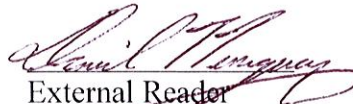Southern New Hampshire University

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Committee Member
Audrey Rogers, Ed.D.

External Reader
Daniel Tanguay, Ph.D.

Committee Member
Shanita Williams, Ed.D.

Director of Doctoral Studies
Matthew R. Moehle, Ph.D

Abstract

This explanatory sequential mixed methods study aims to understand the relationship perceptions of online Millennial Generation students with their online academic advisors. The study asks the question: How do online Millennial Generation students perceive their relationships with online academic advisors? This study surveyed 715 participants and interviewed seven participants from the Millennial Generation to learn their relationship perceptions with their online academic advisors. There were two phases of this mixed methods approach: quantitative and qualitative. These phases created an overall interpretation for the study, which produced four themes and three major findings. The four themes were connectivity, empathy, awareness, and encouragement. The three major findings indicated that online academic advisors are the main support system for online Millennial Generation students, online Millennial Generation students are empathetic towards their academic advisors and peers, and online Millennial Generation students appreciate their connections with their online academic advisors.

Keywords: millennial generation, academic advising, perceptions, relationships, online higher education

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In 2010, I graduated with a Bachelors, thinking I learned a bit. In 2012, I graduated with a Masters, thinking I learned a ton. In 2014, I entered a doctoral program, realizing I knew nothing. This program has changed who I am as a person. It has opened up countless doors that were never possible in my wildest dreams and I have many people to thank along the way.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The Millennial Generation defined as those between 1982-2000 (Howe & Strauss, 2000) is a generation unlike any other. This is a generation that has grown up with technology and desired a break from formal education (Arnett, 2004, p. 164). Since this generation is technologically savvy, the internet and online education have become a trustworthy resource (Karnjanaprakorn, 2018). A survey conducted by Northeastern University found that more than half of Millennials have taken an online course, double the rate compared to other generations (Zimmerman, 2018). With technology being second nature to many in this generation, enrollment rates of the Millennial Generation have risen in online education (Arnett, 2015).

Throughout higher education, the best supporting service to ensure that a student has every chance to succeed is academic advising (Habley, 1983). According to Habley (1983), "Academic advising is the only structured activity on the campus in which all students have the opportunity for one-to-one interaction with a concerned representative of the institution" (p. 3). Numerous studies corroborate Habely's theory in regard to student collaboration, communication, engagement, and relationship building with academic advisors (Bitz, 2010; Crookston, 1994; Hughey, 2011; Vianden & Barlow, 2015). The previously mentioned studies (Bitz, 2010; Crookston, 1994; Hughey, 2011; Vianden & Barlow, 2015) contributed benefits to the academic advising service, yet there is there is scant research that concludes best practices in online academic advising on how to engage, support, motivate, and retain online Millennial Generation students (Amador, 2011; Blashak, 2010).

Understanding the purpose and perceptions of relationships with online Millennial Generation students and online academic advisors is paramount due to the multiple meanings of the roles and practices of online academic advisors (Kuhn, 2008). According to Crookston (1994), "Perhaps the greatest difficulty is found in the differential meaning that faculty and students attach to the term advising" (p. 9). While this quote was mentioned in 1994, it holds true today because there is still a lack of clarity on what the term advising means to students and faculty.

Students, professors, faculty, and staff have interchangeably mentioned the term "academic advising" with all different purposes since the 17th century (Kuhn, 2008). Because academic advisors hold multiple interchangeable roles, college students have had difficulty in perceiving the roles of academic advisors, and therefore, have had variations and mixed relationships with academic advisors (Kuhn, 2008). As academic advising evolved into the digital age, Crookston's statement of the difficulty of understanding the term advising is still unclear.

Numerous researchers (Christian and Sprinkle, 2013; Davis and Cooper, 2001; Kuhn, 2008; Saving & Keim, 1998; Suvedi et al., 2015) support Crookston's claim on the difficulty of the meaning of academic advising; these researchers' studies also pertain to perceptions of college students in the face-to-face learning environment. These studies provided added more information on academic advising services pertaining to communication, engagement, support, motivation, and relationships between students and academic advisors. However, few researchers have explored the meaning of online advising especially for the Millennial Generation of students.

Once the information on relationship perceptions from online Millennial Generation students are collected and analyzed, the present study will provide beneficial information in regards to the qualities of the relationship between online academic advisors and online Millennial Generation students, which can be used for developing best practices for communicating, motivating, engaging, and supporting these students. As Millennials comprise an increasing percentage of the online market population, this information will only provide more useful answers in time (Arnett, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

There is a paucity of research in regards to online Millennial Generation students and the contexts, purposes, and the relationship perceptions with online academic advisors. The only similar form of research that has been conducted on relationships of academic advisors has been through the perspectives of Millennial Generation college students in the face-to-face classroom environment, not online (Bitz, 2010; Keeling, 2003). The lack of knowledge on these topics calls for more research to be conducted to fully understand how online Millennial Generation students perceive their relationships with online academic advisors and how to best support online Millennial Generation students.

Before looking into more effective methods of support for the Millennial generation of students, however, academic advisors would be well served to first understand how this generation perceives their relationships and how their relationships with students impact their success. These relationship perceptions are crucial to the success of a college student in regards to persistence, retention, communication, support, motivation, engagement, and their overall success in the classroom (Crookston, 1994;

Keeling, 2003; Kuhn, 2008; & Lowenstein, 2005). Lowenstein (2005) supported this line of thinking when he asserted, "The advisor is arguably the most important person in the student's educational world" (p. 72). The academic advisor relationship is pertinent to any college student's persistence throughout a program. Researchers have demonstrated the impact of not having a strong relationship between student and academic advisor in the face-to-face environment (Crookston, 1994; Kuhn, 2008). Relationship perceptions of online academic advisors have not been addressed in the context of an online Millennial Generation student and needs further research.

Researchers have contributed to the literature of understanding relationship perceptions between academic advisors and traditional college students (Bitz, 2010; Christian & Sprinkle, 2013; Davis & Cooper, 2001; Habley, 1983; Hughey, 2011; Kuhn, 2008; Saving & Keim, 1998; Suvedi et al., 2015; Vianden & Barlow, 2015). Several studies specifically focused on Millennial Generation students in regards to perceptions and relationships with academic advisors (Keeling, 2003; & Montag et al., 2012). These studies, however, did not research online Millennial Generation students, but rather Millennial Generation students enrolled in courses in the face-to-face environment. Even though these findings provided more information on Millennial Generation students' expectations and standards when working with academic advisors, online Millennial Generation students could have different needs, wants, opinions, and preferences compared to students in a face-to-face learning environment (Keeling, 2003; & Montag et al., 2012). These studies also lacked diversity in regards to methodology, as they primarily focused on quantitative research and did not explore the voices of students through qualitative research. Only one study out of the previously cited studies were

qualitative in nature (Montag et al., 2012). This proposed study intends to fill these gaps by seeking out the relationship perceptions of online Millennial Generation students by incorporating both qualitative and quantitative measures for a methodology.

Purpose Statement

The intent of this mixed methods study was to understand Millennial Generation students' perceptions of their relationships with their online academic advisors. This study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. This design involved gathering and collecting quantitative data first and then exploring the quantitative results with in-depth qualitative data. In the first phase of the study, quantitative results from survey data were collected from online Millennial Generation students at a non-profit university located in New England. This data measured the relationship perceptions of online Millennial Generation students pertaining to the academic advisors' concern, contact, and relationship qualities.

The second, qualitative phase was conducted as a follow up to the results of the first phase to support the quantitative findings. In this explanatory follow-up, the intent was to explore further descriptions of the relationships between online Millennial Generation students and to understand how the perceptions and relationships were formed among online Millennial Generation students at the university. This qualitative phase explored additional qualities online Millennial Generation students are seeking from online academic advisors including efforts for engaging, supporting, and motivating them throughout their time enrolled in online courses.

Research Questions

This mixed methods research study will seek to answer the following overarching

research question:

How do online Millennial Generation students perceive their relationships with online

academic advisors?

During phase one, a survey included quantitative questions involving advisor contact,

advisor concern, and advisor relationship quality (See Appendix A) (Bitz, 2010).

During phase two, online focus groups were conducted and sought to answer the

following sample questions to support the findings of phase one:

Subquestions

1. What is the most frequent element that online Millennial Generation students

   claim supports their relationship perceptions with their academic advisors?

2. What perceptions of qualities of relationships with online academic advisors

   engage, support, and motivate online Millennial Generation students?

With this being an explanatory sequential mixed method designed study, the main

research question and subquestions has specific assigned methodologies. The first

subquestion is quantitative in nature while the second subquestion is framed in a

qualitative manner. Lastly, the main research question is framed as a mixed methods

approach. This study has separately assigned questions for mixed, quantitative, and

qualitative, and thus intends to provide a robust response to the main overarching

research question.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research is based on a combination of three

established theories: Crookston's (1994) Developmental Academic Advising Model,

Arnett's (2004) Theory of Emerging Adulthood, and Kohler's (1947) Gestalt Theory. The theoretical framework is composed of two theories to account for the relationships between advisors and students along with the characteristics on how Millennials think and feel.

Developmental Model of Academic Advising

Crookston (1994) described developmental academic advising as, "The belief that the relationship itself is one in which the academic advisor and the student differentially engage in a series of developmental tasks, the successful completion of which results in varying degrees of learning by both parties" (p. 6). Crookston's (1994) theory is also grounded in facilitating the student's rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavioral awareness, and problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills (p. 5). This model of advising is not simply to answer the questions that students may have. This model intends to build a relationship between the academic advisor and the student to reach their goals together. This study will be an appropriate supplement to the theory of developmental academic advising because of the nature of relationship perceptions that are being researched such as advisor concern, advisor contact, and advisor relationship quality when working with an online Millennial Generation student. Understanding this generations' views regarding the characteristics of relationship perceptions with online academic advisors will establish a basis for best advising practices for supporting online Millennial students.

Theory of Emerging Adulthood

Emerging adulthood is the stage in a Millennial's life that is between adolescence and young adulthood or ages 18-25 (Arnett, 2015, p. 8). This is the stage in life that

involves events such as higher education, marriage, and home ownership. Within this life stage, Millennials are likely trying to find their identities, a significant other, and a career along with realizing they have fewer commitments towards other people. This life stage is also composed of feeling less like an adolescent or a teenager, but not entirely like an adult yet. Lastly, most Millennials may feel that all possibilities are still endless as the future is undecided at this point in their lives (Arnett, 2004). Once again, this stage in life can be vary vastly depending upon the Millennial, however, most of the population experiences these stages in their lives. The Theory of Emerging Adulthood indicated several themes a Millennial will live through. These five main themes include: identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and possibilities/optimism (Arnett, 2015, p. 9). From Arnett's five themes emerge a concept of seeking a purpose. Whether this purpose is looking for love, a career, or an education, the underlying tone is that the Millennials are seeking what is right for them through the period known as emerging adulthood. For this study, the Theory of Emerging Adulthood could offer an explanation of the purpose of the relationship with an academic advisor from a Millennial Generation student's perspective.

Gestalt Theory

Kohler (1947) was one of the founders of Gestalt psychology, the influential school of psychology that argued that perception is best understood as an organized pattern rather than as separate parts. The learners' experiences and perceptions influence the organization and structure of the mind. For the present study, Gestalt Theory could describe the experiences and perceptions online Millennial Generation students create about their academic advisors.

The model below visualizes this framework:

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework
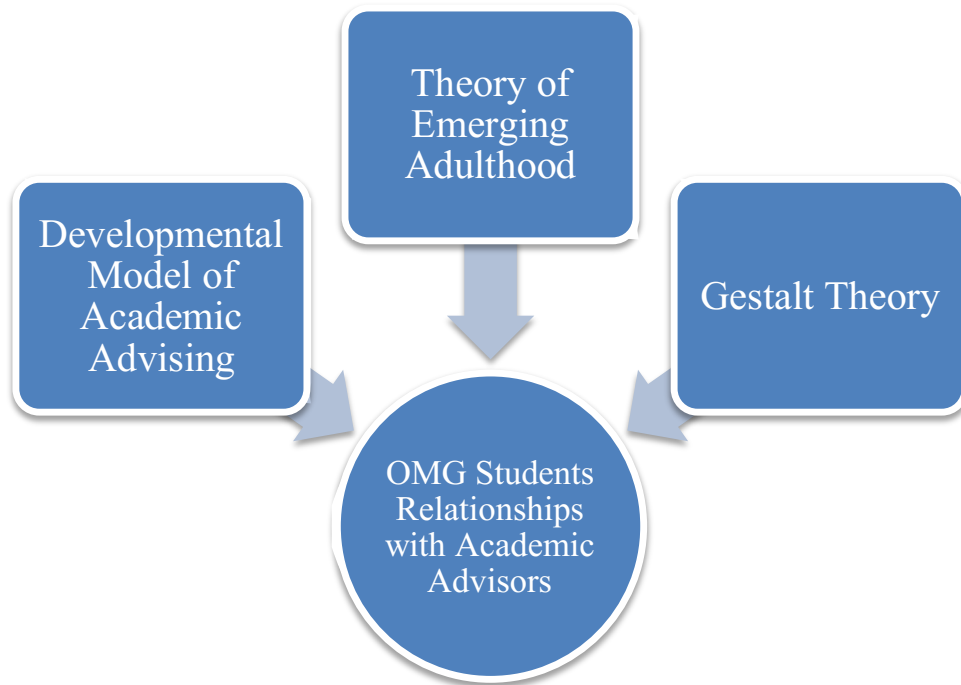
The Developmental Model of Academic Advising provides a model of how students and academic advisors form relationships and experience reaching goals together, while the Theory of Emerging Adulthood describes the mindset on what and how Millennial students are thinking and experiencing. Along with these experiences, Gestalt Theory provides a learning theory on how students organize and structure their perceptions. This combined theoretical model will help to explain the perceptions of the relationships between academic advisors and Millennial Generation students, qualities Millennial Generation students are seeking in a relationship with academic advisors, and successful efforts for communicating, motivating, and supporting online Millennial Generation students.

Definition of Terms

Academic Advising – For the purpose of this study, Kuhn's (2008) definition of academic advising was used. According to Kuhn (2008), "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" (p. 2-3).

Millennial Generation – The generation born between 1982-2000 (Howe and Strauss, 2000). For the purpose of this study, participants will be between the ages of 18-25-years-old.

Online Higher Education – For the purpose of this study, online higher education will refer to online asynchronous learning provided by a college or university.

Perception – Perception is defined as the way one thinks about or understands someone or something.

Relationship – For the purpose of this study, relationship is defined as the way in which two or more people or things are connected.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is to understand and depict the relationship perceptions of online Millennial Generation students with their online academic advisors. This understanding will provide insight to academic advisors on two different levels. The first level is the understanding of what an online academic advisor means to an online Millennial Generation student so that advisors may better serve them. As mentioned before, the term "academic advisor" could refer to a variety of roles (Crookston, 1974). This information can explore what aspects of a relationship online Millennial Generation

students seek from their academic advisors in order to inform practices that may lead to increased satisfaction and retention rates. Without this knowledge, online academic advisors will continue to make assumptions about how they are perceived by online Millennial Generation students, which can lead to miscommunication and dissatisfaction. If a clearer description of the relationship is established, academic advisors can anticipate the best methods of interactions for academic advising hopefully leading to further engagement, support, and motivation.

The second level explores which practices are effective when collaborating and communicating with the Millennial Generation in an online environment. This research can supplement how online academic advisors engage, support, and motivate the online Millennial Generation and could potentially be the base for more refined methods for assisting online Millennial students through academic advising services. Knowledge of how online Millennial Generation students think and feel about their relationships with online academic advisors could lead to increasing retention and persistence rates.

The Millennial Generation is becoming an integral part of enrollment rates for online higher education with this generation believing in the quality of online education (Arnett, 2015). The results of this study will be significant for a variety of stakeholders including academic advisors, administrators, faculty, and other roles throughout higher education on how to understand the relationships between online Millennial Generation students and online academic advisors. The understanding of these relationships may impact engagement, support, and motivation for online Millennial Generation students' retention and persistence rates.

Target Population

This study was located at a non-profit university based out of New England. To narrow the scope of the study, online undergraduate Millennial Generation students were surveyed between the ages of 18-25-years-old.

General Procedures

This explanatory sequential mixed methods study was designed to identify the relationship perception experience between online academic advisors and online Millennial Generation students in hopes of improving persistence and retention rates of online Millennial Generation students in higher education. With this study being grounded in mixed methods, data collection was completed using a survey and an online focus of online Millennial Generation students. With approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at a non-profit university in New England, a preliminarily survey was emailed to a sample of the population of online Millennial Generation students. The survey was composed of themes including advisor concern, advisor contact, and advisor relationship quality.

Overview

Enrollment in online courses is rising among the Millennial Generation in universities across the country; resultantly, it is critical to understand how they perceive and build a relationship with their academic advisors (Arnett, 2015). To examine numerous aspects of how online Millennial Generation students perceive their relationships with online academic advisors, an explanatory sequential mixed method study was conducted. This conducted study comprised of both quantitative and qualitative methods, providing a more comprehensive conclusion. Understanding the qualities and characteristics of relationships between online Millennial Generation

students and online academic advisors can impact the retention and persistence rates for these students in online higher education and improve best advising practices for these students in particular.

      The next chapter contains literature review for the future study. Topics such as academic advising, relationships and perceptions of academic advising, the Millennial Generation and online learning, etc. will be discussed. These concepts will set the foundation for the topics discussed in chapter one.

Chapter Two

Introduction

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature pertaining to the academic advising service and the Millennial Generation. This review includes the origins of academic advising, models of academic advising, roles of academic advisors, perceptions of academic advisors, the definition of the Millennial Generation, the Theory of Emerging Adulthood, and the perceptions of the Millennial Generation. Chapter 2 concludes with a summary and the gap in literature pertaining to academic advising and the online Millennial Generation.

The empirical research mentioned in the following chapter was obtained through scholarly databases such as EBSCO host, Sage, and Google Scholar, and professional scholarly publications *NACADA Journal*. Preliminary search terms included terms such as "millennial generation," "academic advising," "online academic advising," and "academic advising relationships." Secondary research provided scholars such as Arnett (2005), Crookston (1994), Howe & Strauss (2000), & Kuhn (2008). Their works provided crucial information for the topic of understanding online Millennial Generation students' relationship perceptions of online academic advisors. Their research will be referenced numerous times throughout this chapter and others. Their topics introduced understanding the mindset of the Millennial Generation, the life stage known as emerging adulthood, the relationship models of academic advising, and the history of academic advising. This chapter introduces a review of the literature on the academic advising service and on the Millennial Generation.

Academic Advising

Academic advising has evolved over almost 400 years, but it was not until the 1970's that the term "academic advisor" was coined. Before the 1970's, the role of an advisor was combined with other duties that teachers, professors, and administrators shared. This study used Kuhn's (2008) definition of advising as referring to situations in which an institutional representative gives insight or direction to a college student about academic, social, or personal matter (2008, p. 3). Kuhn's work originated as a complement to Frost's (2000) "Historical and Philosophical Foundations for Academic Advising." For the purpose of discussing advising's history, this study utilized Kuhn's philosophy on advising as well. Kuhn's philosophy has been divided into three segments: first, second and third advising eras. These eras explain the evolution of how academic advising developed and will be further documented and discussed below.

The earliest date of an academic advisor's role was recorded in 1636 from Harvard College (Kuhn, 2008). This can be described as the beginning of the First Advising Era. Fast forward to 1870, academic advising developed as a system to keep students focused and to help preserve the classical curriculum while having elective options. This time frame of 1870 – 1970 is called the Second Advising Era (Kuhn, 2008). From 1970 to present day, an academic advisor is considered a profession and the creation of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) was established. This is known as the Third Advising Era.

While the history of an academic advisor has been documented up until the Third Advising Era, the present day advisor's role has evolved due to technology and online education. Online academic advisors for online institutions face challenges of working

with students in a setting that previous advisors never encountered. Research in this particular field is scarce as best advising practices for online academic advisors have not been researched extensively.

According to a survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, students born between 1987 and 1992 were likely to have enrolled into an online course, with 50.7% taking at least one online course, while 17.5% had enrolled into an entirely online degree program (2016). No longer are online universities only for middle-aged adults with full time careers and families. They are becoming increasingly popular with young adults born between 1987-1998. The following research explores the literature pertaining to academic advisors, online academic advising, the Millennial Generation, and the relationship of the Millennial Generation and online learning. Also included, is the gap in literature for this growing trend of enrollment with the Millennial Generation (Arnett, 2015).

First Advising Era (1636 – 1870)

The concept of advising students can be traced back to the 17th century with the beginning of American higher education. During this timeframe, the role of advising was predominantly focused on the needs of students. According to Gillispie (2003), "Although academic advising has been a defined region within education only a few short decades, it has been a prevalent concern since the birth of the college institutions of America" (p. n.a.). This coincides with Kuhn's (2008) research as well. According to Kuhn (2008), the origin of advising is dated back to 1636 from the founders of Harvard College (p. 3). During this period, Harvard's goal of creating a society of educated citizens came to fruition from a process that required students and teachers to uphold a

residency requirement. These teachers passed along knowledge, discipline, and insight through this residency to scholars. Not only were the faculty responsible for these duties, they also served as moral role models (Kuhn, 2008, p. 3).

As time progressed, the responsibilities of faculty members became too overwhelming and the could no longer complete all of the same activities they were known to do before. The passing of time also changed the way students and teachers perceived one another. The lack of communication and residency paved the way for faculty members to then be perceived by students as a necessary evil (Veysey, 1965, p. 295). No longer did students have a connection with their teachers as mentors, scholars, or leaders. Rather than being able to approach their teachers with thoughts or questions, students were structured with an inflexible system of rules, regulations, and punishments (Kuhn, 2008, p. 4). This disciplinarian approach further divided students and faculty to the point that a new system had to be established.

In the 1870s, students' demanded a change from the inflexible structure and a new elective system provided several options that students did not have before. These options included more choices of classes for students, more positive interactions with teachers, and increasing the use of seminars and laboratories (Kuhn, 2008, p. 4). The creation of a new elective system gave rise to students needing guidance on the correct career path to take. This guidance became the main responsibility of an academic advisor and as institutions grew further, more responsibilities fell into the academic advisor category. These early advisors became friends, mentors, communicators, and tutors among their first students (Hayes, 1841, p. 54).

The Second Advising Era (1870 – 1970)

With American higher education institutions growing, the course offerings for the curriculum grew as well. The classical curriculum of theology, Latin, and Greek were no longer required and new alternatives for students were found within the elective system (Kuhn, 2008, p. 5). A fear amongst those who wanted to maintain the classic curriculum was growing. What if students chose the wrong courses and did not master a discipline to benefit society? Who would guide these students on their academic journey? The answer was fulltime academic advisors. According to Kuhn (2008), "Developing an academic advising process was one answer to those critics, who feared that the elective system used unwisely by students would result in a less focused education" (p. 5). Even though the fear was alive and well, the elective system, with the help of advisors, had the opposite effect and created the modern day major found within programs.

From 1870 to 1970, academic advisors found a niche inside of higher education. Esteemed institutions such as Harvard and John Hopkins University created the position of academic advisors as essential to a student's future. The President of John Hopkins University at the time, Daniel Coit Gilman, recognized the importance of these fulltime positions and even described relationships of advisors and advisees like a lawyer to a client or physician to patient (Veysey, 1965, p. 565). These important relationships helped to maintain a positive balance between students and faculty. However, the academic advisors' roles lacked a clear and concise focus on obtainable goals. How to be a successful advisor was never defined and measurable concepts had yet to surface (Kuhn, 2008, p. 6).

The 1920s started to bring about more changes on how to advise a student and student support structures were established. The most notable, as described by Kuhn

(2008), was called, "Student Personnel Point of View" (SPPOV) (p. 6). The SPPOV was developed by the American Council on Education and elucidated students' rights. These rights essentially pertained to how to fundamentally create a healthy and well-rounded student. This philosophy that originated in the 1930s still holds true today with how to best serve a student in higher education.

The Third Advising Era (1970s – Present)

As noted from the second advising era, academic advising was not measured as an examined activity. Instead the advisors' roles pertained to assisting students with registration and course scheduling. The third advising era brought about comparing and contrasting between different institutions in how they serve their students best (Kuhn, 2008, p. 6). These institutions shared best practices from an advising perspective. This theme of sharing ideologies became known as an association called the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA). Besides the gathering of advisors to share practices, advising as a whole was researched for the first time. This research led to published journal articles on advising practices. The research categorized advising practices into several different models. Each model characterized an institution's form of advising and their differences compared to other universities. The models included faculty-only, supplementary, split, dual, total intake, satellite and self-contained models (Kuhn, 2008, p. 7). Each model has advantages and disadvantages. The differences in models were identified by the variety of institutions. For instance, an institution that is considered a liberal arts college could have a different model of advising compared to a community college or a known research university. This third era of advising paved the

way for online universities to capitalize on how to best serve students, even though there
is still a lack of research on the best advising practices for online learners.

Developmental Relationship Model

Crookston (1994) described the developmental relationship model as the
combination of both advising and teaching in the relationship between academic advisor
and advisee (p. 6). According to Crookston (1994),

> The most important of these is the belief that the relationship itself is one in which
> the academic advisor and the student differentially engage in a series of
> developmental tasks, the successful completion of which results in varying
> degrees of learning by both parties. (p. 66).

In essence, the developmental relationship model for academic advising is a shared
experience between both parties and learning will not occur unless both parties are open
to listening.

Prescriptive Relationship Model

The prescriptive relationship model for academic advising is a relationship built
on the premise of the advisor as being the authoritative figure whom the advisee listens to
for advice (Crookston, 1994, p. 5). The term prescriptive was developed within the
contexts of an academic advisor being seen as a doctor prescribing students information
as patients. This model was developed for the academic advisor to have more control
over the content that the advisee was receiving.

Roles of Online Academic Advisors

As the previous information has mentioned, the roles of an academic advisor have developed over the years. No longer are the duties of academic advising left into the hands of instructors and professors. Instead academic advising has become a profession. To understand this profession, it is important to note the roles of online academic advisors specifically.

In a response to accreditation fears and concern for long distance learners, online students were provided with more academic advising support systems (Kuhn, 2008, p. 12). These systems included academic advisors, career advisors, disability services, admission counselors, and more. Capella was an example of a university offering these services, but now, these services are standard procedures among any institution that offers online courses (Kuhn, 2008, p. 12). This type of connection affiliated with a support system was additionally mentioned in a study from The Open University of Catalonia (UOC). According to Rimbau-Gilabert et al., (2011) "The advisor must solve these problems directly if possible, or refer the student to the adequate service or person in the university" (p. n.a.). It is therefore an assumption that other online institutions have developed similar support systems.

Besides being an important link to different departments, online academic advisors can be seen as academic "coaches" (Robie et al., 2015). This role reflects on being able to assist with time management, study skills, prioritization and more. This is a critical role when working with students who are distance online learners and already have prior obligations and commitments along with online learning. This function of academic advising established the fact that students are concerned with getting the most of out their time and money investments (Rimbau-Gilabert et al., 2011.) Establishing this

coaching role informs the academic advisor of the student's wants and needs and will lead to the student's greatest chance of success.

Lastly, the final role of an academic advisor is to be a specialist in the field pertaining to the student's program. This has always been a responsibility of an academic advisor and it is no different in the online setting. This role involves not only understanding the curriculum of a program, but also the process of registration for upcoming courses (Robie et al., 2015). This role is significant as 40% of students change their major before they graduate (Broadbridge, 1996; Kramer, Higley, & Olsen, 1994; Malgwi, Howe, & Burnaby, 2005). This ensures that the student stays on track in the program just as advisors did in the 1970's.

Perceptions of Academic Advisors

Academic advising has long been perceived to be critical to a student's success. Burns Crookston (1994) established advising as important by saying,

> Advising is concerned not only with a specific personal or vocational decision but also with facilitating the student's rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavioral awareness, and problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills. Not only are these advising functions but, deriving from the above assumptions, they are essentially teaching functions as well (p. 5).

These words arguably place academic advising as the same level of importance as teaching. The significance of advising for students is corroborated by several other researchers, who have studied student perceptions of academic advisors (Christian and Sprinkle, 2013; Davis and Cooper, 2001; Kuhn, 2008; Saving and Keim, 1998; and

Suvedi et al., 2015). Even though all of these researchers believe that advising is instrumental to a student's success, students have different perceptions when it comes to academic advising. Since Crookston's (1994) research, a multitude of studies on perceptions with advising have been conducted. Saving and Keim (1998), have classified these perception studies into three categories: 1) students' opinions about advisement; (2) advisors' views about advisement; and (3) comparisons between students and advisors about advisement (p. 511). For the purposes of this study, student's perceptions of advising will be reviewed.

Several quantitative studies of perceptions of academic advising have been created from the students' perspectives under different circumstances such as ideal advising practices versus actual advising practices (Christian and Sprinkle, 2013), comparing perceptions of full-time advisors to full-time faculty (Davis and Cooper, 2001), and methods of improving advising practices (Suvedi et al., 2015). Even with the differences and intended goals of these studies, each study surveyed students on similar advising factors. These factors included availability, motivation, academic knowledge, registration processes, course scheduling, direction, guidance, career paths, values, interests, enjoyment, encouragement, and other intrinsic factors pertaining to being an academic advisor (Suvedi et al., 2015; Davis and Cooper, 2001; Christian and Sprinkle, 2013). Since these surveys had different objectives and intentions, the results were varied, depending upon the researchers' purposes. However, positive results could be seen throughout every study indicating that the academic advisor was beneficial to the student's success.

The Millennial Generation

The Millennial Generation can be defined in various ways. For this author's purposes and for the purpose of this study, the Millennial Generation was defined as individuals born between 1982 and 2000 (Howe & Strauss, 2000). This study used this age range specifically because 18-25-year-old individuals will include those who do not transition into adulthood until closer to age 30 (Arnett, 2015, p. 7). This study also acknowledges that there are individual differences despite generalization. The Millennial Generation has emerged differently compared to the former generations. These young adults view marriage, home life, children, education and other major life events in a different way compared to previous generations. While there are exceptions, the average Millennial does not reject these achievements, but they would rather wait until it is the right time. According to Arnett (2015),

> Most of them do want to take on all of these adult roles, and most of them will have done so by the time the reach age 30. It is just that, in their late teens and early twenties, they ponder these obligations and think, "yes, but *not yet"* (p. 6).

If this generation were to be defined in one word, that word would be "freedom" (Arnett, 2004). This group of individuals is freer in a sense than any former generation. This generation is taking advantage of the time gap between the end of secondary school and entry into marriage and parenthood, by exploring other options for the future (Arnett, 2015, p. 7). This is not to say that every individual of this group has this same freedom, but as a collective whole, this theme has emerged. This is also due to the concept that society has embraced and accepted that this group will take on adult roles later on in life.

Theory of Emerging Adulthood

With the Millennial Generation being researched, it is important to discuss the Theory of Emerging Adulthood. Emerging adulthood is the stage in a Millennial's life that is between adolescence and young adulthood (Arnett, 2015, p. 8). This is the life stage that traditionally involves the previous life events discussed such as marriage, higher education, home ownership, etc. Once again, this stage in life can be vastly varied depending upon the Millennial, yet as a whole group, this time frame can be depicted. The Theory of Emerging Adulthood indicated several themes a Millennial will live through. These five main themes included: identity explorations, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and possibilities/optimism (Arnett, 2015, p. 9). From these themes emerge a concept of seeking a purpose. Whether this purpose is looking for love, a career, or an education, the underlying tone is that the Millennials are seeking what is right for them through the period known as emerging adulthood.

Perceptions of Millennials

The first perception to understand the Millennial Generation is to interpret how they perceive themselves. Millennials' self-perceptions tie back into the Theory of emerging Adulthood. The Millennial Generation does not perceive themselves to be completely adults yet (Arnett, 2015, p. vii); rather, they believe stable factors in life will still come later on. Another important characteristic of the Millennial Generation is the relationship with their parents. As Millennials age, parents no longer are seen as parents, but rather equal partners (Arnett, 2015, p. 49). This generation still seeks guidance from their parents on the responsibilities of being an adult and is not completely independent yet from their parents (Arnett, 2004).

Online Learning and the Millennial Generation

With the sense of looking for a purpose and keeping their freedom in mind, the Millennial Generation has turned to the online learning environment. A recent study conducted by Clark University surveyed a thousand students of the Millennial Generation. According to this study, "Nearly 3/4 say it is possible to gain as much value from an online education as from a traditional college/university" (Arnett, 2015). To support this theory, the present study gathered the open enrollment information for a university located in New England. Out of the undergraduate population, 45% of the population was between the ages of 18–29years old (Robie et al., 2015). A significant proportion, 34% of the population, was between the ages of 18–25 years old.

There are several reasons for why the Millennial Generation is choosing online learning environments over traditional classrooms. One simple reason is that the Millennial Generation was born into the technology era and it has been a part of their entire lives to the point of their nicknames revolving around technology. According to Rivera & Huertas (2006), "They are called Digital natives, Native speakers, Nets, Internet generation, iGeneration and Nintendo digital generation, all making a reference to the digital world of our days" (p. n.a.). However, Arnett's (2004) thinking with freedom could arguably be the reason for the success and growth in the online classroom. According to Gordon et al. (2008),

Online learning is transforming higher education because it is shifting accountability from the institutional inputs to student outcomes, changing expectations for faculty employment and ownership of curricular material, shifting credit hours from the time students spend in class to their acquisition of

knowledge and skills, altering the nature of attending classes for students, and

rendering meaningless the concept of geographical service area.

Being in control of one's own outcomes, expectations, and acquisition of knowledge and

skills are appealing to a Millennial Generation learner and further drives the need of

online education.

Summary

From reviewing the literature on academic advising, it is clear that the role of an

academic advisor has evolved considerably since its creation in 1636 at Harvard (Kuhn

(2008). The academic advisor role was originally associated with other faculty duties and

did not have a stand-alone purpose. Over time, faculty collaborated more with students to

meet their needs and expectations and acknowledged that students needed a voice in their

decisions about their education. Recognition of the importance of advising students to

the correct paths brought about a radical change for the better with more effective

communication from an advisor to student. This literature review also revealed the trend

of the Millennial Generation choosing the online route for education. As long as freedom

plays a role in a Millennial's education, online education could continue to be the vessel

to for higher education and perhaps, someday surpassing the traditional college

experience.

A Gap in the Literature

From the review, a few gaps in the literature are notable, with the first gap being

the lack of research of online academic advisors. Each university has its own

interpretation of best practices when it comes to advising, which presents difficulties in

giving an exact answer of what defines an online academic advisor. Since the profession

in an online setting compared to traditional advising is still relatively new in the online environment and growing, there have not been studies conducted yet on students' perceptions of online academic advising. The studies in the literature review all pertained to traditional face-to-face advising; therefore, more research is needed on the topic of online academic advising. It is also critical to note that the majority of studies were quantitative in nature. Therefore, there is a lack of qualitative data from the student's perspective about the specific perceptions of online academic advisors.

There is a gap in literature on how to best serve this specific population in the online environment (Kuhn, 2008). Previous advising practices have shown how to effectively advise the traditional advisee, yet there is a lack of research on how to online students. The significance of finding these best practices is because each generation learns differently. The Millennial Generation is a generation that has grown up with technology and does not need the same level of guidance compared to older students in online courses. Much like how advising has evolved into separate eras since the 1700s to best fit the student's needs, it is now time for advising to transform once again. There cannot be a transformation unless the perceptions of advisors from the Millennial Generation have been identified. Once advisors know what this generation thinks of advising, then academic advisors can understand the Millennial Generation.

Forward Thinking

Online universities and academic advisors need to identify their current online students. Online students are perceived in commercials and website advertisements as older in age and are depicted with fulltime careers and children. What these commercials are not depicting is the rapidly growing student population of the Millennial Generation.

It is this study's intended purpose to learn how to best serve these students from an academic advisor's perspective. The most efficient way to learn how to serve these particular students is to first learn what an academic advisor means to them. Learning the perceptions of these students on academic advisors will establish a ground basis to build upon. In order to move forwards, a general understanding must first be established. Once these perceptions are understood, new advising practices can be developed to best serve this generation.

The next chapter will explore the methodology of the study, along with the reasoning for choosing a mixed methods design to understand online Millennial Generation students' relationship perceptions with their online academic advisors. Along with this explanation, the chapter will include an overview of the research questions, protocols, sampling, and procedures for conducting an explanatory sequential mixed methods study.

Chapter Three

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to understand how online Millennial Generation students perceive their relationships with online academic advisors. These relationship perceptions may explain the qualities Millennial Generation students are seeking in relationships with online academic advisors impacting successful efforts in engaging, supporting, and motivating online Millennial Generation students. This research was conducted at a non-profit university in New England and participants included undergraduate online Millennial Generation students between the ages of 18 and 25 years-old. An explanatory sequential mixed methods study was utilized to analyze online Millennial Generation students' understandings of relationships with online academic advisors.

Research Question

The purpose of this research is to answer the research question:

How do online Millennial Generation students perceive their relationships with online academic advisors?

In addition to this research question, the following subquestions will be explored:

- What is the most frequent element that online Millennial Generation students claim supports their relationship perceptions with their academic advisors?

- What perceptions of qualities of relationships with online academic advisors engage, motivate, and support online Millennial Generation students?

This chapter describes the methodology for the study and includes areas such as research design, sampling, instrumentation, interview protocols, data collection, data analysis, limitations and a brief summary.

Mixed Methods

There are several variations on the definition of mixed methods design as the definition has evolved over time. Originally, Greene, Caracelli, and Graham coined the phrase in 1989 and only focused on the aspect of methods and philosophy of the study. Since then, several authors (Creswell, & Plano Clark, 2011; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2006; and Tashakkori, Teddlie, & Turner, 2007) have added to the definition of mixed methods. For the purpose of this study, Tashakkori and Creswell's version from 2007 was used. According to Tashakkori & Creswell (2007), mixed methods can be defined as, "Research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or program of inquiry" (p. 4). Even though this is the definition of the design that was chosen, the researcher will keep in mind the characteristics of mixed methods research that Creswell and Plano Clark mentioned in 2011 as these are the latest additions to mixed methods design (Creswell & Clark, 2011). According to Creswell & Clark, "In mixed methods, the researcher:

- Collects and analyzes persuasively and rigorously both qualitative and quantitative data (based on research questions);
- Mixes (or integrates or links) the two forms of data concurrently by combining them (or merging them), sequentially by having one build on the other, or embedding one within the other;

- Gives priority to one or to both forms of data (it terms of what the research

   emphasizes);

- Uses these procedures in a single study or in multiple phases of a program of

   study;

- Frames these procedures within philosophical worldviews and theoretical lenses;

- Combines the procedures into specific research designs that direct the plan for

   conducting the study" (p. 5).

The reason for choosing mixed methods for understanding how online Millennial

Generation students perceive relationships with online academic advisors stemmed from

the research problems in that a qualitative or quantitative only approach could not address

all of the research needs. According to Creswell & Plano Clark (2011), "Quantitative

results can net general explanations for the relationships among variables, but the more

detailed understanding of what the statistical tests or effect sizes actually mean is lacking.

Qualitative data and results can help build that understanding" (p. 9). In order to gather

widespread initial data of online Millennial students, this researcher collected and

analyzed quantitative data that informed the qualitative focus group exploration, allowing

for a more complete interpretation and conclusion.

Explanatory Sequential Design

This study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach. An

explanatory sequential mixed methods design can be defined as,

   A mixed methods design in which the researcher begins by conducting a

   quantitative phase and follows up on specific results with a second phase. The

   second, qualitative phase is implemented for the purposes of explaining the initial

results in more depth, and it is due to this focus on explaining results that is reflected in the design name (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 82).

An explanatory sequential mixed methods design consists of two phases: quantitative and qualitative. During the first phase, quantitative data was collected and analyzed. After the collection of data and the analysis of the results, the qualitative data can be further explained by conducting a second phase. This second phase was a qualitative phase. The qualitative phase was implemented to further the understanding of the initial results and allowed for a more complete elaboration on the research problems. The purpose of the explanatory sequential design is to use qualitative strand to explain initial quantitative results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

This design does have its own advantages and challenges. In regards to advantages, with the research divided into two distinctive phases, the researcher has a straightforward approach with implementing the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This means that one researcher alone can conduct this study and does not require the assistance of multiple researchers. Regarding the challenges, explanatory sequential designs take a longer period of time to conduct since there are two separate phases. This can also take a toll on the number of resources allocated for the study, as the research can take longer than anticipated (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Once the quantitative and qualitative phases have both been completed, an overall interpretation can be made from the data collection and analysis. A model of the explanatory sequential design is illustrated below:

Figure 2 Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design

| Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis | → | Follow up with | → | Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis | → | Interpretation |
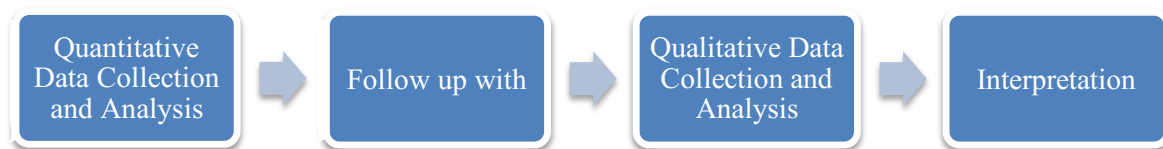
Participants/Sampling

With this study being grounded in explanatory sequential mixed methods design, two separate sampling phases (probabilistic for quantitative and purposeful sampling for qualitative) were required to meet both demands of the quantitative and qualitative phase. In regards to mixed methods design for this study, sequential mixed methods sampling comprised of probability sampling techniques for generating data for the quantitative strand and then from this data, purposive sampling techniques for generating data for the qualitative strand occurred (Tashakkori, Teddlie, & Turner, 2009, p. 189). For the quantitative strand for the study, probabilistic sampling was utilized to select a percentage of undergraduate online Millennial Generation students between 18 and 25 years-old to participate in the survey. Participants in this phase represented a segment of the undergraduate online Millennial Generation population. Participants for the

qualitative phase were purposefully selected based upon gender, age, ethnicity, academic status, and location. Another factor for purposeful sampling was the differences in the participants' answers, providing more perspectives from the online Millennial Generation.

Phase One: Quantitative Strand

The quantitative phase of this study measured online Millennial Generation student's perceptions of the online academic advising relationship through an email-distributed survey. This phase included a survey instrument developed by Kristi Bitz in 2010 that measured first-year students' perceptions of the academic advising relationship. This instrument measured three main categories of advisor concern, advisor contact, and advising relationship quality. According to Bitz (2010), "Levels of student satisfaction among these items can be measured for purposes of studying advising relationships, assessing advising at institutions of higher learning, and identifying areas of strengths and weaknesses in advising relationships" (p. 58). In order for this study to maximize the use of this instrument, minor adaptions were made to focus on online students instead of on-campus students. The questions are relevant to both environments for topics such as advisor concern, contact, advisor knowledge's of advisee, trust, listening skills, and comfortability.

This research focused on the online Millennial Generation population at a non-profit university located in New England that predominantly offered online programs. The researcher requested to survey undergraduate online Millennial Generation students between the ages of 18 and 25 and to send the survey to 10,000 students. With the approval of the university to survey this number of students for a population size, the

technique of Bartlett et al. (2001) technique for probability sampling was followed using a confidence limit of .05. In order for the sample size to accurately reflect the population and provide reliability, 384 students needed to respond to the survey in the email.

Instrumentation for Quantitative Strand

A survey instrument was utilized for this study measuring academic advisor relationship perceptions created by Bitz (2010). The instrument comprised of three components: advisor concern, advisor contact, and advising relationship quality. In Bitz's validated survey, Cronbach's alpha was applied as measurement for internal consistency. According to Bitz (2010),

> The constructs for this instrument demonstrated excellent reliability (based on the high values of Cronbach's α for items associated with each of the three factors). Furthermore, the survey was constructed based on a literature review of factors important in academic advising, and therefore, the emergence of these three familiar factors can be interpreted as evidence that the survey has substantial content validity (p. 59).

While most of the survey was based around Bitz's (2010) instrument, minor adaptations were necessary for gender, age, and academic standing. For gender, the survey was adapted to allow students to choose the gender with which they identified and age was limited to the previously discussed age of 18 and 25 years-old. Academic standing was also adapted to reflect the institution's academic standing terminology. Lastly, Bitz's (2010) survey mentioned specific terminology to being enrolled in a first year seminar course, a type of freshmen orientation course. This wording was adapted to terminology around being enrolled in an online program.

Constructs for this survey included concern with the students' academic, personal, and social development (Questions 4, 5, 6), satisfaction with advisor contact (Questions 7, 8, 9), advisor knowledge of the student (Questions 10, 11, 12), trust (Questions 13, 14, 15), listening (Questions 16, 17, 18), and comfortability (Questions 19, 20, 21) (Bitz, 2010). Overall, the construct categories demonstrated: advisor concern (Questions 4, 5, 6), advisor contact (Questions 7, 8, 9, 11), and advising relationship quality (Questions 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21). For each question within each construct, the mean, median, mode and standard deviation were calculated.

During the quantitative phase, the survey was sent electronically to students through their university's email accounts. The survey utilized a Likert scale, allowing students to rate the response between 1 (strongly disagree) through 6 (strongly agree) corresponding with the previously mentioned constructs. This survey data was collected through software called, Qualtrics, (2019). Once the survey data was collected in Qualtrics, the survey data was examined while an initial understanding of the data was developed. The Qualtrics data was then exported into SPSS for conducting descriptive analysis. Descriptive statistics were generated for all variables of the study inside of SPSS and followed the above guidelines from Creswell & Plano Clark (2011).

Phase Two: Qualitative Strand

Since this study comprised of an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, after the quantitative phase of this study was completed, a qualitative phase was conducted. The purpose of the qualitative phase was to describe the relationship qualities and characteristics of online Millennial Generation students' perspectives on the relationships with their online academic advisors, which emerged from the quantitative

survey. This study used this qualitative phase to further explore and identify key factors in engaging, supporting, and motivating online Millennial Generation students.

Qualitative Sampling

Subsequent to the quantitative data collect and analysis, a qualitative strand was completed. This qualitative strand included purposeful sampling of the population of undergraduate online Millennial Generation students who completed the survey and responded to the question in the follow up interview. To ensure a wider range of demographics, the candidates for the follow up interview were intentionally selected to display different dimensions on demographic characteristics such as gender, age, academic status, location, etc. This will allow for multiple perspectives on the relationships with online academic advisors. Participants were also selected based on their answers to provide more perspectives for the interview process.

Approach for Qualitative Strand

To help with these explanations, the qualitative approach was an online synchronous focus group. Liamputtong (2011) described synchronous focus groups as a resemblance to a face-to-face focus group that allows for real-time interactions between the host and participants (p. 151). Students were selected for this focus group by previously mentioning in the first survey that they would like to participate in future research. The online synchronous focus group was operated under the guidance protocols Liamputtong (2011) and the audio was recorded to aid in the transcribing process. Liamputtong described the effectiveness of an online focus group, but warned of the limitations in the participants' internet connectivty, microphone quality, time zone differences, etc. While technology presents these disadvantages, most studies have found

virtual focus groups to be beneficial for participants (Reid & Reid, 2005). For instance, participants in online focus groups feel freer to speak and interact online, compared to a face-to-face focus group (Reid & Reid, 2005). This freedom also allows for more disagreement, which can produce a more enhanced conversation (Reid & Reid, 2005). The qualitative phase utilized Zoom for software with the online synchronous focus group. Zoom provided the option of students wishing to either speak directly with a microphone or using a chat feature as a form of interaction.

This online focus group would ideally interview 7-9 undergraduate online Millennial Generation students on the features from the last survey, and would allow the researcher to explore a deeper understanding of their answers. For reliability purposes, three focus groups containing different demographic categories were held (Krueger & Casey, 2000). To ensure that the researcher limited the chances of missing information during transcription, the online focus groups' audio was recorded. This recorded audio was already be mentioned in the application for the IRB approval and was understood by the participants. For the protection of the students, Zoom allowed for users to log into the study as "guests" and would not display their real names to provide a sense of privacy and security.

Interview Protocols

According to Liamputtong (2011), "Moderating virtual focus groups can be more challenging than the face-to-face ones" (p. 157). This is due to numerous reasons that the virtual environment creates. In a virtual environment, it is critical for the moderator of the online focus group to be involved at the right moments. Without visual or verbal cues, participants can be confused on the direction or what to do during the focus group.

Moderators need to provide enough leadership to have the conversation start and flow

smoothly through gentle reminders and touch upon opportunities that the conversation

creates (Liamputtong, 2011, p. 157). Keeping these considerations in mind, this study

followed the guidance of Liamputtong's (2011) group question guide. This question

guide provided directions to questions such as introductory, transition, focus,

summarizing, and concluding. Liamputtong (2011) described the question guide as a

method for initiating discussions and encouraging interactions among the group

participants (p. 76). After the introductory question the transition helps the moderator

narrow down the focus for the conversation and can lead to the key questions the

moderator is looking to ask. This leads the moderator into asking focus questions that

would touch upon the quantitative results from the first phase of the study. After the

questions from the quantitative phase have been asked reflecting questions can be asked

to summarize the experiences of the participants. Lastly, the moderation can ask a

concluding question to see if the participants would like to discuss anything else that was

not mentioned before. These questions were organized before the online synchronous

focus group was conducted along with additional prompts to keep the dialogue

interactive. Sample questions included:

1. Can you describe what an academic advisor meant to you before attending a
    university? How did you come to this conclusion of what an advisor was without
    ever working with one before?

2. How would you describe an academic advisor now after attending a university?

3. What does your advisor do to support and motivate you?

4. In what ways has your advisor showed concern / been involved with your academic development?

Data Collection

The data collection process for an explanatory sequential mixed method study has two separate data collection and analysis phases: one for quantitative and one for qualitative. There were two sample sizes from the data collection. The intent of this design was not to merge the two samples together, but to have the qualitative findings uncover meaningful themes and support the findings of the quantitative strand (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Quantitative Analysis

According to Plano Clark & Creswell (2011),

Exploring the data in quantitative data analysis involves visually inspecting the data and conducting a descriptive analysis (the mean, standard deviation, and variance of responses to each item on instruments or checklists) to determine the general trends in the data (p. 206).

The mean, median, mode and standard deviation were calculated for each item in the constructs. To ensure reliability of the study, descriptive statistics were applied to the findings. As this researcher interviewed participants to further explore the data from the quantitative findings, it was imperative to apply descriptive statistics from the data to create an agenda and interview questions. This analysis of the quantitative data provided outliers on what to follow up with from the qualitative data.

To analyze the data correctly, a mixed method researcher must represent, interpret, and validate the results from the first strand to build into the second strand. The

first step is to take the raw data from the quantitative phase and convert the data into

useful information with scoring the data by assigning numeric values to each response,

cleaning data entry errors, and creating special variables. This can be done through

various forms of software, but for the purpose of this study, Qualtrics was utilized as the

form for data collection within the quantitative strand seeking the responses from

participants about advisor concern, advisor contact, and advisor relationship quality.

Once this information was collected, the survey data was uploaded into IBM SPSS

Version 23.0 and SPSS was utilized for conducting descriptive analysis.

Qualitative Analysis

Data from the quantitative strand involved qualitative data analysis: coding the

data, dividing the text into units, assigning labels to each unit, and then grouping the

codes into themes (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). A pre-coding process preceded the

actual coding process. Pre-coding occurs when a significant quote is made and stands out

before the researcher has a chance to code. The importance of such quotes can lay the

foundation of the coding process. According to Saldaña (2013), "The codes or quotes

may even be so provocative that they become part of the title, organizational framework,

or through-line of the report" (p. 20). Such important quotes would be distinguished in

NVivo for easy retrieval.

The coding process involved the overarching constructs, the initial constructs

(development, contact, knowledge, trust, listening, and comfort), and the coding patterns

that would lead to the emergence of themes. The following steps occurred in the

qualitative analysis portion for the coding process: preliminary exploration of the data

was read aloud through the transcripts, the data was coded and grouped with labeling

text, the codes were then verified, the codes were used to develop themes by assimilating similar codes together, the connections were determined between themes, and then were determined how the themes fit into the theoretical framework and answered the research questions (Ivankova & Stick, 2007).

To assist with the qualitative data analysis process, a qualitative data analysis software program was utilized. For this study, Nvivo was the data analysis software program. According to Creswell & Plano Clark (2011), a qualitative data analysis software program, such as Nvivo,

> can store text documents for analysis; enable the researcher to block and label text
> segments with codes so that they can be easily retrieved; organize codes into a
> visual, making it possible to diagram and see the relationship among them; and
> search for segments of text that contain multiple codes (p. 208).

Data collection for the qualitative strand was recorded by capturing audio through Zoom for transcription. The benefit of the recording not only allowed the moderator to only focus on interacting with the focus group, but it also allowed for the audio recording to be transcribed. The recorded audio from Zoom was played back into Google Docs Voice for transcribing. While Google Docs Voice may not be ideal in the transcription, it is simple correct any errors in the document. The transcription was double checked for accuracy by comparing the document to the audio file. All of this data was recorded under the protection of sign in credentials with Zoom. The correct username and password would be needed to access the data. The data will be stored under this account for three years.

There are certain steps to follow ensure an accurate depiction of the online interview findings. As mentioned before, each online interview was recorded for audio and transcribed through software. These steps were modeled by another explanatory sequential designed study for consistency purposes (Ivankova & Stick, 2007). The following steps occurred in the qualitative analysis portion: (1) preliminary exploration of the data by reading through the transcripts; (2) coding the data by grouping and labeling the text; (3) verifying the codes; (4) use the codes to develop themes by assimilating similar codes together; (5) determine the connection between the themes; and (6) determine how or if the themes fit into the theoretical framework and answering the research questions. This coding process was utilized to see if the original thoughts and hypothesis from the theoretical framework match the findings.

Limitations

In regards to limitations of this study, there are a few factors to discuss. The first is that the survey data was collected from the university's school email accounts and the survey will not be sent the online Millennial Generation student's personal account such as a Yahoo, Gmail, Hotmail, etc. type of email account. This does provide the answers to the survey with more authenticity because the university email accounts are verified. However, it also limited the number of participants in the study to those students who check their university email accounts, thereby potentially limiting the number of participants. The second factor is that the study was conducted completely online, including the online interviews for the qualitative phase.

Another limitation is that this study was conducted in a university with an open enrollment policy. This policy welcomes all students to apply to the university, which

creates a broad target audience for this study. There is an admission requirement for

students seeking a Bachelor's degree to provide a high school diploma or GED and a

requirement for students seeking a Master's degree to provide proof of a conferred

Bachelor's degree. It is not known if the perceptions of online academic advisors of

online Millennial Generation students at a university with stricter admission requirements

would be similar or different compared to a university with an open enrollment policy.

Another potential limitation is that during the analysis process of the quantitative

phase, the mean of the ordinal data was calculated. The median and mode were also

calculated to provide an overall understanding of the quantitative data. The last limitation

was that the survey was modified for the population of online Millennial Generation

students instead of traditional Millennial Generation students. The original intent of the

survey was not meant for the online demographic. With this modification, terms on the

Likert scale could be interpreted differently. The only difference is the online

characteristics of the population which is why additional validity and reliability processes

did not occur.

Positionality

It is important to note the positionality involved in this research. This researcher

was a former academic advisor prior to advancing into a different position in higher

education, and the topic of the dissertation stemmed from an interest in understanding the

online Millennial Generation's relationship with academic advisors. According to

McDowell (1992a), "We must recognize and take account of our own position, as well as

that of our research participants, and write this into our research practice" (p. 409). While

acknowledging a personal connection with the position of an online academic advisor,

this researcher will take steps such as memoing and bracketing to surface and address any biases that arise.

Summary

  This chapter provides a summary for how an explanatory sequential mixed methods design was utilized in regards to understanding how online Millennial Generation students perceive relationships with online academic advisors. Participant sampling differed depending upon the separate phases of the study yet online undergraduate Millennial Generation students between the ages of 18 and 25 were surveyed and included in an online synchronous focus group. Interview protocols created by Liamputtong (2011) were followed accordingly. The intent of the study is to support the findings of the quantitative phase with those of the qualitative phase to create an interpretation of the relationship perceptions of online Millennial Generation students with their online academic advisors. This study aims to establish academic advising as a factor in the persistence and retention rates of online Millennial Generation students by exploring qualities and characteristics of relationships that have demonstrated motivating, communicating, engaging, and supporting online Millennial Generation students.

Chapter Four

Introduction

In this chapter, the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative analysis reflect the research question and subquestions and are discussed. Both quantitative and qualitative analysis is required due to the methodology being explanatory sequential mixed methods. This explanatory sequential mixed methods study was designed to provide more scholarly findings on how online Millennial Generation students perceive their relationships with online academic advisors.

Chapter one described the background of the problem and identified one main research question and two subquestions. This chapter will answer the research question and subquestions by providing analysis of the submitted electronic surveys and by the outcome of online focus group interviews. The participants for the submitted electronic surveys and the online focus group interviews comprised of online Millennial Generation students enrolled into online higher education programs.

Survey Distribution and Response Rate

The survey questionnaire was created in Qualtrics, an electronic survey platform. A unique hyperlink was created to access the electronic survey. Email addresses for online Millennial Generation students were gathered from a non-profit university in New England. An initial email (see Appendix B) was sent containing the survey link to 10,000 online Millennial Generation students enrolled in an online program. The survey consisted of 24 questions and was sent based upon the needed criteria of being an online

Millennial between the ages of 18 and 25 at the time this survey was sent. The initial survey was sent on June 11, 2018 and remained open 2 weeks afterwards.

Out of the 10,000 students who were sent the electronic survey, 740 responses were gathered. From the 740 responses, 25 of these responses were incomplete or were left blank. Due to these incompletions, these 25 responses will be eliminated from the total number of responses. Therefore, the number of participants that will be mentioned proceeding onwards will be the 715 respondents (13.98%). Participants needed to answer "yes" to the initial question, "Your completion of this survey indicates your consent to participate in this research study. Do you wish to participate in this survey?" in order to indicate consent and proceed to the survey (see Appendix B). Respondents who selected "yes" were brought to the electronic survey while those who responded "no" were brought back to the previous screen.

Validity and Reliability of Instrumentation

Participants completed the Advising Survey based off of the Perceptions of Advisor Relationships tool developed by Bitz (2010). As noted in Chapter 3, the Perceptions of Advisor Relationships instrument have demonstrated high validity and reliability. According to Bitz (2010), "The Cronbach's α levels for all constructs demonstrate very good internal consistency: The low was .89 for Contact and the high was .95 for all variables" (p. 56).

Slight modifications to the original instrument were made as they did not apply to this study's purposes. The original instrument asked one question about enrollment in a "first year seminar" and since this question did not apply to this study they were removed. Another slight modification included changing the wording for the question

regarding the Academic Standing demographic. Participants in the study were enrolled

into online programs and it was not expected for students to be able to identify if they

were freshmen, sophomores, juniors, or seniors. Instead it is common practice for

employees at the institution to ask Academic Standing as being full time or part time.

This change replaced the wording Academic Standing with Academic Status and

participants could choose full or part time. In addition, two supplementary questions were

added to the original instrument. These questions were in regards to understanding the

roles of an academic advisor with a participant before and after the participant attended

the university. These two questions were added to aid in the understanding of

participant's relationships with online academic advisors. The final addition was a

question soliciting follow up interviews to elaborate on the supplied answers. This was

worded as, "Would you like to participate in a follow up online focus group on academic

advising?"

Descriptive Demographics

In the survey, participants were asked questions relating to demographics, which

are represented in Table 1 below. These demographics included gender, age, ethnicity,

and academic standing (full time or part time status). Participants were asked their

gender, but also had the option to not be identified by gender. Out of the 715 participants

138 (19.3%) were male, 570 (79.7%) were female, and 7 (1%) chose to not be identified

by gender. There were 2 categories of age ranges: The first range was 18 and 20 years-

old and the second range was 21 and 25 years-old. The purpose of splitting the ranges

was to see if the younger participants (18 and 20) answered differently compared to the

21 and 25 age range participants. Out of all the respondents, 141 (19.7%) were in the 18

and 20 age range and 574 (80.3%) were 21and 25. The majority of participants identified

as White/Caucasian (75.1%), while 7.6% identified with being Hispanic or Latino, 6.9%

identified as Black/African-American, 1.7% identified as American Indian or Alaskan

Native, 7.6% identified as Multi Ethnic or Other and 1.3% preferred not to respond. The

last demographic pertained to the participants' academic status. 447 (66.7%) identified as

full time status while 238 (33.3%) identified as part time status.

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	138	19.3
Female	570	79.7
Not Identified	7	1.0
Age Category		
18-20	141	19.7
21-25	574	80.3
Ethnicity		
Hispanic/Latino	54	7.6
White	537	75.1
Black/African American	49	6.9
American Indian/Alaskan Native	12	1.7
Multi Ethnic / Other	54	7.6
Undisclosed	9	1.3
Academic Status		
Full Time	447	66.7
Part Time	238	33.3

Table 1 Descriptive Demographics of Study Sample

Roles of Academic Advisor Before and After

Participants were also asked on their understanding of an academic advisor's role

before and after attending a university. This portion of the survey was insightful as a pre

and post assessment while still acknowledging that there are limitations for completing a

pre and post assessment concurrently. The participants' answers to this section of the study was used as the foundation for designing the interview questions. Participants in the survey had options to answer the questions using a rating system of strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). The questions were, "Before attending a university, I understood the roles of an academic advisor and After attending a university, I understand the roles of an academic advisor." Below are Table 2 and Table 3 presenting the answers to the question revolving around understanding the roles of academic advisors before (Table 2) and after (Table 3).

	Frequency	Percentage
Rating		
Strongly Disagree (1)	45	6.3
Disagree (2)	90	12.6
Slightly Disagree (3)	47	6.6
Slightly Agree (4)	169	23.6
Agree (5)	222	31.0
Strongly Agree (6)	142	19.9

Table 2 Academic Advisor Role Before

	Frequency	Percentage
Rating		
Strongly Disagree (1)	11	1.5
Disagree (2)	2	.3
Slightly Disagree (3)	4	.6
Slightly Agree (4)	43	6.0
Agree (5)	261	36.5
Strongly Agree (6)	394	55.1

Table 3 Academic Advisor Role After

The above table demonstrates that participants did not understand the roles of academic advisors as thoroughly before attending a university. After they attended a university, their understanding of the roles of academic advisors increased. The mean of

understanding the role of an academic advisor before is 4.20 with a standard deviation of

1.484. The mean of understanding the role of an academic advisor after is 5.41 with a

standard deviation of .859.

These results can be summarized below with the histograms.

Figure 3 Academic Advisor Role Before

Academic Advisor Role Before
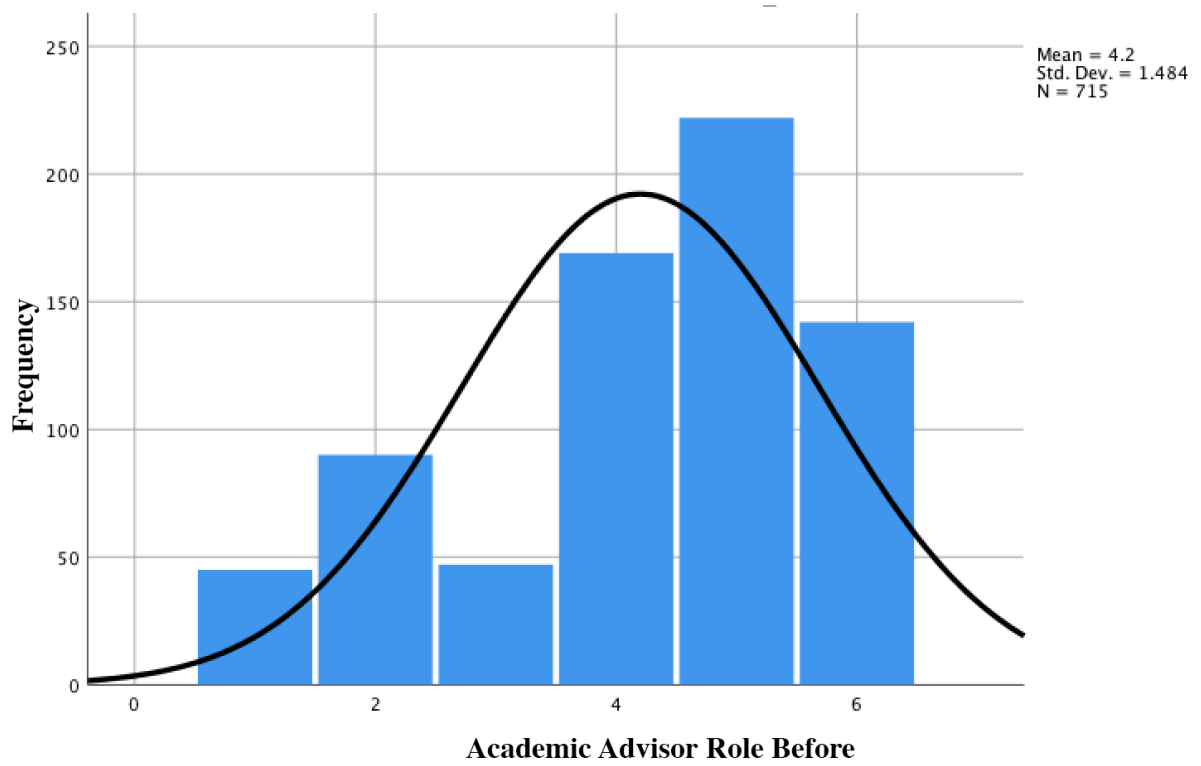
Figure 4 Academic Advisor Role After
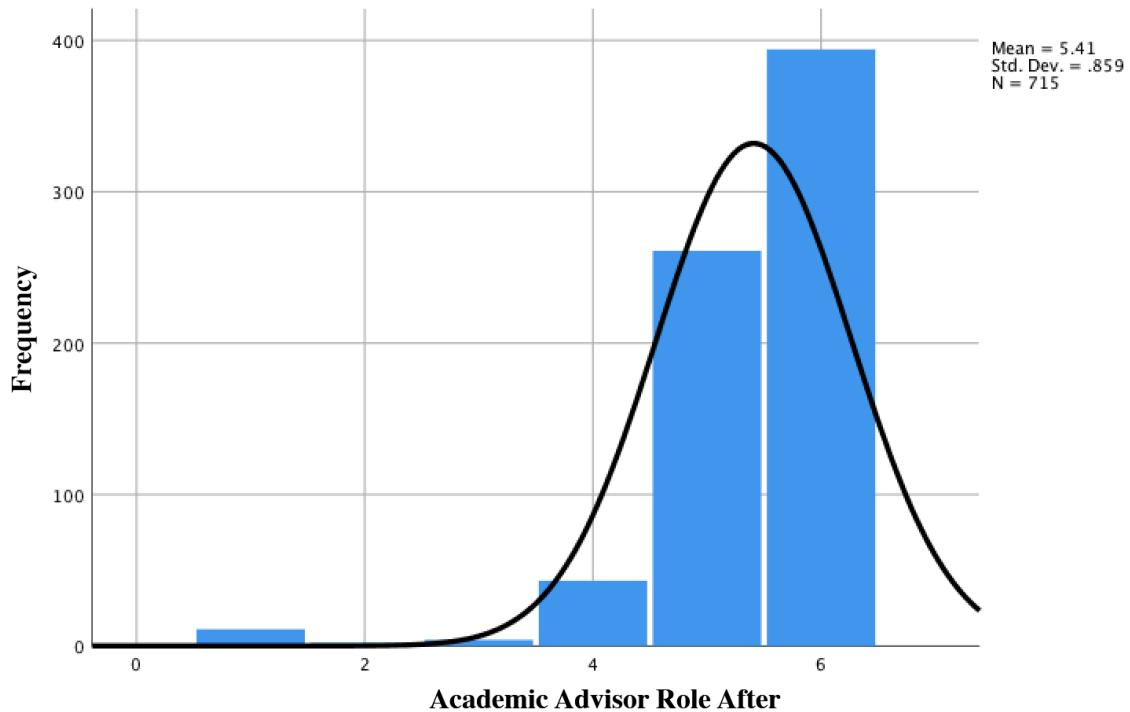
Measurement of Constructs

Participants were asked to answer questions pertaining to constructs including

Advisor Concern (Questions 4, 5, 6), Advisor Contact (Questions 7, 8, 9, 11), and

Advising Relationship Quality (Questions 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21). Once again,

constructs for this survey included concern with the students' academic, personal, and

social development (Questions 4, 5, 6), satisfaction with contact with advisor (Questions

7, 8, 9), advisor knowledge of the student (Questions 10, 11, 12), trust (Questions 13, 14,

15), listening (Questions 16, 17, 18), and comfortability (Questions 19, 20, 21).

A descriptive analysis of each item was conducted to determine the mean,

median, mode, and standard deviation for each item using SPSS. This analysis explored

not only the individual items but also these items together as constructs. Out of all the

mean, median, mode, and standard deviation scores, Advisor Concern had the widest

ranges. The median and modes of each item were concern of academic development

(median=6.00, mode=6), personal development (median=5.00, mode=6.00), and social

development (median=4.00, mode=4). Advisor Contact items measured as number of

interactions (median=6.00, mode=6), overall contact (median=6.00, mode=6, and

accessibility (median=6.00, mode=6.00. Advisor knowledge measured as about me

(median=6.00, mode=6). Advisor Relationship Quality items measured as advisor follow

through (median=6, mode=6), advisor confidence (median=6.00, mode=6), listening

skills (median=6.00 mode=6), attentiveness (median=6.00, mode=6), focused on

interactions (median=6.00, mode=6), approachability (median=6.00, mode=6), academic

matters (median=6.00, mode=6), and personal matters (median=5.00, mode=6.

	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Dev.
Rating				
Advisor Concern				
Academic Development	5.15	6.00	6	1.224
Personal Development	4.66	5.00	6	1.352
Social Development	4.07	4.00	4	1.473
Advisor Contact				
Number of Interactions	5.18	6.00	6	1.146
Overall Contact	5.20	6.00	6	1.114
Accessibility	5.30	6.00	6	1.097
Advisor Knowledge				
About Me	5.18	6.00	6	1.146
Advisor Trust				
Follow Through	5.50	6.00	6	.810
Keep Confidential	5.53	6.00	6	.767
Advisor Listening				
Listening Skills	5.44	6.00	6	.895
Attentiveness	5.41	6.00	6	.888
Focused on Interactions	5.52	6.00	6	.801
Advisor Comfortability				
Approachability	5.50	6.00	6	.812

Academic Matters	5.50	6.00	6	.878
Personal Matters	4.48	5.00	6	1.533

Table 4 Measurement of Constructs

Mean and standard deviation were also determined for the items with concern of development (M=5.15, SD=1.224), personal development (M=4.66, SD=1.352), and social development (M=4.07, SD=1.473). Advisor Contact items measured as number of interactions (M=5.18, SD=1.146), overall contact (M=5.20, SD=1.114), and accessibility (M=5.30, SD=1.097). Advisor knowledge measured as about me (M=5.18, mode=1.146). Advisor Relationship Quality items measured as advisor follow through (M=5.50, SD=.810), advisor confidence (M=5.53, SD=.767), listening skills (M=5.44, SD=.895), attentiveness (M=5.41, SD=.895), focused on interactions (M=5.52, SD=.801), approachability (M=5.50, SD=.812), academic matters (M=5.50, SD=.878), and personal matters (M=4.48, SD=1.533.

While analysis showed that results were positive, personal development and social development scored lower with the median range of 4.00 – 5.00. Within Advisor Concern, academic development scored the most positively in comparison with personal development and social development.

Figure 5 Academic Development

Figure 6 Personal Development

Mean = 4.66
Std. Dev. = 1.352
N = 715
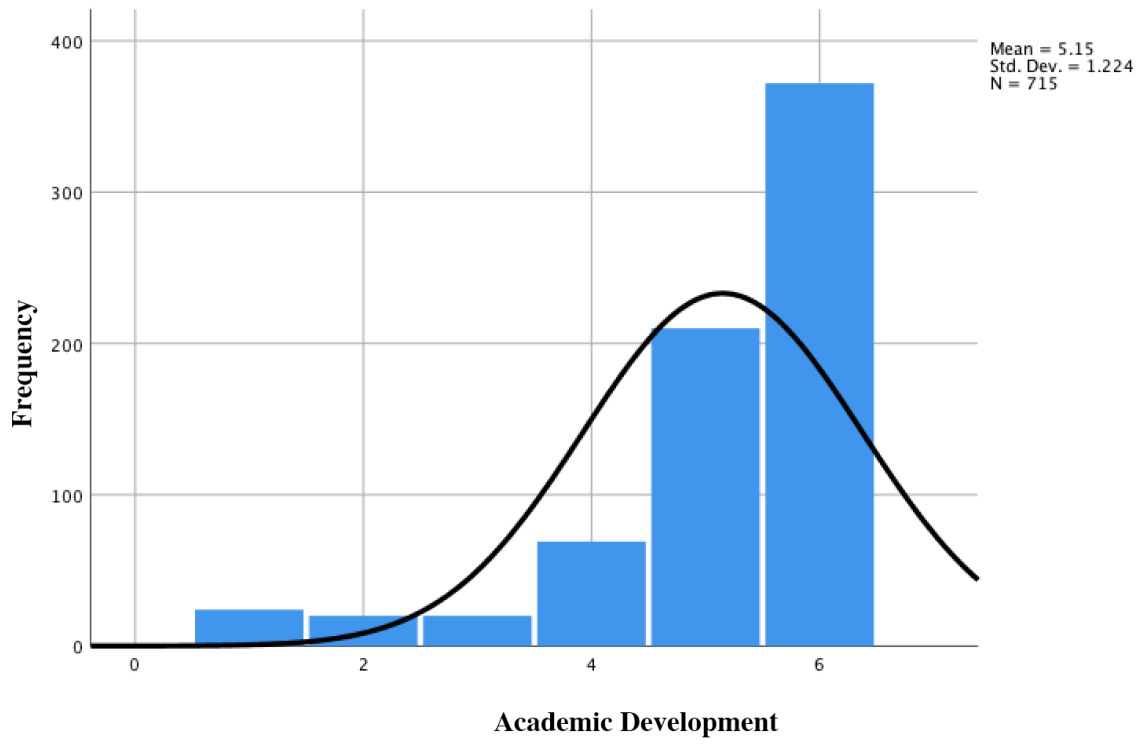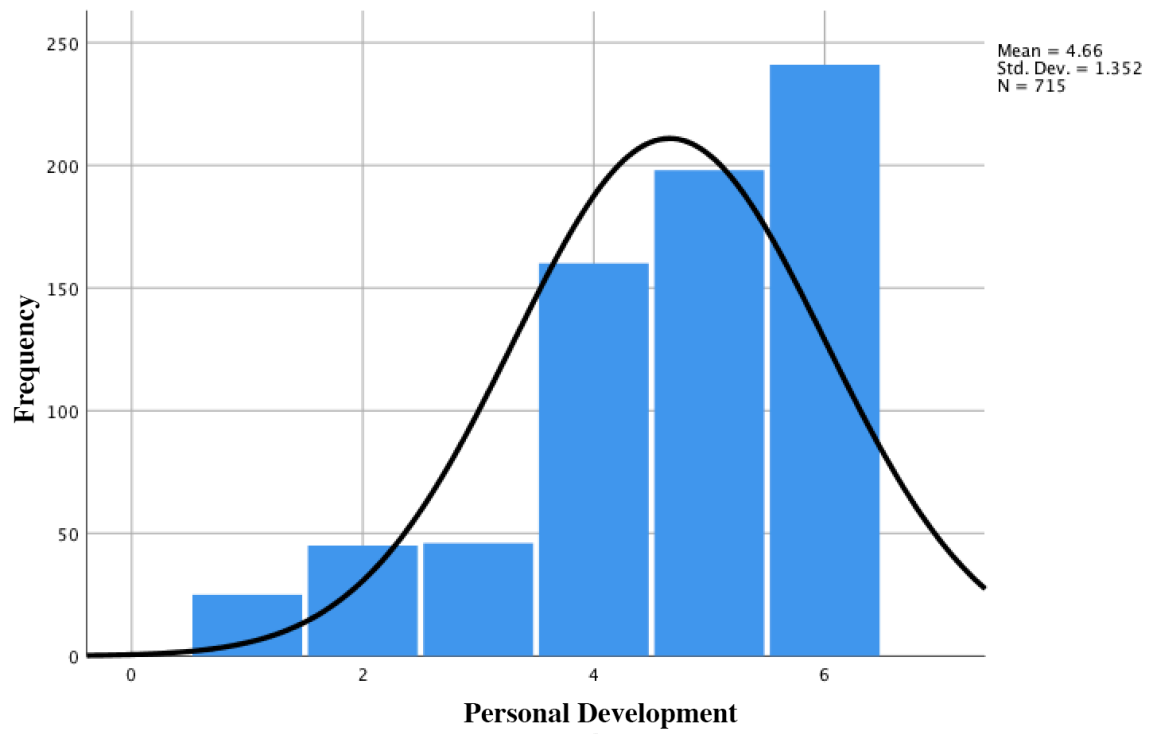
Figure 7 Social Development

Mean = 4.07
Std. Dev. = 1.473
N = 715
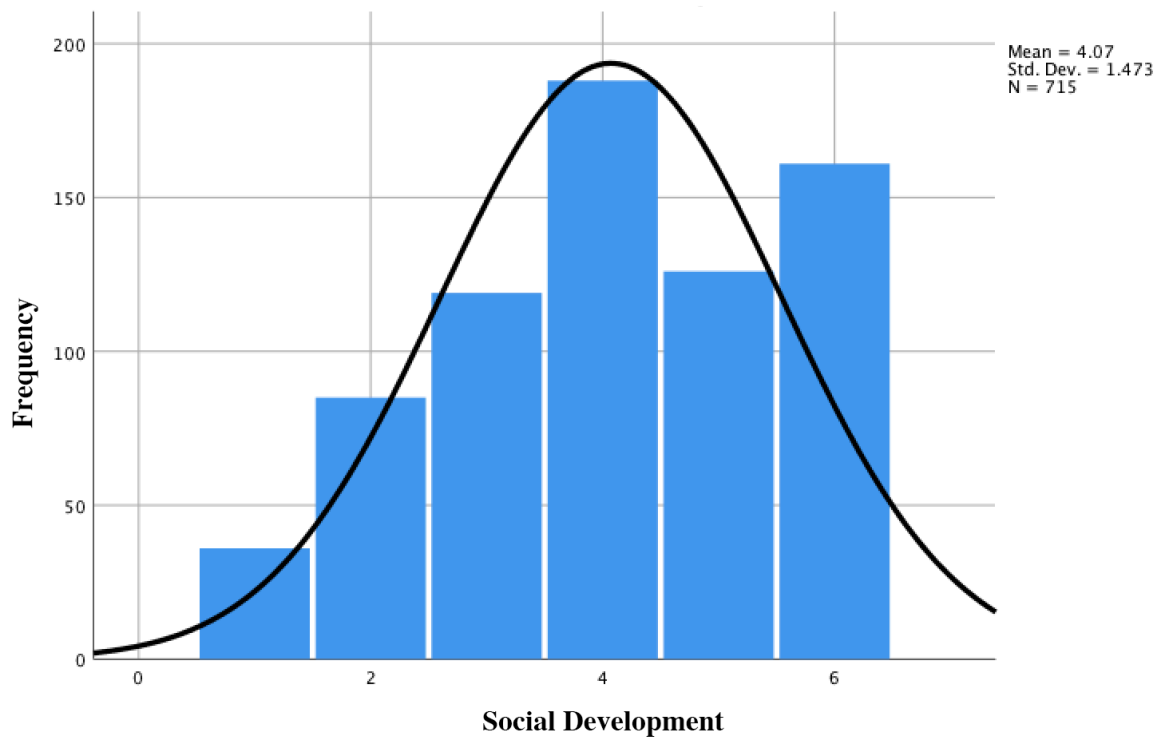
The item of personal matters also scored differently compared to the other items in the

same construct of comfortability.

Figure 8 Personal Matters
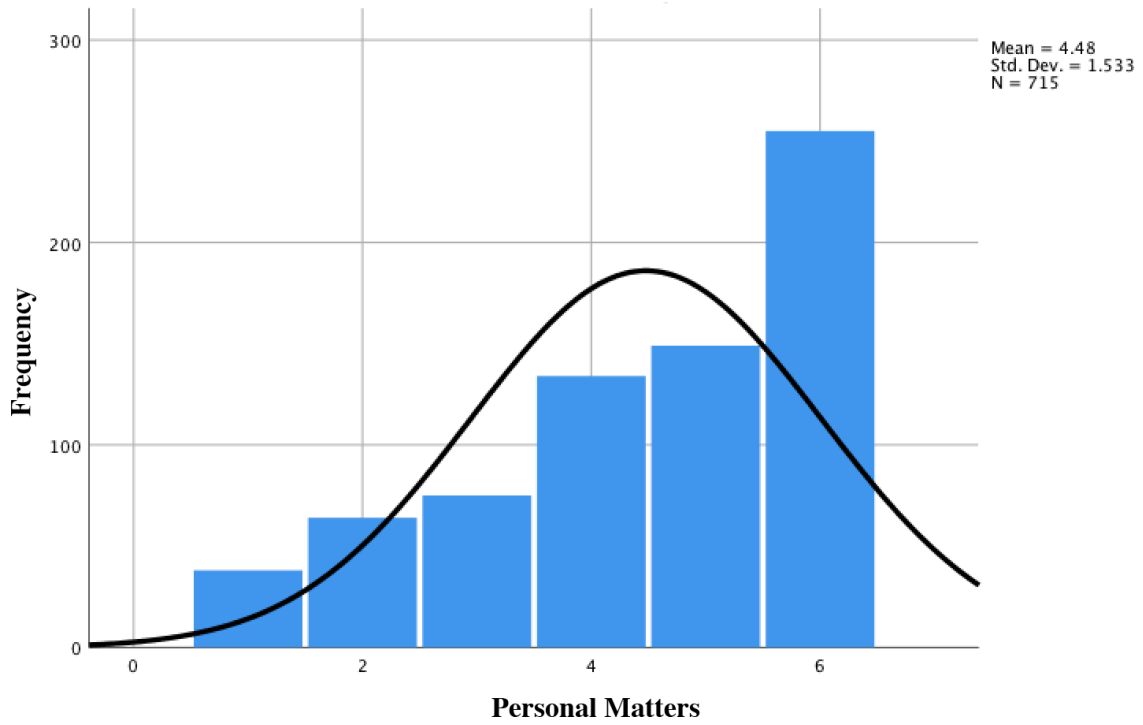
Figure 9 Academic Matters

Academic Matters
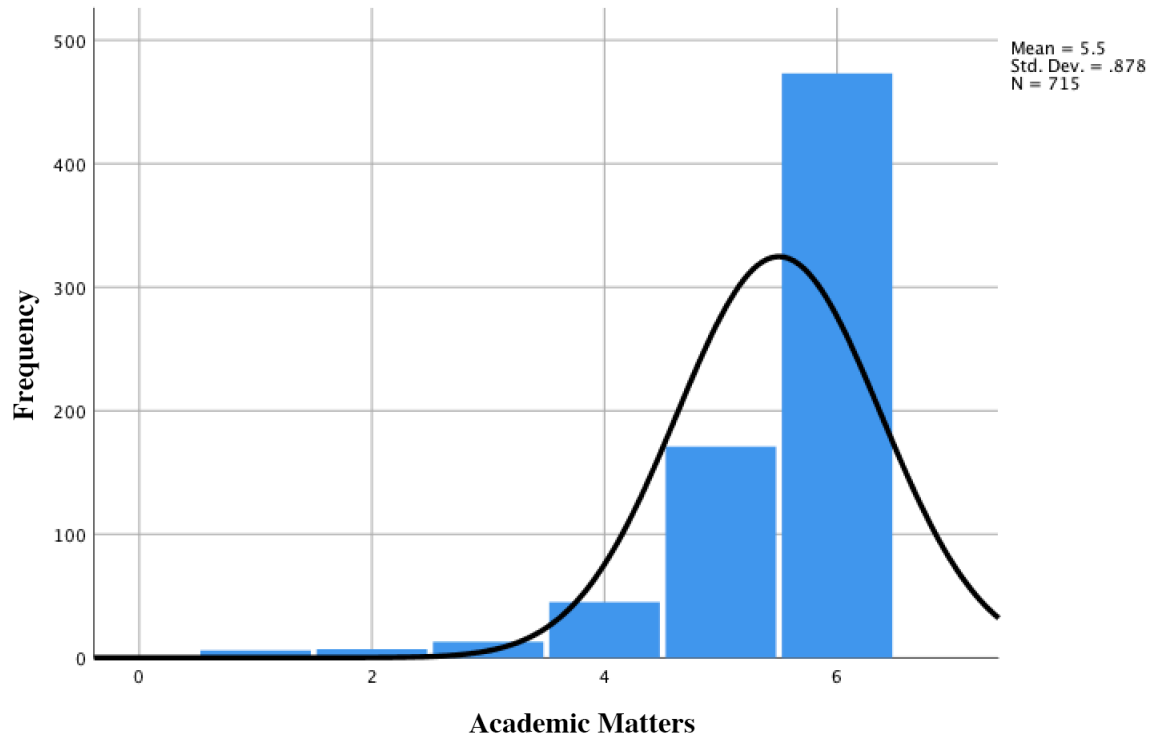
To understand these findings, these items will be explored further in the qualitative phase

of the study.

What was also unexpected from the data was that there wasn't an overall significant

difference in answers by gender or the age categories. Analysis was conducted on both

gender and age categories to determine if there were different results. As Table 6 and

Table 7 show below, there was little variance in answers:

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Academic Dev	Male	138	5.28	.974
	Female	570	5.12	1.280
Personal Dev	Male	138	4.78	1.213
	Female	570	4.64	1.384
Social Dev	Male	138	4.20	1.373
	Female	570	4.05	1.499
Number of Interactions	Male	138	5.23	1.089
	Female	570	5.18	1.158

Overall Contact	Male	138	5.25	1.061
	Female	570	5.20	1.125
Accessibility	Male	138	5.41	1.008
	Female	570	5.28	1.114
Follow Through	Male	138	5.51	.839
	Female	570	5.49	.807
Confidential	Male	138	5.57	.661
	Female	570	5.51	.794
Advisor Listens to Me	Male	138	5.51	.804
	Female	570	5.43	.920
Attentive to What I Want	Male	138	5.44	.904
	Female	570	5.41	.889
Focused on Interactions	Male	138	5.61	.656
	Female	570	5.50	.835
Approachable	Male	138	5.59	.702
	Female	570	5.48	.837
Comfortability Academic	Male	138	5.58	.853
	Female	570	5.49	.884
Comfortability Personal	Male	138	4.51	1.534
	Female	570	4.47	1.539

Table 5 Gender

	Age Category	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Academic Dev	18-20	141	4.99	1.429
	21-25	574	5.19	1.165
Personal Dev	18-20	141	4.50	1.486
	21-25	574	4.69	1.316
Social Dev	18-20	141	4.09	1.492
	21-25	574	4.07	1.470
Number of Interactions	18-20	141	5.25	1.001
	21-25	574	5.17	1.180
Overall Contact	18-20	141	5.23	.990
	21-25	574	5.19	1.143

Accessibility	18-20	141	5.42	.927
	21-25	574	5.27	1.134
Follow Through	18-20	141	5.57	.730
	21-25	574	5.48	.829
Confidential	18-20	141	5.58	.678
	21-25	574	5.51	.788
Advisor Listens to Me	18-20	141	5.55	.681
	21-25	574	5.42	.939
Attentive to What I Want	18-20	141	5.50	.752
	21-25	574	5.39	.918
Focused on Interactions	18-20	141	5.57	.690
	21-25	574	5.50	.827
Approachable	18-20	141	5.53	.752
	21-25	574	5.49	.827
Comfortability Academic	18-20	141	5.49	.850
	21-25	574	5.50	.886
Comfortability Personal	18-20	141	4.47	1.432
	21-25	574	4.48	1.558

Table 6 Age

The overall above descriptive analysis that was conducted was completed in order for the next steps in the research process. These results will be used to create the interview questions for the online focus groups. Once again, this study was designed with two phases of quantitative and qualitative. The next qualitative phase will further explain the answers provided in the quantitative phase, which will lead to a richer understanding of the initial results and full elaboration on the research questions.

Transition

There was a transitional phase between the quantitative phase and the qualitative phase. During this time frame, the quantitative findings were gathered and selected for what to be explored further. The intent of the explanatory sequential mixed method design is to not merge the two samples (quantitative and qualitative) together, but to have the qualitative findings uncover meaningful themes and support the findings of the

quantitative strand (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Additionally, from the researcher's perspective, there was a shift in mindset with having been only focused on the quantitative phase to transitioning into the qualitative phase. The purpose of the qualitative strand is to describe the relationship qualities and characteristics from online Millennial Generation students' perspectives on the relationships with their online academic advisors.

Introduction to Qualitative Phase

The qualitative phase of this study incorporated the findings of the quantitative phase to create thought-provoking open-ended questions to ask the study participants. Each question was created based upon the findings from the survey. From these initial findings, came questions that aligned to the constructs of the survey. These constructs were advisor concern, contact, and relationship qualities. These constructs were further categorized into advisor qualities including concern, contact, knowledge, trust, listening skills, and comfortability. Lastly, another category of interview questions was formulated called advisor before and after representing questions surrounding perceptions of before and after attending a university and working with an academic advisor. These open-ended questions were designed to have online millennial generation studies describe their perceptions and relationships with online academic advisors. See Appendix D. Questions were included but not limited to questions such as:

In-depth Interview Questions

Advisor before and after

- Can you describe what an academic advisor meant to you before attending a university?

- o How did you come to this conclusion of what an advisor was without ever working with one before?
- How would you describe an academic advisor now after attending a university?

Advisor Concern

- What does your advisor do to support and motivate you?
- In what ways has your advisor showed concern / been involved with your academic development?
- Describe a time when your advisor has shown concern / been involved with your personal development.
  - o According to the data, about 16% of Millennial Generation students do not believe that their advisor is concerned for their personal development. Why do you think they feel that way?
- In what ways has your advisor demonstrated concern with your social development?
  - o About 34% of Millennial Generation students answered that their advisor does not demonstrate concern for their social development. Why do you think they feel that way?

Advisor Contact
- According to the data, 90% of students were satisfied with how many times their advisor has contacted them. What has been the best way for your advisor to contact you so far?
  - o If you had your preference, how would academic advisors contact students?
  - o How could your advisor be more accessible for you?

Advisor Knowledge
- Can you describe how your advisor has gotten to know you over the time you have worked together?
- According to the data, a vast majority of students said that their advisor knows them well. What could your advisor do to understand your needs more?

Advisor Trust
- According to the data, 98% of students trust their advisor when it comes to following through on their word and for keeping information confidential. How has your advisor earned your trust over the time you have worked together?

Advisor Listening Skills
- Most students who took the survey felt that their advisor listened to them. Can you describe a time when your advisor listened to what you needed?
  - o How does it make you feel when your advisor is listening to what you share with them?

       o   Is there anything else your advisor can do to show that they are being attentive to your conversations?

Advisor Comfort Level
- 97% of students according to the data said that their advisor is approachable. Can you describe how your advisor is approachable?
- 25% of students did not feel comfortable speaking with their advisor about personal matters while 75% answered that they do feel confident discussing personal matters. What are your thoughts on this?

- Is there anything else you think I should know that I didn't ask?

Study Participants

Out of the 715 participants of the study, 205 opted to be a part of the process for follow up interviews based on the survey data. The original intent of this study was to host online focus group interviews with at least 3 focus groups composing of 7-9 participants. After initial testing of the online focus groups, the decision was made to instead host interviews with a single participant. The online focus group environment did not allow enough time for each participant to express their answers in a timely manner. Another factor was the accessibility and understanding of how to use the technology created for hosting online group interviews. After experiencing issues and troubleshooting with solutions, the online group interview formatting demonstrated that they were not the optimal platform for the interviews. Given the nature of the study, the single participant in-depth interviews provided substantial and significant information compared to numerous online focus groups and limited the amount of troubleshooting with technology.

From these 205 participants, 7 were interviewed for 45 minutes. These participants were selected using purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially

knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano

Clark, 2011). These subgroups included the demographics from the survey (age, gender,

academic status, etc.).

Gender	Age Range	Ethnicity	Academic Status	Location
Female	21-25	White	Part time	NH
Male	21-25	White	Full time	CT
Male	21-25	White	Full time	MO
Male	18-20	Multi Ethic or Other	Full time	IL
Female	21-25	White	Part time	MA
Male	21-25	White	Full time	NH
Male	18-20	Hispanic or Latino	Full time	NJ

Table 8 Participants' Demographics

These participants were also chosen based upon their differences in their survey

answers, providing more perspectives during the interview process. None of the

participants answered the survey in the same manner during the quantitative phase.

In addition to these subgroups, more characteristics appeared during the interview

process, which led to even further subgroups. These subgroups comprised online

millennial generation students who indicated being transfer, military, hybrid (online and

face-to-face enrollment) or homeschooled students. One participant in particular

mentioned she had only enrolled in online courses and had not experienced a traditional

face-to-face course. Overall, each participant fit the requirement of being an online

millennial, enrolled at an institution and had previously worked with an academic

advisor. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant and were labeled as Participant A

– G.

Coding Process

Before this study's coding process can be explained, its paramount to differentiate the meanings between code, categories, and themes. According to Saldaña (2013), "A code is a researcher-generated construct that symbolizes and thus attributes interpreted meaning to each individual datum for later purposes of pattern detection, categorization, theory building, and other analytic processes" (p. 4). A pre-coding process started the actual coding process. Pre-coding occurs when a significant quote is made and stands out before the researcher has a chance to code. For the purpose of this study, Bitz's constructs provided the a priori coding. The importance of such quotes can lay the foundation of the coding process. According to Saldaña (2013), "The codes or quotes may even be so provocative that they become part of the title, organizational framework, or through-line of the report" (p. 20). Such important quotes were distinguished in NVivo for easy retrieval.

Saldaña's (2013) first and second cycle coding methods were utilized for this study. The first cycle used was In Vivo Coding where "a code refers to a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record," (p. 91). These actual words and phrases were then grouped with the corresponding a priori code (development, contact, knowledge, trust, listening, and comfort). The words and phrases were then second cycle coded for Patterns. Saldaña (2013) defines Pattern Codes as, "explanatory or inferential codes, ones that identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation," (p. 210). These patterns developed the subthemes for the study. These subthemes when looking through the lens of the conceptual framework provided themes. Figure 1 below shows the coding process:

Figure 10 Coding Process
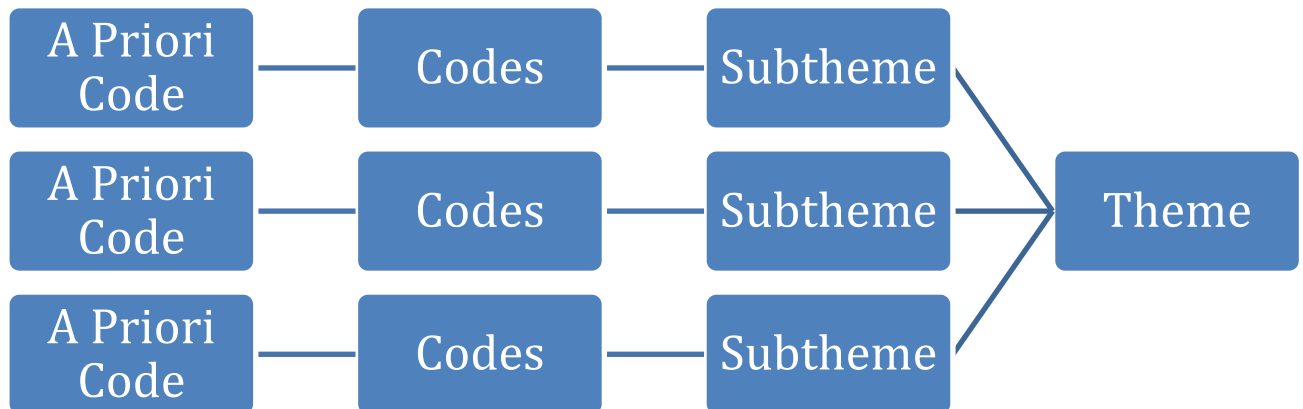
The following steps occurred in the qualitative analysis portion for the coding process:

- preliminary exploration of the data was read aloud through the transcripts

- the data was coded and grouped with corresponding a priori code

- codes were then verified

- codes were used to develop subthemes by assimilating similar codes together

- connections were determined between subthemes and to develop themes

- themes were looked through the lens of the conceptual framework and answered the research questions.

The slight modifications to the survey became additions to the existing constructs. These additions were the questions relating to understanding the roles of an academic

advisor before and after attending a university and asking if there was additional

information the survey or interviews should have mentioned. Figure 2 below outlines

the constructs that provided a priori codes:

Figure 11 A Priori Codes

A Priori Codes Explained

With this study being an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, the

constructs from the survey provided a priori codes, which supported the uncovering the

subthemes and themes. In order to fully understand the subthemes and themes that were

identified, the a priori codes need to be revisited and explained further in detail with the findings of the interviews. These a priori codes comprised of advisor development, contact, knowledge, trust, listening and comfort. In addition to these a priori codes, a question addressing academic advisor perception before and after working with an advisor was included in the interview questions. Lastly, a question asking if there were any other topics that should have been covered in either the interview or the survey were asked participants. Below is the further explanation of each construct according to the interview data:

Development

Participants of the study were asked questions pertaining to academic advisor's concern with academic, personal, and social development. These questions in particular received the most diverse answers among any of the other survey questions. Table 6 depicts this information:

Advisor Concern	Mean	Median	Mode	Std Dev.
Academic Development	5.15	6.00	6	1.224
Personal Development	4.66	5.00	6	1.352
Social Development	4.07	4.00	4	1.473

Table 9 Advisor Concern Measurement

Participants scored academic development as highest, revealing that participants weighted academic progress more than personal and social. Due to difference in the data, interview questions were developed asking for examples of how advisors have been involved in their academic, personal, and social development. Questions asking for the participants' thoughts on why the answers were diverse were also included.

In regards to academic development, participants mentioned that academic advisors are fully committed to their growth. The words help, professional, support, and

goals were consistent answers relating to academic development. Participants mentioned that advisors had previously helped with academic development such as registering for courses, fixing discrepancies, waving requirements, reviewing programs, aligning career goals, discussing internships, and connecting to proper academic resources. A representative comment was made by participant F, who summarized the above comments by saying, "Advisors are focused on really making sure that students are prepared."

Personal and social development were perceived differently from academic development among participants of the study. Participants understood that advisors have too many students to be able to provide personal and social development for each student. A percentage of the participants mentioned that depending on advisors for social and personal development was not appropriate and that the nature of the advisor to advisee relationship should be more professional. Participant C mentioned, "I don't believe it's the advisor's responsibility to act as my social guide." While this professionalism of the relationship was a resounding answer, certain participants mentioned that their advisors were more of mentors and played a more significant role in helping with their social and personal development. Participant F described the social development piece as, "My advisor and I have had hour long conversations. I can call her and voice my concerns. She's helped me with that social-emotional piece." As the above data aforementioned, online Millennial Generation students perceived personal and social development different compared to academic development.

Contact

Participants were then asked about explaining their answers on the advisor contact

section of the survey. The majority of participants answered that they were satisfied

overall with the number of interactions, contact, and accessibility from their advisors.

Participants were asked to further describe the best form of communication and contact

preferences. Participants described the importance of having a communication path with

their advisor with phone calls and emails. Participant B described how important this

timing was with communication because being an online student meant that he was never

able to see his advisor face to face. Another participant described his contact with an

advisor by saying, "I could call them and they would solve any problem I had."

Every participant mentioned their appreciation of the urgency of the advisor's

response. Four of the participants mentioned how they were transfer students and their

former colleges had them waiting weeks at a time to make an appointment with their

advisors. As one participant described, "I no longer had to make an appointment or wait a

month in order to get an answer." While the concept of texting was mentioned during the

interview process, most participants did not wish for this form of communication. Three

participants described how their advisor works with hundreds of students and texting

would not be feasible and that they wouldn't have the time.

Knowledge

Participants were asked to answer questions pertaining to the advisor's knowledge

on the participant and their needs. Participants were asked to describe how advisors have

attempted to become more familiar with the participant and their needs. All of the

participants were impressed with the amount of knowledge their advisor had about them.

All participants were surprised advisors could remember several details about them as an

individual or comments from their pervious interactions. Participant B commented on this by saying, "How on earth are they supposed to have an individual relationship with that many people? And that's what I noticed about these advisors. When they called me, they were actually talking to me like an individual, which I was surprised about." All participants that were interviewed shared this sentiment of surprise. Another surprise sentiment was how few mistakes were made when participants and academic advisors were working together. Participants assumed that the academic advisor would eventually mistake the participant for another student. Participant G even mentioned that her advisor was so impressive that she could remember her dogs name despite being "overloaded" with students. The knowledge that advisors have too many students to remember minute details was also shared among all participants. They mentioned this by saying statements such as, "I know what they are sort of working with 150 something other people," "Has a lot of other students that she's kind of watching out for," and "Even though she has two or three hundred students."

All participants described that their advisor had been successful with being knowledgeable on their needs and were able to give the best advice based on what was best for the participant. Participants described that advisors were able to make appropriate academic recommendations including courses and degrees. Participant C mentioned how he wanted to enroll in a course, but his advisor intervened because the course did not align appropriate to his degree plan. His academic advisor said, "Why do you want to take this course though? Do you really need to take this class? Is it really relevant." This eventually led him to reconsider and take a different course.

The data above proposes that online Millennial Generation students trust their academic advisor's knowledge.

Trust

Participants unanimously believed that their advisors were trustworthy and were asked in the interview to further clarify about this trust. Participants mentioned that advisors created trust by being problem solvers when participants encountered issues. Participant C mentioned how her advisor calmed her down during situations, which became a common similarity among all of the interviews. Participants described how academic advisors would "take care" of issues and would offer assistance. Participant E mentioned that her advisor said, "Don't worry. We'll take care of it." This was a shared sentiment of among participants in addition to advisors having a calm demeanor towards participants. Participant C described her advisor like a friendship and putting forth effort to take time to make sure everything is okay.

Another similarity was that trust was built upon words of encouragement. Participants described how advisors would check in with them to make sure their progress was still on track. These statements comprised of, "Keep chugging along," "Been rooting me on," and "I'm all good, thumbs up."
Academic advisors seemed to understand what the participants were experiencing during difficult situations by offering their perspectives and then following up with assistance.

Listening

Participants were asked to elaborate on how most online millennial generation students felt that their advisors listened to them. Questions pertained to describing a time when advisors listened to their needs and how it felt to be listened to. Participants

explained about the professionalism of their advisors. This perception of professionalism came from advisors being attentive during conversations and taking each conversation seriously. Participant D mentioned how he asked his advisor before how he was able to remember each conversation. His advisor described that he took notes with every phone call and did his best to pay attention to the participant's needs. Participant D also described how advisors went above expectations and "checked all the boxes" when it came to their listening skills.

Participants once again expressed their surprised sentiment with how advisors could remember each detail of their conversations despite working with numerous students. Participant A mentioned, "I kind of know what their schedule is like and that they are swamped with their own work too." Even if advisors did make mistakes, participants would not fault them due to their prior history of listening to their issues.

Comfort

Participants were asked to clarify and expand on their response to the question on how comfortable they were with their advisors. While it was clear from the data that participants of the survey felt that their advisors were approachable, answers varied with questions pertaining to comfort levels with speaking to advisors about different matters. Participants were asked to explain their thoughts on why these answers varied.

Participants explained why the majority of respondents to the survey felt comfort with their advisors. Across all participants, academic advisors made it clear to participants that they were available to help and proactively reached out to participants to check in on their progress throughout the term. These sentiments could be seen with statements such as, "I need help and you can help me," "They help me address any issues I'm having,"

"Point me in the right direction to fix those," "Find more ways to help me," and "Trying to solve problems."

These check ins to make sure participants were progressing were described as not just simple check ins, but rather it seemed to participants that advisors truly wanted to follow through for the participants. These check ins were described as "friendly," "professional," and "proactive." Along with these characteristics, participants described their advisors were approachable because of their tonality and voice.

Participants were asked about why 25% of participants indicated that they did not feel comfortable speaking with their advisor about personal matters. Participants interpreted this question differently, specifically in regards to what the term "personal matters" means. Participant D interpreted this as perceiving an advisor as a friend and not as a colleague, which he was uncomfortable with. He mentioned, "Don't just go about airing your dirty laundry." Other participants felt the same sentiment of not wanting to cross the line of friend and colleague with their advisors. A separate participant had a different interpretation of responders from the survey could be private people and did not like talking about their own matters. Other participants agreed with his sentiment by expressing statements such as, "Just keep their life under wraps," "Don't like talking about personal matters," "Some people are closed off," and "People have different backgrounds."

Before and After

A section of the interview questions was dedicated to asking participants to think back to their first experiences of being accepted at the university. During this time frame, they did not yet know their academic advisor. Interview questions were asked to reflect

upon what an academic advisor meant to them and how they reached their conclusions. Participants described a variety of answers and how they reached these conclusions.

Two participants mentioned how they were unaware of what an academic advisor meant before they attended a university. One participant D particularly mentioned that he had "no idea" what an academic advisor's role was. Along these same lines of thinking, some participants were unsure if they would actually speak with their academic advisors as one participant mentioned, "I didn't think you'd talk to them." These participants mentioned that they were not influenced by anyone else so these conclusions were their own. Other participants had the perception that academic advisors were "go-to" people as several of the participants said this phrase. "Go-to" person to these participants meant that the academic advisors were there to help with questions and any issues the participants would encounter. When participants were asked how they came to this perception, a majority mentioned that they previously worked with high school academic advisors, guidance counselors, or career counselors and they assumed they roles were similar. From their past experiences, these previous advisors or counselors were a form of "one stop shop" when it came to answering any inquiries.

A few participants also mentioned they knew about the roles of an academic advisor because of their friends and colleagues. Some participants mentioned that they had older friends who attended a university before them and told them about their experiences of working with an advisor. Half of the participants knew of at least one friend or colleague who attended the same university as them so they felt confident in knowing how to describe an academic advisor's role.

As the data showed from the quantitative phase, the participants felt that they had more of an understanding of an academic advisor's role after working with them. One participant described his first conversation with his advisor as, "Hey, my name is so-and-so. I'm here to help you. What are your goals? What kind of classes should we start you out with? What is something you want to make out of your career here." The topics of This initial conversation was a reoccurring topic from all of the interviews. Participants mentioned that academic advisors were still their "go-to" source when it came to assistance, but now they could describe in further detail how they could assist them. In addition to the words "go-to" person, participants described advisors as a support, resource, higher authority, friend, and life saver. Participant F described her experience of working with her advisor as, "They can relate to what I'm going through and they can figure virtually anything out." Additional terms such as decision maker, direction, support role, and finding proper place were used to describe their perceptions of working with their academic advisor. Overall, participants could describe in far more detail the roles of an academic advisor after attending a university and working with their advisor.

Additional Information

The last construct pertained to a category asking if there were additional information that was not asked during the interview or written on the survey that the participants felt were important to discuss. A few of the participants described how they were instantly able to build rapport with their academic advisors because they shared the same interests. They most significant interest was when academic advisors had the same degree the participant was attending the university for. Participant E mentioned how impressed he was that the university matched him with an academic advisor that had the

same degree he was pursuing and he encouraged this process more throughout the university.

All of the participants had worked with several academic advisors during their time at this university and each participant mentioned how they had a better working relationship with one advisor and then were transitioned to another advisor. With this transition, they felt that they did not have the same type of connection and were seeking areas to improve their relationships with being able to get to know their advisor more. Two participants suggested that creating an opportunity like a "coffee chat" to able to speak with their academic advisors about non-academic topics. Along these same lines, one participant mentioned that he would like to see academic advisors participate in more clubs to bond with students more.

Two participants mentioned that they had concern for the upcoming generation, Gen Z, and did not believe that the same support system they currently have would be optimal for them. One participant mentioned how she works with Gen Z students as a profession and has witnessed these students be apprehensive with communication skills and her fear is that an academic advisor would not be able to contact this generation in the same manner. She described that an additional safety net would be helpful for them.

Identified Themes and Subthemes

By utilizing the aforementioned coding process, overall themes emerged from the data analysis. These themes emerged from the a priori codes (development, comfort, trust, listening, contact, and knowledge) and additional codes. The identified words or phrases (In Vivo codes) were categorized into these a priori codes and can be viewed in Appendix E.

From the first and second cycle coding of In Vivo Coding and Pattern Coding, subthemes and themes emerged. The identified themes and subthemes were as followed:

- Connectivity (Support, Approachable, Communication)
- Empathy (Advisor Workload, Advisor Caseload)
- Awareness (Go-To Person, Professionalism, Generation Z)
- Encouragement (Help, Motivation, Goal Oriented)

These emerged themes were further reflected upon, examined, and related back to the theoretical framework and the research questions. These themes were developed through the examining of the data, transcribing the interviews, and reading these transcripts aloud. The coding process for the themes can be seen in Appendix F. The subthemes within the themes will also be explained throughout the identified themes section.

Theme 1: Connectivity

Every participant throughout their interviews mentioned subjects relating to connectivity with their academic advisors. Participants all felt it was essential to their success to be connected with their academic advisor. These feelings also corresponded with the quantitative data to lead to the conclusion that online Millennial Generation students felt that connectivity was significant with relationships with academic advisors. Within this significance, three subthemes of support, approachableness, and communication emerged.

Support

The first subtheme that emerged was support. In the context of this research, support referred to academic advisors being a support system to online Millennial Generation students. This subtheme was discussed in each interview. An example of

support was when Participant B mentioned that her academic advisor has been supporting

her from the beginning, which has created a strong bond. Participant B shared,

> I was kind of naïve on what to expect about this college thing. I was really
>
> prepared fully for what to expect, so they've been on the brunt of a lot of
>
> freakouts, like "What in the world am I supposed to be doing?!" But right now,
>
> she has been a great help to me.

It was evident that she had a strong connection with her academic advisor when she

mentioned, "I'm trying to describe them in a couple of words because if I start talking

about them, it will go on for hours." And then she added, "She's just been like a big

supporter to me with everything that I've been personally going through." This support

system piece was described by other participants. Participant C also described how his

advisors have been a strong support system for him. He mentioned that,

> The past two advisors I've had, they've been a great support role because they've
>
> been, for one, they've set up my entire class schedule for six months out, which
>
> was really helpful. And they're almost, for me, they're kind of like a cheerleader.

The preceding data suggests that online academic advisors are a strong support system

for online Millennial Generation students.

Approachable

The second subtheme, approachable, was the second most frequently discussed

topic. The subtheme of approachable described how online Millennial Generations

students felt towards reaching out to their academic advisors as well as how accessible

they were. Participant C mentioned how his academic advisors had demonstrated care in their interactions when he had experienced issues. He shared,

> It wasn't just simple check ins, like there were a couple of times I had problems with professors and they tried to talk it out with me, and I think it was almost like I wasn't, the reason why they made a good impression, they were approachable is because I didn't feel like I was ever burdening them. They wanted to help me. They wanted to do their job. And that's what makes someone approachable, I think.

He further explained how his academic advisors had been approachable by saying,

> Well, a lot of it had to do with tone of voice. And I'm a sales person. I actually think of it in terms of when people walk in my door and how I'm talking to them. And I'm not just a sales clerk, I'm a consulting. I'm actually, you say if you're talking on the phone you can tell if someone's smiling or not. And if they do smile when they talk to you, you know. And a lot of it I think has to do with a lot of these advisors have been on the phone, but they've been so approachable in their voice and their tonality, but also just so proactive.

Another participant explained how her academic advisor's approachableness was what helped her when a family member passed away. She shared,

> I was like freaking out. I'm just like "What am I going to do. My grandmother just passed away." I had this deadline coming up. I had this essay. I'm not used to citing things. And I'm just like, I am losing my mind. And she's just like "Don't

worry. We'll take care of it. Just be there with your family and then we'll get back

to it once you are settled and less going on."

The data proposes that online Millennial Generation students felt that their academic

advisors were approachable. The above data discusses different instances when an online

Millennial Generation student reached out to his or her academic advisor with receiving

the same amount of care.

Communication

The last subtheme to emerge was communication. Participant F explained how

her relationship with her academic advisor was built around communication and support.

She described about how every time she went through an issue, her academic advisor

communicated with her about her options and did so in a calming way. She shared,

I've always had questions like trouble with a professor or assignment and trying

to figure out where I'm going next or how many classes I have left. I'm always

able to shoot her an email and no matter how many students she has she gets back

to me within 24 hours. Right now, I'm freaking out because I have that big final

class coming up and she sat down and explained it and be able to be there.

Participant F's communication with her academic advisor was important to her success as

she mentioned a particular circumstance where she needed her academic advisor's help.

She mentioned,

I wanted to go out of the country but still keep my academics up. I was able to

call her and voice my concerns. She helped me through that. It's like a friendship

type in a way. If you know what I mean. It's very cool to take the time to talk to

me about classes, but that she also takes the time to talk about me and remember

stuff about me.

Participant E also described how important communication was to him because of his

experience at a prior university. He felt that his previous academic advisors from another

institution didn't have his best interests in mind and it forced him to transfer to another

institution. He described his process with transferring to another institution and working

with a new advisor as, "Right away, it was just a completely different experience because

I felt that was what they were focused on. They were focused on really making sure that

students are prepared before they even start classes." He went on to explain further,

I can say throughout the entire whole two years I've been here, it's been the same

thing. If I ever have a question, I can call my advisor and within a day or two,

they can get a response. It's no longer making an appointment or waiting a month

in order to get an answer. They make the initiative to make sure that you get what

you need, not just in terms of classes, but if you have a question about a club or if

you need to talk to somebody from the career office or if you need to get in touch

with them, just whatever you need.

Lastly, online Millennial Generation students did identify texting communication with

their online academic advisors. However, six out of the seven participants mentioned how

while they view texting as a convenient way of communicating, they didn't wish to use

this as a way of talking with their online academic advisors. This was because texting

seemed unrealistic for online academic advisors to maintain and be able to keep track of

all of their conversations.

Overall, communication was a critical element to online Millennial Generation students. Each participant described how communication was important and made them feel supported.

Theme 2: Empathy

The second theme that emerged from the data was empathy. Online Millennial Generation students demonstrated a great deal of empathy throughout the interview process. This sense of empathy was not specifically asked throughout the interviews, but happened organically. All of the participants in the interviews mentioned how they felt empathetic for the perceived amount of work their academic advisors must complete. From this theme of empathy, there were two subjects that participants mentioned: advisor workload and advisor caseload.

Advisor Workload

The first subtheme of advisor workload could be defined for this research as how much activity an advisor how to complete for his or her advisees. One participant described how she was aware of how much work her advisor must have to do for her advisees. She believed that because her academic advisor is responsible for so many students' progress that she might make a mistake. This participant mentioned,

That's too much to remember for them, personally, and they might end up making a mistake in someone else's. Because I know she has a lot of other students that she's kind of watching out for. So, it's all kind of a balance.

This participant's thoughts were similar to other participants. Overall, online Millennial Generation students were surprised that an academic advisor could keep track

of hundreds of students progress yet were able to contact all of them. Participant C described this process when he mentioned,

> How on earth are they supposed to have an individual relationship with that many people? And that's what I noticed about these advisors. When they called me, they were actually talking to me like an individual, which I was surprised about.

When Participant A was asked about the data around listening and his thoughts on the subject, he mentioned the advisor workload. According to him,

> I'm trying to think, because at the same time I got that in the back of my head I kind of know what they're schedule is like. I'd say I don't want to give them the black mark of saying you didn't reach out to me enough when I know they're swamped with their own work too, so you don't want to fault them for it. But at the same time, I don't really think so much because the way our relationship was we just both seemed to understand that. Or it's like "I'm all good, thumbs up." Or he's like, "Keep chugging along."

The data proposes the online Millennial Generation students were cognizant of an academic advisor's workload. Online Millennial Generation students were surprised by how organized academic advisors could be while managing their workloads.

Advisor Caseload

The second subtheme for empathy was advisor caseload. One participant described a scenario pertaining to advisor caseload and was impressed that his academic advisors were able to solve numerous problems for so many students. He shared,

What I liked a lot about these advisors is that they, for one, I think they had less of

a load than some other universities. I was actually asking one advisor, I said,

"How many students do you actually get at a normal university?" And the number

was 10 times what he had to deal with. And I was already surprised by the

number he gave me.

Participant F added to these thoughts by mentioning how impressed she was even though she was working with "two to three hundred students." She mentioned, "It's incredible to me that they are able to do that. Like, you're literally overloaded with all of these kids but you can remember my dogs name." When asked how she knew this information, she shared, "She posted that has three hundred students she when you leave a message, please say your name. Even that she yeah, a lot of people are asking about master degrees but even with that many, she still remembers."

As the data above proposes, online Millennial Generation students were aware of how many students an academic advisor is responsible for. Four of the participants mentioned this advisor caseload during the interview process.

Theme 3: Awareness

The third theme that emerged from the research was awareness. Online Millennial Generation students were aware of three subthemes: academic advisors being the go-to person, relationships with academic advisors for Generation Z will be different, and relationships with academic advisors must be professional.

Go-To Person

Each participant from the interviews mentioned the subtheme of an academic advisor being a type of "go-to" person. Participants had different names for expressing

how academic advisors were go to sources for information by identifying advisors as a

one stop shop, go to guy, or just simply go-to. One participant described how her

academic advisor created the reputation of being the go-to person for questions. She

shared,

> If something comes up with my academics, I want to reach out right away. My
>
> advisor would be first. My advisor knows what classes I'm in, they could speak to
>
> the professor, if a family member died or something happened, I would want my
>
> advisor to understand first. Even financial situation, I would want them right there
>
> because she would be able to help. She would be the first batter in my bad
>
> situation.

Participant A described his academic advisor as his go-to person in a variety of ways

during the interview process. He shared,

> I would say the way I always perceived it personally is they're basically like your
>
> go-to person if you have any questions regarding things you got to get for school,
>
> or have questions about how this class is going to be, or how do I get registered
>
> for classes, or just really, they're the person you go to for virtually anything. It's
>
> kind of your one stop shop if you will. If you don't know who to go to, even if
>
> your advisor isn't the person to correct an issue, they're the ones who always get
>
> you going in the right direction or find that person for you.

Participant G also mentioned how his academic advisor became his go-to person. He
shared,

> Your advisor is someone you go to even with trouble for something and they
>
> should be able to go through why you want to do it. Like be a mentor. Talk

through the process even if you are going through a hard time. Mine have been

pretty helpful in a lot of things.

As mentioned above, every participant called their academic advisor a "go-to" person. Online Millennial Generation students view their academic advisors as their best resource to answer their questions.

Professionalism

The next subtheme that emerged for awareness was professionalism. Online Millennial Generation students mentioned several times that while academic advisors are like friends, they are definitely not friends. They are employees of a university and are meant to be respected as professionals. This line of thinking with professionalism can be seen in the quotes below. When asked about online Millennial Generation students' personal development, he mentioned how it was not the academic advisor's role because they were meant to be a professional resource. He stated,

I don't really think so because I think on some aspects they want to still retain that

sort of professional guidelines. They don't want to be super, super friendly, like at

the point where they know everything that's going on in a student's life.

Participant B shared the same sentiment by simply stating, "It's more like advisors are my professional resource, not personal resource." Participant A also agreed with the professionalism statements above when he mentioned, "The best way to describe it is just a professional relationship of I need help and you can help me. Then you fix the issue, and we can both get on with our day." Participant C mentioned the same type of professionalism too when he mentioned, "I think they acted like professionals and they put a human touch on it. And I think the aspects were that they were very friendly and

professional. Those would be the two things." Participant F also described their relationships in a professional sense, but said that academic advisors were more like a higher authoritative figure. She shared, "But in reality, the advisor was more like, a higher authority. They know more about the university and what you're going through and they have more information."

Overall, online Millennial Generation students view their academic advisor as a professional resource and respect their profession.

Generation Z

The online Millennial Generation students commented about their concern for Generation Z or Gen Z students and what their relationships with academic advisors would look like. According to Artemova (2018), "The term Generation Z applies to individuals born after the generation of the millennials" (p. 8). While there are different definitions for this generation, Gen Z can be defined as individuals born between 1996 and 2012 (Schwieger & Ladwig, 2018). This generation has been even more familiar with technology than the Millennial Generation, and because of these early experiences with technology, the participants in the interviews expressed their concern. Their concern pertained to how academic advisors currently work with students would need to adapt based on Generation Z's needs.

Participant F mentioned how she has friends who are classified as Generation Z and they have different anxiety with communicating. She shared,

I know in my friend group, they have nerve wracking anxiety about phone calls. Even if it's an email in the beginning that says hey reach out to me. And maybe inbox thing to them beginning and end of semester to make sure they are okay.

She also had experience working with students in this generation and has witnessed their behaviors. She mentioned, "When I look at older students, none of them want to participate. They are like, I don't like people. And we say you need to work together and they shut down the second it comes to that."

Participant E mentioned how some of his friends who are in the Generation Z category have had unrealistic expectations of college and the work force. He mentioned,

> Some of the freshmen tend to pick careers based on irrational reasons. There are a couple of people I know that have literally told me, "Yeah, I'm just going to go get my associate's degree in engineering because people say I can come out making 120 grand a year."

As the data above suggests, online Millennial Generation students are aware that they have different needs than Generation Z students. The online Millennial Generation students described how academic advisors are going to need to take a different approach when working with Generation Z students.

Theme 4: Encouragement

The last theme that emerged was encouragement. The online Millennial Generation students felt encouragement from their relationships with their academic advisors. Three subthemes emerged from the data: help, motivation, and goals. Each subtheme was an element of encouragement that online Millennial Generation students expressed.

Help

Help was most frequently said word out of all the conducted interviews. From all seven interviews, the word help was mentioned 17 times. Participants during the interviews referred to help as in academic advisors were helpful and participants would

reach out to them for help. Participants described ways in which academic advisors were helpful in terms of finding resources or in terms of development. One example of an academic advisor being helpful in terms of finding resources can be seen from this participant's experience with her academic advisor,

> She connected me with the career office, so to speak. I did not even know this existed. I got the emails. I kind of knew it existed. I kind of knew yeah, there's a career office. I think that's pretty standard that all colleges have one, but I just wasn't aware that that was something that I could utilize.

Another participant described how his advisor helped him with his personal development when he mentioned, "I personally, yes, I would say that my advisors, I feel like yes, they have helped me with that social-emotional piece." Participant A described his advisor as helpful when he said, "Yeah my academic advisor is very approachable in regards to getting help and any kind of help. It can be social or personal problem, but also academic." Participant C also described this helpfulness by saying, "The past two advisors I've had, they've been a great support role because they've been, for one they've set up my entire class schedule for six months out, which was really helpful." Lastly, Participant B shared a similar sentiment, "I really like my advisors, and they've been a really big help for me going through."

As the data mentioned, the word "help" was the most said word from the online Millennial Generation students. Academic advisors are seen as helpful in the online Millennial Generation students' development.

Motivation

The second subtheme to emerge was motivation. Online Millennial Generation students feel motivation from their academic advisors to do well and to finish their degree programs. Motivation is an important piece to the online Millennial Generation with needing help to stay consistent and on track with their courses. Participant A mentioned how his academic advisor wasn't only a supporter, but also a motivator for him. He shared,

> But, motivator, your advisor is someone you go to even with trouble for something and they should be able to go through why you want to do it. Like be a mentor. Talk through the process even if you are going through a hard time

Participant C mentioned how he has worked with three different academic advisors, but all of them have been motivators. He shared, "I've had three different advisors, actually, and they've all been able to motivate me and keep me on track and make sure that the program that I'm in actually matches my goals."

Online Millennial Generation students are motivated by their academic advisors to do well in their courses and to finish their degree programs.

Goal Oriented

The final subtheme that emerged was goal oriented. Online Millennial Generation students are goal oriented in the sense of wanting to reaching completion of the degree and complete their coursework. In order to strive for these goals, their relationships with academic advisors have adopted this principle. Academic advisors and online Millennial Generation students set goals together and make sure to stay on track together throughout the time they work together.

Participant C transferred from another institution and found that his new academic advisors provided a different approach for goal setting. He described his experience as, "One of the reasons why I really have had a good experience is because they make sure of that whatever you're doing fits into your goal, not just the idea you have in your head, so to speak." This participant also mentioned how in his initial introduction call with his academic advisor, she asked what his goals were from the beginning.

Participant F also mentioned how her advisor helped with being goal oriented by continuously checking in with her every few weeks to make sure she was on track. She shared,

> One thing that helps me is knowing that my advisor calls me halfway through the term to check in. She says, "Oh you have this grade and you are doing great" or she says "Oh, you have this grade, do you need help?" She always, like I voiced concerns about my math class. So, she always was able to sit down with me over the phone and said this is where you can go to, this is how you can get extra help.

Online Millennial Generation students are goal oriented as the data suggests above. Online Millennial Generation students and academic advisors work together on these goals to ensure success.

Connections to Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research was based on a combination of three established theories: Developmental Model of Academic Advising, Theory of Emerging Adulthood, and Gestalt Theory. This conceptual framework created the lens for this researcher to examine the data through. Each element of the framework contained crucial pieces to understand the relationship perceptions of online Millennial Generation students

with their online academic advisors. The following section provides analysis to how the data from this research and each of the theories connect.

Developmental Model of Academic Advising

During analysis of the data and the emerging themes, Crookston's developmental model of academic advising was used as a lens to understand the characteristics of the relationships between online Millennial Generation students and their academic advisors. Crookston's (1994) developmental model of academic advising centered around the belief that the relationship between the advisor and the advisee comprise in a series of developmental tasks designed to educate both the advisor and the advisee (p. 6). These developmental tasks were also grounded in facilitating the student's rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavioral awareness, and problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills (p. 5). These elements of learning were for the advisor and advisee to reach the same goals together.

Elements of these characteristics emerged from the themes of the research. The themes of connectivity, awareness, and encouragement were present and demonstrated in many ways by all of participants. The participants demonstrated through their words that the relationships with academic advisors made them feel supported, motivated, and goal oriented. One example of this sense of support, motivation, and goal orientation was described by Participant F. She mentioned, "She has been there for me through everything with helping me out and being in the right classes. I'm graduating because she is saying to me I can do this and do that." Online Millennial Generation students also perceived their relationships as an approachable and professional working relationship built on communication. These themes and subthemes align to Crookston's goal centered

tasks for both advisor and advisee to learn together and was demonstrated in the participants answers to the interview questions.

Theory of Emerging Adulthood

The lens of the Theory of Emerging Adulthood explained the purpose of the relationship with an academic advisor from a Millennial Generation student's perspective. Arnett's (2015) Theory of Emerging Adulthood described the stage in a Millennial's life between the ages of 18 and 25 years-old (p. 8). During this age range, Millennials experience major life events such as higher education, marriage, home ownership. Arnett's theory identified that Millennials are trying to find their identities, a significant other, and a career along with realizing they have fewer commitments towards other people. This life stage comprised a sense of feeling in between where Millennials do not identify with being teenagers nor do they identify with being an adult. At this point in their lives, Millennials feel that all possibilities are endless (Arnett, 2004). The Theory of Emerging Adulthood indicated five themes Millennials are likely to experience: identity, explorations, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and possibilities/optimism (Arnett, 2015, p. 9). From Arnett's five themes emerge a concept of seeking a purpose. When looking through the lens of the Theory of Emerging Adulthood, answers from the participants described these themes.

Participant C described how Millennials have different expectations for their relationships with academic advisors. He shared,

> I think there's probably a chasm between maybe an old guard view on education
> and a new guard. And I'm not sure if all those chasms have been filled yet. You

know, Millennials may have different expectations. And I'm a Millennial. I hate

the term, but I am a Millennial.

He further went on to explain his thoughts when he mentioned,

I really do think that there are going to be people in our generation who expect a

certain level of service versus other people who may come in who might be older

or already have three kids, full-time job and whatnot. They're like, actually I don't

need you as much. I'll reach out when I need you. Compared to those who

proactively like to speak on the phone and give updates and talk about their

studies and whatnot. That makes sense to me.

Participant F described how she was still looking for a sense of purpose with her

education and sought her academic advisor to help with this purpose. She mentioned,

My personal relationship with my advisor even before I came to school were life

savers. Lost before coming into college even coming in with entrance advisors to

find my proper place, find exact degree that was perfect for me, they were like

career savers.

 She also shared,

Before I came to school, I had an Associates in CJ (criminal justice). Once I got to

my internship, I realized that's not what I wanted to do at all. I had friends tell me

to go to another institution. They (academic advisors) are life savers. So, I went

onto the website and said hey this is what I want to do and they called me up that

night and had an hour- long conversation with them. They were like, this degree

sounds perfect for you. Would you be willing to give it a shot?

Overall, online Millennial Generation students demonstrated the Theory of Emerging Adulthood with seeking their sense of purpose.

Gestalt Theory

Kohler's (1947) Gestalt Theory argued that perception is best understood as an organized pattern than as separate parts. Through Gestalt Theory, learners' experiences and perceptions influence the organization and structure of the mind. For this research, Gestalt Theory was applied during the analysis phase to describe the relationship perceptions of online Millennial Generation students and their academic advisors. Examples below can be read of how online Millennial Generation students discussed how they perceived their relationships with academic advisors before attending a university. Participant B shared her perception experiences when she mentioned,

> Before attending, I would say the way I always perceived it personally is they're basically like your go-to person if you have any questions regarding things you got to get for school, or have questions about how this class is going to be, or how do I get registered for classes, or just really they're the person you go to for virtually anything.

Another participant had a negative perception of academic advisor relationships because he had an overwhelming experience from another institution. This experience impacted his perception beforehand until he had another experience working with a new academic advisor. He mentioned,

> I started my college career, so to speak, actually at a community college. I would say that my first advising experience was actually not the best because at my local community college there are just thousands of strategies. We have, the one that's

near me, we just have thousands and thousands of students. There's probably a couple hundred at least per advisor. In order for me to actually get to the advisor, I had to make an appointment three or four weeks out, not even kidding.

Summary

This chapter described the process to understand the relationship perceptions of online Millennial Generation students with their academic advisors. An explanatory sequential mixed methods study was conducted. The study comprised of both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a well-rounded constructed conclusion. During the quantitative phase of the study, a survey questionnaire created in Qualtrics was sent to 10,000 online Millennial Generation students enrolled in an online program. The survey consisted of 24 questions pertaining to academic advisor development, academic advisor concern, and academic advisor contact. Out of the 10,000 sent surveys, 715 responses were gathered. The mean, median, mode and standard deviation for each construct were collected and analyzed.

From this analysis, questions pertaining to advisor concern, contact, knowledge, trust, listening skills, and comfort level were created. Questions in regards to advisor perception before and after working together were asked along with a section for additional information. Seven online Millennial Generation students agreed to be interviewed. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded, under the protocols of Saldaña (2013) and Creswell & Plano Clark (2011). From the coding process, subthemes and themes emerged and were as followed:

- Connectivity (Support, Approachable, Communication)
- Empathy (Advisor Workload, Advisor Caseload)

- Awareness (Go-To Person, Professionalism, Generation Z)
- Encouragement (Help, Motivation, Goal Oriented)

Participants' transcripts from the interviews reinforced the emerged themes to further explain the relationship perceptions of online Millennial Generation students and their academic advisors.

Lastly, the data and emerged themes were explained through the lens of the conceptual framework. This conceptual framework was based on the Developmental Model of Academic Advising, Theory of Emerging Adulthood, and Gestalt Theory. Each element of the conceptual framework was applied through the conducted research and was the foundation for the findings in the following chapter.

Chapter Five

Introduction

Based on the explanations of the constructs, coding process, subthemes, and

emerged themes, findings can be concluded to answer the overarching main research

question and sub-questions. The purpose of this study was to understand how online

Millennial Generation students perceive their relationships with online academic

advisors. To understand these relationship perceptions, online Millennial Generation

students answered surveys to provide data and select participants were interviewed to

further explain their answers. By utilizing both methods, the data demonstrated both

quantitative and qualitative perspectives. In addition to these methods, this research was

based on a theoretical framework comprised of the Developmental Model of Academic

Advising, Theory of Emerging Adulthood, Gestalt Theory. This chapter includes data

findings explaining how online Millennial Generation students perceive their

relationships with online academic advisors.

Main Research Question

How do online Millennial Generation students perceive their relationships with online

academic advisors?

Online Millennial Generation students perceive their relationships with online

academic advisors as professional working relationships, which aligns with Crookston's

(1994) developmental model of academic advising. These relationships were built on

support, communication, and trust. It has already been established by Bitz (2010) that

students perceive their relationships with academic advisors in three separate

constructions: concern, contact, and development. This study's research supports these

findings and were able to expand upon areas such as personal, social, and academic development, communication, knowledge, trust, listening skills, and comfortability. Online Millennial Generation students also perceive their relationships with online academic advisors as the advisors being their "go-to" people with questions. Online academic advisors are perceived as being the approachable and knowledgeable sources of information who can help resolve issues. In addition to being able to provide help, online academic advisors are seen as motivators and goal setters to ensure that online Millennial Generation students stay on track with their courses and programs. The relationship between the two parties is not prescriptive in nature, but rather was described as being a mutual partnership. The data gathered from the mixed methods study aligned with Crookston's (1994) definition of developmental academic advising, as in the relationship between advisor and advisee was built on engagement and developmental tasks in which both parties learned from (p.6).

These relationship perceptions developed over time as online Millennial Generation students explained how their perceptions changed from before working with an online academic advisor and afterwards. After working with an academic advisor, online Millennial Generation students feel that they understood the roles of academic advisors more. 50% of online Millennial Generation students agreed and strongly agreed that they understood the roles of an academic advisor before working with one. After working with an academic advisor though, this number changed to 91.6%. In addition, this change with the mean of understanding the role of an academic advisor before was 4.20 with a standard deviation of 1.484. The mean of understanding the role of an academic advisor after was 5.41 with a standard deviation of .859. This change of

perception was also demonstrated from participants during the qualitative phase. While some participants indicated that they had some idea to what an academic advisor's role was, several participants mentioned that they were unsure of their roles. One participant indicated,

"I had no idea. Before I came in, I thought they were like, you take this class, this class, this class, and you're done. I didn't think you talked to them." When the participants were asked to describe how they perceive their relationship with their academic advisor after working with together, they were able to go into further detail then before. One example was from a participant who mentioned that she learned how academic advisors were not simply there to only answer questions, but were there to guide her. When asked to describe the role of her academic advisor after working together, she shared, "Someone that's there to help you, but more along the lines of they're in this with you."

Overall, online Millennial Generation students perceive their relationships with academic advisors as important to their success. From motivation, goal setting, and helpfulness, academic advisors support online Millennial Generation students in a variety of ways. Online Millennial Generation students enjoy working with their online academic advisors, but also understand that their relationship is a professional one. Online Millennial Generation students understand that academic advisors are their go to people with any form of question because of their approachable nature and encouragement.

Subquestion 1

What is the most frequent element that online Millennial Generation students claim supports their relationship perceptions with their academic advisors?

The first subquestion's purpose was to determine amongst all of the elements, which were of the most important to online Millennial Generation students in regards to their relationship perceptions with their online academic advisors. The most frequent element that online Millennial Generation students claim supports their relationship perceptions with their academic advisors is trust. From each category of measuring constructs (advisor concern, advisor contact, advisor knowledge, advisor trust, advisor listening skills, advisor comfortability), advisor trust had the highest frequency with the mean being 5.50 for trusting the academic advisor to follow through and 5.53 for trusting the academic advisor to keep informational confidential. The standard deviation was also the lowest with .810 and .767. While other constructs had similar results, comparing the mean of all constructs concluded that advisor trust was the highest rated.

Subquestion 2

What perceptions of qualities of relationships with online academic advisors engage, support, and motivate online Millennial Generation students?

The second subquestion's purpose was to explore the qualities of relationships between online Millennial Generation students and their online academic advisors, specifically exploring the qualities of engagement, support, and motivation. Participants during the interviews answered how their academic advisors have demonstrated engagement, support, and motivation among their time working together. One participant described her academic advisor as a safety net. She described how her academic advisor would constantly check in to make sure she was doing well in her courses and didn't have any issues. She shared, "One thing that helps me is knowing that my advisor calls me halfway through the term to check in. she says oh you have this grade and you are doing

great or she says oh, you have this grade, do you need help?" Another participant

described how his academic advisor was engaging because of the amount of interest his

academic advisor took with their conversations. It was this quality of taking an interest in

his activities that allowed the participant and the academic advisor to form a stronger

bond and gave the academic advisor more insight into recommendations for his courses.

He shared, "One time I was talking about some of my interests for extracurriculars. And

based on our previous conversations he kind of understood what I would be interested

in." These qualities of engagement, support, and motivation were mentioned in every

interview and provided in rich detail providing further evidence that online Millennial

Generation students feel engaged, supported, and motivated when working with an online

academic advisor.

Findings

Through analysis of the quantitative and qualitative phases, themes emerged

described how online Millennial Generation students perceive their relationships with

their online academic advisors. From the data and themes, three major findings were

uncovered about online Millennial Generation students. The first finding describes how

online academic advisors are the support system for online Millennial Generation

students. The second finding identifies how online Millennial Generation students are

empathetic towards their colleagues and peers. The third finding describes how online

Millennial Generation students appreciate their connections with their online academic

advisors.

Finding 1: Online academic advisors are the main support system for online Millennial Generation students

The survey results and the participants' answers during each interview provided several examples that academic advisors are not just a resource to answer questions, but are seen as a support system. When asked to describe academic advisors, as indicated before, several participants describe advisors as their "go-to" person to answer questions. However, each participant further explained that online academic advisors were also there to solve issues, motivate them, support them, calm them down, set goals with them, and provide further assistance. This information provides certainty that academic advisors and online millennial generation students have a working relationship where each communication leads to further growth. At the same time, online Millennial Generation students also have an element of a prescriptive relationship where they see their online academic advisors as a type of higher authority and strive to keep their relationship professional in nature (Crookston, 1994, p. 5). However, their relationships are not prescriptive in nature where students only ask advisor questions and that is the sole basis of their working relationship. Online academic advisors are more along the lines of being seen as a coach or a mentor towards an online Millennial Generation student. The role of an online academic advisor with an online Millennial Generation student reflects on being able to assist with goal setting, time management, study skills, prioritization, and more. This is a critical role when working with students who are distance online learners and already have prior obligations and commitments along with online learning (Robie et, al. 2015). Additionally, online academic advisors are seen as the first support system for online Millennial Generation students compared to other traditional support systems like parents, friends, or colleagues. Participants during the

interviews were quick to mention their online academic advisor as being a support

system, but only one participant mentioned that she had another support system.

Finding 2: Online Millennial Generation students are empathetic towards their online academic advisors and peers

The second finding from the data is that online Millennial Generation students are

empathetic towards their colleagues. One of the main themes that emerged from the data

was empathy. However, the feelings of empathy from online Millennial Generation

students are not strictly towards just their online academic advisors, but also towards

Generation Z and their fellow millennials. Once again, online Millennial Generation

students demonstrated empathy towards their online academic advisors' workload and

caseload. Several participants discussed how they were amazed that their academic

advisors could remember small details about their conversations, assuming that academic

advisors must be reaching out numerous times a day to their students. Also, it was often

quoted in this research about the perception online Millennial Generation students have

with how many students online academic advisors work with often citing hundreds or

larger. For example, the statements of, "I know what they are sort of working with 150

something other people," "Has a lot of other students that she's kind of watching out for,"

and "Even though she has two or three hundred students" were all mentioned during

interviews.

Online Millennial Generation students also showed empathy towards their online

academic advisors in another manner: communication. When participants were asked if

they would prefer texting instead of phone calls or emails when reaching out to their

academic advisors, all of the participants mentioned how while they would like texting,

they know it would not be sustainable for the academic advisor. Participant A described this when he mentioned, "I can really see that in commonality, where people would probably prefer texting just because it's more of the norm now, but I can definitely also agree that it would be an issue when you have 200 students and you're texting all of them. Your phone's just going be blowing up all day."

Besides feeling empathetic towards their online academic advisors, online Millennial Generation students mentioned being concerned towards Generation Z students. Two of the participants mentioned how Generation Z students would not have the same type of relationship with their academic advisors like Millennial students do. Their reasoning included feeling nervous with communicating via phone or potentially email. One participant described how they would need an additional safety net.

Online Millennial Generation students also feel empathetic towards other millennials. One participant described how she felt like an outlier compared to other Millennials when she shared,

> I know from what I have read and seen online and I know I'm at the butt end of being a Millennial and they don't want to go to college because of debt and job markets, but if they had that motivation and encouragement from the advisor, that might help them.

Another participant described that what methods worked for him when speaking with his online academic advisor may not work for other Millennials. He mentioned that he also felt like an outlier to the generation when he shared, "I'm not sure if all those chasms have been filled yet. You know, Millennials may have different expectations. And I'm a Millennial. I hate the term, but I am a Millennial."

Finding 3: Online Millennial Generation students appreciate their connections with their online academic advisors

An overwhelming topic among the data from this study was how online Millennial Generation students appreciate their connections with their online academic advisors. This appreciation can be measured by both the quantitative and qualitative phases from the study. In regards to rating the constructs of online academic advisors, online Millennial Generation students were asked to rate the constructs according to a Likert scale of strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). There wasn't a single construct that had a median or mode lower than a score of 4. Additionally, the lowest mean score was 4.07.

After the descriptive analysis was concluded, 13 of the constructs had a rating of agree (5) or strongly agree (6) while only two had slightly agree (4). There were no mean, median, or mode scores consisting of disagree or below. The qualitative data further supported these findings. When participants from the interviews were asked about their relationship perceptions with their online academic advisors, it was evident that online Millennial Generation students enjoyed connecting with their advisors. Participants described how they bonded with their online academic advisors because their online academic advisors took an interest in them. Some participants and academic advisors had interests in the same degree, which made online Millennial Generation students feel more connected to their advisor. When participants were asked if there was anything else that academic advisors could do further for them outside of their normal roles, a majority of participants described how they wanted to speak with them more. These were recommended in forms of online coffee chats or joining clubs together to allow online

Millennial Generation students and online academic advisors more opportunities to connect.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study offers a new perspective to the world of online academic advising: through the eyes of online Millennial Generation students. While Millennial Generation students continue to enroll into universities around the country, there is still a paucity of research on the relationships between online academic advisors and Millennials. This research was a step towards the right direction of being able to have more conclusive answers on how to advise this generation.

There are a few recommendations for taking this next step for the online Millennial Generation. The first recommendation would be to continue to interview online Millennial Generation students on their relationship perceptions with their academic advisors, but to conduct these interviews before they attend a university and after attendance for several months. This way a more thorough pre and post assessment on the relationship perceptions could be conducted. Also in regards to time, several participants mentioned how they worked with several online academic advisors as they progressed through their programs. These participants mentioned how they had mixed feelings towards the transitioning process and showed favoritism towards one academic advisor compared to the others. A more thorough study could be done on this transitioning process to find the best way to connect to the transitioned online Millennial Generation student.

Another recommendation would be to interview online academic advisors on their relationship perceptions with online Millennial Generation students. It would be

beneficial to know how online academic advisors perceive working with online Millennial Generation students and to learn if there are commonalities amongst working with them. Themes could emerge that could aid in the understanding of the overall relationship between academic advisors and Millennials.

Lastly, the research of learning about relationship perceptions between a generation of students and online academic advisors is sparse. This is what lead to this research initially was the lack of research out there on understanding the rising generation of students. With this sparseness of research in mind and after hearing the concerns from online Millennial Generation students, it would be beneficial to replicate this study with Gen Z students. There is even less research published on Gen Z compared to the Millennials. This recommendation for Gen Z students is also based on the interpretation from the findings that institutions cater to the students instead of preparing them to be successful once they have graduated. Online Millennial Generation students perceive Gen Z as being unprepared for the workforce between their anxiety around communication and their unrealistic expectations once they have graduated. Before long, Gen Z students will be enrolling into online programs across the country and online academic advisors will have to learn how to collaborate with them.

Summary of Findings

This research adds to the literature encompassing Millennial Generation students and online academic advising. The main research question for this study was: How do online Millennial Generation students perceive their relationships with online academic advisors? Through an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach, 715 online Millennial Generation students responded to an electronic survey and 7 participants of

these surveys were interviewed for further explanation on their answers to the survey

questions. The research utilized a conceptual framework based around the Developmental

Model of Academic Advising (Crookston 1994), the Theory of Emerging Adulthood

(Arnett, 2015), and Gestalt Theory (Kohler, 1947). With this conceptual framework in

mind, the analysis of the data was completed and from this analysis emerged four main

themes and their subthemes:

- Connectivity (Support, Approachable, Communication)
- Empathy (Advisor Workload, Advisor Caseload)
- Awareness (Go-To Person, Professionalism, Generation Z)
- Encouragement (Help, Motivation, Goal Oriented)

The themes that emerged from the data were found to be consistent throughout the

interviews. From these themes came three major findings. The identified findings were:

- Academic advisors are online Millennial Generation students main support

  system

- Online Millennial Generation students are empathetic towards their online

  academic advisors and peers

- Online Millennial Generation students appreciate their connections with their

  online academic advisors

These findings demonstrated the importance of relationship perceptions amongst online

Millennial Generation students and online academic advisors. The relationship between

these two parties are so successful because of the level of investment. Online academic

advisors care about the development of online Millennial Generation students and its

clearly evident as online Millennial Generation students continue to feel connected

towards these academic advisors. As a fellow Millennial and a former online academic

advisor, I could not be happier to aid in the understanding of these relationships.

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Appendix A

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Advising Survey

Gender　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　**Age**
___ Male　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　___ 20 and under
___ Female　　　　　　　　　　　　　　___ 21 and over

Ethnicity　　　　　　　　　　　　　**Academic Standing**
___ Hispanic or Latino　　　　　　　　___ First Year Freshman
___ White/Caucasian　　　　　　　　　___ Transfer or sophomore level or above
___ Black/African-American
___ American Indian or Alaskan Native
___ Multi Ethnic or Other _____
___ Prefer not to respond

1. I am enrolled in a section of a first year seminar course	Y	N

2. If enrolled in a first year seminar, I have attended approximately the following percent of SOS classes that meet once per week (circle one):
0%　20%　40%　60%　80%　100%

3. I know who my academic advisor is	Y	N

Please think of the following questions with respect to your current academic advisor. Rate each of the questions to the best of your ability.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
4. My advisor is concerned with my academic development	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. My advisor is concerned with my personal development	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. My advisor is concerned about my social development	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I am satisfied with the number of meetings I have had with my advisor	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I am satisfied with the amount of overall contact I have had with my advisor	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. My advisor is readily accessible to me	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I am satisfied with the depth of information that my advisor knows about me at this time	1	2	3	4	5	6

</div>

Kristi Bitz

Please think of the following questions with respect to your current academic advisor. Rate each of the questions to the best of your ability.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
11. I trust my advisor will follow through with things he or she says they will do	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. I trust my advisor to keep information I share confidential unless they deem it necessary to share it for my own well being	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. My advisor listens to me	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. My advisor is attentive to what I want to share	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. My advisor is focused on me during our interactions	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. My advisor is approachable	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. I feel comfortable speaking with my advisor about academic matters	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. I feel comfortable speaking with my advisor about personal matters	1	2	3	4	5	6

Comments:

Appendix B

Dear Student,

You are invited to participate in a research study to understand the perceptions and relationships that millennial students have with online Academic Advisors. For the purpose of this study, millennial generation students are defined between the ages of 18-25 years old.

The overall objective of this study is to investigate the relationships that online millennial generation students have with their online academic advisors. Since the term "academic advisor" can mean a variety of roles, the data from this survey can measure what aspects of a relationship these students are seeking from their academic advisors.

This electronic survey takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may end it at any time simply by closing your browser. There are no risks by taking part in this study. You will remain anonymous unless you choose to identify yourself. Otherwise, you will not be associated with your answers. The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report made public, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. You will receive no incentive for participation in this study.

If you would like to expand upon your answers, online focus groups will be held at a later date once the survey has been completed. If you would like to participate in a focus group, please select the check box at the end of the survey pertaining to the future focus group.

If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact my directing Professor in the SNHU School of Education, Gibbs Kanyongo ([g.kanyongo@snhu.edu)](mailto:g.kanyongo@snhu.edu).

Please click on the link below to indicate your consent to the study and proceed to the study.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Luke Hobson
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix C

Advising Survey

Gender You Identify With
___ Male
___ Female
___ Other

Age
___ 20 and under
___ 21 and older

Ethnicity
___ Hispanic or Latino
___ White/Caucasian
___ Black/African-American
___ American Indian or Alaskan Native
___ Multi Ethnic or Other
___ Prefer not to respond

Academic Status
___ Full time student
___ Part time student

I know who my academic advisor is
Y N

Please think of the following questions with respect to your current academic advisor. Rate each of the questions to the best of your ability with 1 being strongly disagree to 6 being strongly agree.

Before attending a university, I understood the roles of an academic advisor
1 2 3 4 5 6

After attending a university, I understand the roles of an academic advisor
1 2 3 4 5 6

My academic advisor is concerned with my academic development
1 2 3 4 5 6

My academic advisor is concerned with my personal development
1 2 3 4 5 6

My academic advisor is concerned about my social development

1 2 3 4 5 6

I am satisfied with the number of interactions I have had with my academic advisor
1 2 3 4 5 6

I am satisfied with the amount of overall contact I have had with my academic advisor
1 2 3 4 5 6

My academic advisor is readily accessible to me
1 2 3 4 5 6

I am satisfied with the depth of information that my academic advisor knows about me at this time
1 2 3 4 5 6

Please think of the following questions with respect to your current academic advisor. Rate each of the questions to the best of your ability with 1 being strongly disagree to 6 being strongly agree.

I trust my academic advisor will follow through with things he or she says they will do
1 2 3 4 5 6

I trust my academic advisor to keep information I share confidential unless they deem it necessary to share it for my own well being
1 2 3 4 5 6

My academic advisor listens to me
1 2 3 4 5 6

My academic advisor is attentive to what I want to share
1 2 3 4 5 6

My academic advisor is focused on me during our interactions
1 2 3 4 5 6

My academic advisor is approachable
1 2 3 4 5 6

I feel comfortable speaking with my academic advisor about academic matters
1 2 3 4 5 6

I feel comfortable speaking with my academic advisor about personal matters
1 2 3 4 5 6

Would you like to participate in a follow up online focus group on academic advising
     Y N

Appendix D

Advisor before and after
- Can you describe what an academic advisor meant to you before attending a university?
  - How did you come to this conclusion of what an advisor was without ever working with one before?
- How would you describe an academic advisor now after attending a university?

Advisor Concern
- What does your advisor do to support and motivate you?
- In what ways has your advisor showed concern / been involved with your academic development?
- Describe a time when your advisor has shown concern / been involved with your personal development.
  - According to the data, about 16% of Millennial Generation students do not believe that their advisor is concerned for their personal development. Why do you think they feel that way?
- In what ways has your advisor demonstrated concern with your social development?
  - About 34% of Millennial Generation students answered that their advisor does not demonstrate concern for their social development. Why do you think they feel that way?

Advisor Contact
- According to the data, 90% of students were satisfied with how many times their advisor has contacted them. What has been the best way for your advisor to contact you so far?
  - If you had your preference, how would academic advisors contact students?
  - How could your advisor be more accessible for you?

Advisor Knowledge
- Can you describe how your advisor has gotten to know you over the time you have worked together?
- According to the data, a vast majority of students said that their advisor knows them well. What could your advisor do to understand your needs more?

Advisor Trust
- According to the data, 98% of students trust their advisor when it comes to following through on their word and for keeping information confidential. How has your advisor earned your trust over the time you have worked together?

Advisor Listening Skills
- Most students who took the survey felt that their advisor listened to them. Can you describe a time when your advisor listened to what you needed?
    - How does it make you feel when your advisor is listening to what you share with them?
    - Is there anything else your advisor can do to show that they are being attentive to your conversations?

Advisor Comfort Level
- 97% of students according to the data said that their advisor is approachable. Can you describe how your advisor is approachable?
- 25% of students did not feel comfortable speaking with their advisor about personal matters while 75% answered that they do feel confident discussing personal matters. What are your thoughts on this?

- Is there anything else you think I should know that I didn't ask?

Appendix E

Before and After
go-to person
questions
how do I get registered
virtually anything
one stop shop
get you going
right direction
correct an issue
advisors in high school
career counselors
go to help
figure stuff out
guy to go to
pointed in direction
were to advise on how to
what would be best for me
made the right decision
an advisor would be to like a monarch
there to help you
more like a friend
a higher authority
what you're going through
they have more information
no idea what I'm doing
guidance counselor of a college.
somebody that I would go to
great support role
help you
resource
support
life savers
find my proper place
I had no idea
I didn't think you'd talk to them
take this class
friends tell me

Development
fix discrepancies
register for classes
wave requirements
to sign off
troubleshooter for issues

advisors just have too many students
lot of students they have to keep track
kind of naïve on what to expect
what in the world am I supposed to be doing
great help to me
big supporter to me with everything
encouraging
involved
talked to parents
social Interaction
what are your goals?
I'm here to help you
focused on really making sure that students are prepared
connected with my advisor
did not even know this existed
just wasn't aware that that was something that I could utilize
able to help me navigate my own career goals
motivate me and keep me on track
matches my goals
why, though? Do you really need to take that class? Is it really relevant
going to fit into your program evaluation
fits into your goal
okay, she's not my friend, she's my advisor
helped me with that social-emotional piece
connecting me and they're helping my social development online
advisors play more of a role
they took an interest in me
how many students do you actually get at a normal university
don't believe it's the advisor's responsibility to act as a social guide for
should be on academics
I've never depended on the advisor for social help
too much to ask for advisors to also map out a life plan
to get all the resources
help you out in every way they can
motivator
you go to even with trouble
go through why you want to do it
mentor
going through hard time
helpful
fix problems
personal help
professional resource
create my schedule
internships
career savers

holding your hand
hour long conversations
call her and voice my concerns
helped me through that

Contact
phone call
no issues in the way of communication
never saw them
could visit them
touching base with you real quick
caught this on my radar
they just don't have the time
talk about life
200 people that your keeping track of
email communication versus phone
really get a timely response from him
need someone to talk to
prefer texting
rushing
straight up text us
communication still there
keep that communication going
shoot me a text message
back and forth
would be an issue when you have 200 students
being fully online when you never actually got to see anybody in person
frequently on email
hey, would you mind calling me
student needs, and what the advisor is willing to provide
retain that sort of professional guidelines
love being involved
calling in and checking in and solving your problems
I could call them and they would solve any problem
stopping in to say hi
build professional friendship
call
old fashion way
hour long conversations
been there for me
shoot her an email
shoot her an email
gives me a call
people have phone anxiety
phone and email are my preferences

Knowledge
when I first started
hurting on a class
make sure everything is ok
if I get any hang-ups I'll let you know
don't want to be super, super friendly, like at the point where they know everything that's going on in a student's life
too much to remember for them
might end up making a mistake
has a lot of other students that she's kind of watching out for
I know what they are sort of working with." 150 something other people
matches the advisor with the student based on their area of interest
somebody that had some experience
more difficult for them to advise
how on earth are they supposed to have an individual relationship with that many people?
And that's what I noticed about these advisors. When they called me they were actually talking to me like an individual, which I was surprised about.
because she doesn't give me any problems
they're not interfering with what I want to do
understood what I would be interested
gonna have their own lives and they don't need to go check in with you just like that
not their for personal reasons
wouldn't share many personal things
academic advisors are busy a lot of the time.
find exact degree
being in right classes
you can do this
trying to figure out where i'm going next
no matter how many students she has, she always gets back to me
explained it all to me
even though she has two or three hundred students
you're literally overloaded with all of these kids but you can remember my dogs name
she remembers
voice concerns
this is how you can get extra help

Trust
both seemed to understand
I'm all good, thumbs up
keep chugging along
has taken my major
understands in that perspective
we'll have a talk session about more about the class
go forward from there
she kind of understands

I was like freaking out
don't worry. We'll take care of it
kind of been rooting me on
getting help and any kind of help.
50% of them are not going to need their advisor
not here to be friends
accountable
you are perfectly fine
it's like a friendship
takes the time to talk to me
sit down with me over the phone

Listening Skills
I kind of know what they're schedule is like
swamped with their own work too
don't want to fault them
would expect more in the way of communication
always attentive
I was impressed that you remembered that
how did you remember that
oh, I write down notes
acted like professionals
put a human touch on it
taking it very seriously
she is on the ball with everything
go above expectations
got me registered right away
I'm all set
she checks all the boxes

Comfort
professional relationship
I need help and you can help me
times where I couldn't reach him in general
can't reach you
they help me address any issues I'm having,
point me in the right direction to fix those
expecting that person to know how
don't just go about airing your dirty laundry
just keep their life under wraps
if it's an issue then I'm gonna bring it up
not there in front of us
people have different backgrounds
it's not like something that pops into conversations, so-
it hasn't come up
I don't know how to bring this in

tone of voice
approachable in their voice and their tonality.
so proactive
find more ways to help me
trying to solve problems
wasn't just simple check ins
I didn't feel like I was ever burdening them
they wanted to help me
they wanted to do their job
very friendly and professional
great personality too and be funny
reach out right away
advisor would be first
want advisor to understand first
I would want them right there
she would bat for me
student preference
some people are closed off
don't like talking about personal matters
advisor calls me halfway through term
checks in with me
do you need help?

Additional Info
around different programs that we were doing for schooling and classes and things of that
nature
how many students actually use the services that are provided to them at
socio-emotional learning
coffee chats
advisors at events around campus, with clubs
match up backgrounds more
butt end of being a millennial
need that extra safety net
concern about gen z

Appendix F

Connectivity (Support, Approachable, Communication)

great support role

support
big supporter to me with everything
approachable in their voice and their tonality.

kind of like a cheerleader
takes the time to talk to me
talked to parents

make the initiative
call her and voice my concerns
tone of voice
call and voice concerns

been a great support role
asked me about my actual experiences
they were approachable
they wanted to do their job
they wanted to help me.
just so proactive
explained it and be able to be there.
take the time to talk to me
they were focused on me

Empathy (Advisor Workload, Advisor Caseload)

that's too much to remember for them
she has a lot of other students
individual relationship with that many people
talking to me like an individual, which I was surprised about
know what they're schedule is like
they're swamped with their own work
how many students do you actually get
surprised by the number he gave me.
two to three hundred students
but even with that many, she still remembers

advisors just have too many students
lot of students they have to keep track
has a lot of other students that she's kind of watching out for

Awareness (Go-To Person, Professionalism, Generation Z)

go-to person
somebody that I would go to

guy to go to
go to help
you go to even with trouble
a higher authority

very friendly and professional
retain that sort of professional guidelines

build professional friendship
professional resource
professional relationship

concern about gen z
safety net
they have nerve wracking anxiety about phone calls
none of them want to participate
I don't like people
they shut down

Encouragement (Help, Motivation, Goal Oriented)

great help to me
go to help
getting help and any kind of help.
I'm here to help you
find more ways to help me
there to help you
able to help me navigate my own career goals
they wanted to help me
motivate me and keep me on track
motivator
matches my goals
fits into your goal
what are your goals
able to help me navigate my own career goals