TRANSITIONS AND DECISIONS: ACADEMIC ADVISING BEHAVIORS OF UNDERGRADUATE TRANSFER STUDENTS

by

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of George Mason University in Partial Fulfillment of The Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy Education

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Transitions and Decisions: Academic Advising Behaviors of Undergraduate Transfer Students

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at George Mason University

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to Joan K. Brown whose love and support was endless since my time as an undergraduate. Though she has left this world prematurely and will never read this, I still looked to her wisdom throughout this process. I’d ask myself “WWJD?” or “What Would Joan Do?” It has gotten me through so many times when I questioned myself or felt overwhelmed. I love you and miss you Joan. I hope that I’ve made you proud.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Abbreviations</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>vivii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Five</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>1292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>11233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td>11234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D</td>
<td>11237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix H</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix J</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix K</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix L</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVT</td>
<td>Expectancy Value Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TpB</td>
<td>Theory of Planned Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRA</td>
<td>Theory of Reasoned Action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

TRANSITIONS AND DECISIONS: ACADEMIC ADVISING BEHAVIORS OF UNDERGRADUATE TRANSFER STUDENTS

Megan Hanna Latwinas Tucker, PhD

George Mason University, 2015

Dissertation Director: Todd Rose, PhD

This study investigates attitudes towards academic advising, barriers to social and academic progress, and the actual academic behaviors used in regards to advising from unique and diverse groups of undergraduate students. Using a convenience sample, one-on-one interviews were conducted and a follow-up questionnaire given to 25 participants who identified as undergraduate transfer students. Following data collection, a thematic analysis was applied in order to extract overarching categories which contained themes and sub-themes. Findings suggest that this group of transfer students are actively thinking about and making decisions related to their academic future. These students saw the benefits of being prepared and being able to manage constant stress. Likewise, the participants that did not have good experiences with advising at their previous institution were much more likely to distrust their new advisors, or seek out information elsewhere. Finally, the participants expressed the desire for changes to the advising structure including catering more to part-time students who have day jobs, creating mentoring
programs for transfers, and requiring advising for new students or brand new transfers until they are comfortable and more confident in their progress. This research offers recommendations for department-level and institution-level changes that puts academic advising in the forefront of the students' minds and offers more accessibility to an ever-growing population of transfer students at higher education institutions. These proposed changes hope to create more inviting and appreciative interpersonal communication patterns between advisors and students, and may promote healthy academic behaviors that assist students in successful degree completion.
CHAPTER ONE

Higher education has a long and rich history in the United States, reaching back as far as the 1600s. Over the years, higher education has changed and evolved into what we know today as academia. While there are many facets to the form and function of higher education, research on student development has been amplified in recent years (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). Research on retention, student socialization, testing and assessment has come to the forefront of the academic community. A focus on the many forms of student development is now prevalent in modern higher education research and this particular research hopes to add to the growing repository of student development and retention research.

Nevertheless, student development and success extends beyond earning good grades and integrating into the campus community. It also includes reaching degree completion, and addressing any academic and social barriers that students may face. Identifying and addressing these barriers to academic completion are vital in regards to retention, student success and the efficiency of the institution in accomplishing its academic mission.

Current research on academic performance has addressed the relationship between student counseling and retention, information framing, links between success and stress in academia and adjustment to college life, among other related topics.
communication education research has looked at technology in communication and teaching practices, communication competence in the classroom, teaching and learning communication skills, and patterns of communication among faculty, students and administration (Bannan-Ritland, 2002; Christophel, 1990; Jaasma & Koper, 1999; Jonassen, Davidson, Collins, Campbell & Haag, 1995).

This research serves to connect current communication theory and research, as well as higher education research via a qualitative study of transfer students' attitudes and behaviors in regards to academic advising. Using theories from communication research offers a different perspective in addressing academic concerns with students and finding barriers in effective communication practices between students and advisors. Higher education institutions call for students to enact beneficial academic behaviors. As such, education researchers should be able to give students information that they can act upon. This study is a step in the direction of being able to identify student views on support and promote beneficial academic behaviors for implementation, specifically for unique student groups, such as transfer students, who may have differing needs.

This chapter explores background on student development research, as well as academic advising and transfer students. Likewise, this chapter offers insight to the current research trends. Furthermore, the chapter addresses the problem statement of this research and identifies the three research questions that this study poses, as well as an overview of the methodology used. The chapter also addresses definitions and how terms
used in this research are operationalized.

**Background**

Modern student development research became popularized in the 1970s (Biggs, Brodie & Barnhart, 1975; Crookston, 1972; O’Banion, 1972), but the earliest iterations of student development research began in the 1600s during the establishment of *in loco parentis*, which translates to ‘in the stead of parents’ (Cook, 2001; Thelin, 2011). Previous research in student development has focused on the role of the undergraduate advisor in two-year colleges, as well as assessment on the quality of academic advising (Biggs, Brodie & Barnhart, 1975; Crookston, 1972; Hines, 1981; Metzner, 1989). However, in the past few decades, the focus on student development research has shifted from advising to different forms of social identity changes (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2009).

Other current higher education research has centered around issues of retention (Shaffer, Zalewski, & Leveille, 2010; Thomas, 2002). Thomas (2002) discusses the large body of international research and theory exploring the individual, social, and organizational factors which impact on student retention in higher education. Much of the research suggests that there is a wide range of interacting personal and social attributes, as well as institutional practices and engagement, which impact retention rates and performance. However, engagement is not the sole responsibility of the student. Managers and teachers also have responsibility to provide a setting that facilitates student engagement and learning which plays into retention concerns (Crosling, Heagney &
Based on this research, academic advisors may have some influence over student engagement and in certain situations, student retention.

A recent resurgence in academic advising research has focused on retention, student leadership, perception and the current state of advising in academia (Christian & Sprinkle, 2013; Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008; Shaffer, Zalewski, & Leveille, 2010). A prevalent theme of the effectiveness of advising emerged starting in the late 1980s and continues in current advising research (Creamer, 2000; Johnson & Morgan, 2005; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). However, the research on what is considered to be effective advising varies across disciplines and decades. How students communicate needs, and how advisors communicate directly with the student body has affected this relationship over many years both positively and negatively. Therefore, marrying theory in communication and higher education research may prove beneficial in understanding student needs.

A set of communication theories related to higher education research are Expectancy Value Theory, the Theory of Reasoned Action and most recently, the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1996; Wigfield, Tonks & Kaluda, 2009). The foundational theory linked to the more current theories of Reasoned Action and Planned Behavior is Expectancy Value Theory (EVT). EVT is derived from Uses and Gratifications Theory by Fishbein in the 1970s (Palmgreen, 1984). The constructs of expectancy and value were initially defined by theorists Lewin and Tolman (Wigfield, Tonks & Kaluda, 2009). Lewin explains that the value or valence of an activity influences its importance to the individual. Ajzen and Fishbein then formulated the
Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) after trying to estimate the discrepancy between attitude and behavior (Garg & Garg, 2008). The Theory of Planned Behavior (TpB) is the most current iteration of these theories which links attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). TpB is most often used in health communication research in order to identify intentions leading to health behaviors. The more favorable the individual attitudes and subjective norms, and the greater the perceived control, the stronger the intention is to complete a specific task or behavior (Casper, 2007; Silk, Parrott & Dillow, 2003). This research seeks to marry the current research in academic advising and student development as it applies to communication theory.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this research, terms should be operationalized. The definitions of these terms are as follows:

Transfer students. First and foremost, the researcher defines transfer students as those students who have previous enrollment and credits from another institution. The students may be transferring from a community college, or 4-year college or university.

Academic advising. Next, the practice of academic advising is operationalized as communication between an advisor and student in regards to their progress towards graduation, academic planning and career goals, learning about academic policies and confusing information, as well as learning about majors, minors, internships, activities and job opportunities. Also, academic advising includes any mentoring, counseling,
coaching and teaching between the advisor and advisee (Gordon, Habley, & Grites, 2008).

**Faculty advisor.** Originally, only faculty members were charged with all advising duties on most campuses (Hemwall, 2008). Advising is typically not the primary duty of a faculty member, but rather, it is a secondary responsibility that is assigned on top of the research and teaching expectations (King, 1993; Self, 2008). Therefore, *faculty advisor*, as the term was used in this study, referred to a faculty member who advised students but whose primary role on campus was instruction and/or research.

**Professional advisor.** A professional academic advisor is a campus official whose primary responsibility is academic advising (King, 1993; Self, 2008). This is most typically a staff member as opposed to an instructional faculty member.

**Academic advisor.** In this study, an *academic advisor* was defined as a staff or faculty member employed by a central advising office or department whose primary duty was the advisement of students, but may also serve in the role of instructor and/or research.

**Engagement.** The term engagement is operationalized as student's willingness, need, desire and compulsion to participate in, and be successful in, the learning process promoting higher level thinking for enduring understanding (Bomia, Beluzo, Demeester, Elander, Johnson & Sheldon, 1997).

**Self-efficacy.** Self-efficacy is defined as one's ability to execute behaviors successfully in order to achieve specific goals (Moore, O'Hair & Ledlow, 2002).
Likewise, the term self-efficacy is empirically associated with adjustment and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986; Erlich, 2011).

**Theory of planned behavior (TpB).** “Attitudes” are defined as the favorable or unfavorable evaluations of the behavior in question. Also part of TpB are the “subjective norms” which are defined as the perceived social pressures to perform or not perform a behavior (Silk, Parrott, & Dillow, 2003). Finally, “perceived control” in TpB is defined as the perceived difficulty or ease associated with performing a behavior. The more favorable the individual attitudes and subjective norms, and the greater the perceived control, the stronger the intention is to complete a specific task or behavior (Silk, Parrott, & Dillow, 2003).

**Problem Statement**

This research is important because academic advising takes place in what Kuhn (2008) calls “situations in which an institutional representative gives insight or direction to a college student about an academic, social or personal matter” (p. 3). According to the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA, 2012) in Fall 2013, a record 21.8 million students were expected to attend American colleges and universities, constituting an increase of about 6.5 million since Fall of 2000. Transfer students now comprise a significant part of student enrollment, especially those coming from community colleges (Hoover, 2010; Kennedy & Ishler, 2000). The National Association for College Admission Counseling reports that the realm of students who start at one institution and end up at another is now about one third of all college students (Hoover, 2010). With the steady increase in undergraduate enrollment, the need for solid academic
advising has never been more vital. Advising meetings may serve a variety of purposes including, but not limited to: course scheduling, registration, helping students develop a plan of work, assisting with student orientations, serving on committees and helping student select a major or minor (Huber & Miller, 2013). The nature of these meetings may serve to inform, mentor, counsel, coach or teach the student; all of which are essential measures of student development and success.

Furthermore, academic advising is a developmental process that supports students in the clarification of their life and career goals as well as in the development of educational plans for these goals (Winston, Enders, & Miller, 1982). Advising is a decision-making process by which students realize their maximum educational potential through communication and information exchanges with an advisor. The process is ongoing, multifaceted, and the responsibility of both student and academic advisor. The academic advisor serves as a facilitator of communication, a coordinator of learning experiences through course and career planning and academic progress review (Winston, Enders, & Miller, 1982). Astin (1993) determined that the persistence and retention rates of students are greatly affected by the quality of interactions with their peers as well as faculty and staff. Therefore, these interpersonal interactions between advisors and students may influence student decision-making and perceptions of their experiences in higher education in either positive or negative ways. Thus, identifying unique needs of this group, and why students choose to go or not to go to advising may better assist the advisor in communicating the importance of advising to their students.
According to Voller (2011) every advisor must look for ways to improve training, professional development and rewards. Only by improving in these areas can institutions attract and keep the best professional academic advisors. Research demonstrates that students learn more from teachers who are well prepared and experienced in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Therefore, the assumption is that students will learn more from academic advisors who are well trained and experienced in advising. Training and professional development experiences prepare and support academic advisors in their work. Rewards may encourage them to stay in the profession (NACADA, 2012). Other scholarly literature confirms that academic advising makes a significant, positive contribution to student learning, retention, and persistence to graduation (Habley, 1994; Kuh, 1997; McGillin, 2000; Noel, 1978; Tinto, 1987). Data from the NACADA 2011 National Survey suggests that too many institutions across the country fail to provide the training, professional development, and rewards needed to maximize the benefits students could receive from academic advising (NACADA, 2012).

NACADA notes the future challenges of academic advising and need for research in the field by stating that academia must continue to press for greater participation of advisors from diverse backgrounds and for them to assume a position of leadership. Furthermore, NACADA must also continue its efforts for increased visibility of academic advising throughout the academy. Also, research must continue to validate the importance of the advising experience in our students' success and provide new avenues for expansion within the field (Thurmond & Miller, 2006).
The specific goal of this research is to identify attitudes towards academic advising, barriers to social and academic progress, and the actual academic behaviors used in regards to advising by undergraduate students. In this research the group being studied are transfer students. Transfer students are those transitioning from one academic institution to another. Identifying academic and communication disconnects may allow for more pointed training protocols for advisors in regards to students transitioning to a new college, as well as identifiable barriers that advisors may be able to address directly with their student advisees thereby enhancing the effectiveness of communication exchanges and interpersonal development between advisors and students.

**Research Questions**

While there is an ever-growing wealth of research in the area of student development and more specifically, academic advising, there are important gaps in the literature. Because advising is such a personalized experience for students, understanding the different needs of specific student groups will allow for a more holistic and rewarding advising experience for the students and advisors alike.

This research utilizes a qualitative focus to gain perspective on specific student attitudes, perceptions and behaviors. Specifically, this research explores attitudes, behaviors and beliefs with the goal of improving academic advising messages to best accommodate transfer students specifically. Based on these goals, the three research questions in this study are as follows:

**RQ1.** How do transfer students decide to attend or not to attend academic advising sessions?
RQ2. Does self-efficacy of transfer students play a role in their decision-making regarding advising behaviors?

RQ3. How do transfer students describe attitudes towards academic advising?

Overview of Procedures

This study will employ a qualitative method design (Creswell, 2002). Creswell (2009) notes that the theoretical lens is introduced in the proposal and shapes a directional research question or questions aimed at exploring a problem, creating sensitivity to collecting data from underrepresented groups, and ends with a call for action. The qualitative methods approach is utilized with the intention of understanding experiences and allowing the researcher to go into the field and examine both actions and thought processes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

An interview approach was used to collect text data through individual semi-structured interviews. The purpose of the interviews were to draw participant perspectives about student attitudes towards advising, and their actual behaviors in academic advising. For the purpose of this study, participants were enrolled undergraduate students in a degree-seeking program at a public four-year institution. The target population for this research were undergraduate transfer college students that may be any age or year in school. This research incorporated a broad range of student ages and class status is in order to get a fuller picture of advising experiences during a student's academic career. Participants for the study were recruited via a convenience sample at a large Mid-Atlantic public university in the United States.
In-depth interviews were conducted with 25 participants who identified as transfers students, which are those who have previous enrollment and credits from another institution. Interview questions were derived from the main research questions in this study. The interviews focused mainly on how the student perceives the importance of advising, their advising habits or lack thereof, and their prior experiences in advising.

Interviews were transcribed by the researcher, and following transcription the researcher used open coding for themes and categories. A thematic analysis (Byrne, 2001) was used to uncover relevant themes and ideas from transcribed interview responses to open-ended questions that investigated the experiences of undergraduate students and the barriers they faced to degree completion. These themes were initially developed inductively through the raw data, followed by deductive theme development through the TpB and self-efficacy research.

In order to provide further qualitative validity, follow-up surveys were sent via email to each participant in February of 2015. The follow-up surveys focused on identifying any changes in attitude or behaviors towards academic advising as a new semester begins. The surveys asked if the student has attended any advising sessions since the initial interview. Also, the follow-up survey asked semi-structured questions regarding current attitudes, future behaviors and factors of self-efficacy in regards to advising. These surveys were then open-coded for any themes and categories. These themes and categories were then compared to those that emerged in the initial interviews.

Organization of the Study
This dissertation is organized by chapter, beginning with the review of the literature and theoretical framework, following this introduction. Chapter 2 details literature pertaining to the history of academic advising, current trends and models used in advising research, self-efficacy research, communication theories used as a framework, and research related to transfer students. It also specifically identifies different types of transfer students. Chapter 3 introduces the research design and methodology utilized for this study. The chapter offers background on the rationale for utilizing a qualitative method in this study. The method incorporates qualitative interviews and a follow-up survey, keeping in mind the theoretical framework of self-efficacy and the Theory of Planned Behavior. Chapter 4 provides the results of the analyses for the qualitative interview method. Finally, Chapter 5 addresses the discussion of the findings, note implications in this study, and provides avenues for further research.
CHAPTER TWO

This chapter will explore the literature associated with changes in academic advising historically to its current status, as well as the current research related to transfer students. Particularly, this chapter will discuss the conception of advising and how the practice has changed with the evolving face of the student body. The history of academic advising has changed frequently based on the needs of students and the fluctuating relationship between students and advisors. Because this research focuses on student attitudes and behaviors in regards to advising, the history offers context into the reason for changes in the past which may offer perspective in current advising concerns. The history of advising is followed by a discussion of the various types of transfer students including those coming from a community college, a four year college or university, returning adult learners, or those with utilizing the GI Bill and veteran students. Lastly, this chapter provides insight into the frameworks of Self-Efficacy and Expectancy Value Theory, the Theory of Reasoned Action, and finally, the Theory of Planned Behavior.

Academic Advising

The role of the academic advisor has seen many changes in its 400-year history. Beginning with a parental-like role in colonial era institutions, advisors were focused on student well-being and lifestyle, and less on curriculum. During the 1700-1800s there was a period of distrust and unrest among advisors, known then as tutors, and students. Much
of the unrest was caused by students feeling a lack of control in their studies. This tumultuous time led to student rebellion and faculty refusal to work in close quarters with the students. From the late 1800's through the 1970's an emergence of curriculum advising and a renewal of the position as its own profession put advising back into favor with the growing student populations. In the decades from the late 1970s to the present, academic advising research has become more prevalent, and there is a renewed focus in the interpersonal interaction between advisor and student. This section details the history of academic advising from its colonial roots, to current research on advising as a practice.

**In loco parentis.** Early forms of academic advising can be found as far back as the early 1600s in the American colonial era at historical institutions which still hold great prestige, such as Harvard, Yale, and the College of William and Mary (Thelin, 2011). During this time period the role of advisors were most closely aligned with the Harvard tutors who served in place of parents for the college students. The concept of tutors was adapted from the pedagogy associated with Oxford and Cambridge in Great Britain (Wechsler, Goodchild & Eisenmann, 2008).

In colonial American colleges the president of the college, and later the faculty, were responsible for advising students regarding their extracurricular activities, their moral life, and intellectual habits (Thelin, 2011). The earlier colonial period in American colleges saw the rise of tutors who acted in loco parentis, or in the stead of parents (Cook, 2001). Today we would think of tutors as a mixture of modern academic advisors, term faculty and resident assistants or hall directors.
Students were reliant on their tutors and tutorial sessions for achievement. However, colleges during this time were very small and lacked funding. As such, the tutors were paid minimally, though they made up a majority of the university. The professorial positions were rare at the time (Thelin, 2011). The typical picture of the tutorship is that of an underpaid, low-status, temporary position made up of younger professionals for whom teaching was only a bypath to more desired careers. According to Smith's research, as the Harvard tutorship developed over time, terms of service lengthened and a more favorable career climate emerged. By 1758, terms of nine years or more were common and even lifetime careers were a possibility (Moore, 1978).

It was the norm that every student took the same subjects at the same time of day with the same tutor. After four years of developing this one on one relationship with the tutors, it is suggested that some solidarity continued beyond school. However, because tutors were frequently graduates who were serving in tutorship only as a transitional position, the turnover rates did increase (Brubacher & Rudy, 2004).

**Relationships between tutors and students in colonial America.** The end of the colonial era saw unrest among the faculty and students that reached a pinnacle during the antebellum era of higher education. Moore (1978) described what became known as a war with the tutors from 1745-1771. She notes that a possible cause of student discontent and rebellion rested with the system of social superiority that was held by colleges and subsequently the tutors that worked there. An example of student rebellion occurred in 1769 at Harvard when the students launched a full-scale attack upon all the tutors. Moore notes that the battle was waged on both literary and physical fronts. The three tutors...
involved were Stephen Scales, Andrew Eliot and Joseph Willard. All three had reputations as able scholars, but they were also known as haughty and arrogant, which provoked the students to burn them in effigy. The students’ lack of voice and independence created a rift between faculty and students that continued into the next century; influencing the formation of social fraternities and violence on campus (Thelin, 2011). The cycle of rebellion and discipline created a maelstrom of dissent between faculty tutors and students.

The academic civil war: Unrest among faculty and students. The role of the tutors and faculty became central in the struggles between faculty and students during the early to mid-1800s. A synopsis of the history of U.S. higher education notes that during the nineteenth century, the role of the tutor was reserved for younger men typically in his early twenties who was a recent graduate from that institution (Lucas, 1994). The tutor’s duties during this time period were to hear student recitations and act as a student overseer and, when required, the students’ disciplinarian.

The time period before and during the American Civil War saw vast changes in lifestyle, government and higher education. As college became more accessible, and the number of institutions grew, so did unrest among faculty and students. The Antebellum period of the United States was a tumultuous time for colleges. Uprisings took place during the 19th century against the combined authority of college professors and college presidents. This continued in some overtly violent and some other more covert forms of rebellion which Horowitz describes as the emergence of “college life” (Horowitz, 1988).
The antebellum period in higher education was marked by grievances from students, and a continually strained relationship between faculty and their charges. Accounts were collected from newspapers, articles and journals during this time period; noting instances of violence and rebellions. In one instance at the University of North Carolina, students horsewhipped the college president, stoned two professors and threatened other faculty members with personal injury. In the 1820s, Yale students bombed a residence hall and later a student killed a tutor who was trying to break up a fight (Horowitz, 1988).

The mid-1800s marked the high point of a communication disconnect between faculty (the tutors) and students. What was once seen as a parental relationship had deescalated to opposition and even enemies in certain cases. The social status of faculty, and their power dynamic over the student body led to rebellions and unrest on campuses. It was at this point that the role of the faculty tutors needed to be addressed and redefined in hopes of re-establishing some discipline in the universities.

Revising in loco parentis in response to rebellion. In loco parentis as a concept changed greatly during the antebellum era of college development, however, the foundations of it remained well into the 1800s. Publications even harkened back to higher education when in loco parentis was the standard for the tutors. An address delivered before the society of the alumni of Harvard University, on their Anniversary, August 27, 1844 made mention of the need for a social bond between college men and their tutors; referring back to in loco parentis. "We wish that there were some mode, in which the
students of the University could be brought into more intimate social relations with their instructors" (White, 1845, p. 62).

In the alumni society address, the presenter makes mention of the growing tensions between teacher and pupil. White (1845) notes that "yet there still remains too much of mutual distance and reserve.” He goes on to state: “The forth-putting and self-confident among the students may, indeed, cultivate the acquaintance of their teachers, and feel always sure of a kind reception; but ought not the retiring and timid to be sought out, and made to feel that there are those ready and glad to stand to them in loco parentis?” (White, 1845, p. 62).

According to White's plan, there should be a quota of students assigned to every member of the faculty. With them it should be the tutor's duty to make himself acquainted to the student, study their personal characteristics, watch over their forming habits, and "to give them advice on all subjects of importance, as to recreation, reading, and modes of study, and to act as their special moral guardian, in pointing out sources of danger and of evil" (White, 1845, p. 63). The hope for this "arrangement" would be meant to go towards establishing a greater regard for moral obligation without which the literary attainments are worthless.

Likewise, in 1878, James McCosh again addressed the rise of rebellion and lack of discipline in U.S. colleges. McCosh notes, "I believe that the whole four hundred colleges which we have, happily or unhappily, profess to take a moral, most of them a religious, charge of their young men, in fact, coming in loco parentis" (McCosh, 1878, p. 432). In the case of some, this role was considered only a profession, and in such it were
better that there should be no profession, that parents might make some other provision for their children (the students). In essence, the guardianship would extend no further than to secure that there are no disorders at the recitations or disgraceful disturbances in the college-rooms and no riots or protests on the streets. But in the great body of the American colleges, male and female, there is a real oversight, moral and religious, of the students (McCosh, 1878).

Tutors were not only there to assist in schooling, but also in students' well-being. These early institutions were seen as a large socializing force for young men. Families paid good money to not only educate these men, but also have a sense of leadership instilled in them. The faculty, administration and tutors were "charged with transforming little boys into little men" (Thelin, 2011, p. 25).

These rebellions and lack of discipline led academics to reevaluate the role of the tutor and the approach to reforming students. McClosh (1878) notes that the current tutors may at times be too strict in order to maintain a sense of their authority, whereas others were quite as frequently much too lax themselves, as they were recent graduates. In this connection it is important to note that it is advantageous to have in a faculty a mixture of older men and of young men as tutors; the former to restrain both from too great and too small of a punishment, and the latter to be there to sympathize with the student situation when need be (McClosh, 1878).

However, it is important to note that the strain between student and tutor did not occur in every circumstance. By the 1820s, Kenyon College in Ohio introduced the first known formal system of advising. Each student was teamed with a faculty member who
served as the student's adviser. Furthermore, Rutherford Hayes described a rule instituted by Kenyon College that stipulated that each student choose a faculty member to be an adviser and friend in 1841 (Biggs, Brodie & Barnhardt, 1975). It is important to note that the Kenyon College rule was still established before advising was a widely defined function, thus making this an important piece of progress during a time in which courteous relationships between faculty and students were practically nonexistent.

The Antebellum era of colleges became known as a time when moral philosophy emerged and the curriculum expanded to include literature, history and rhetoric (Horowitz, 1988). Students sought this new found independence of mind and sought to have their grievances known. When the demands of students were not met by faculty and administration, students subsequently revolted.

**Relationships between faculty and students in antebellum America.** By the 1870s the social climate on campus had become very rigid and formal. Students were kept in line by an inflexible system of rules, regulations and punishments; a rebuttal to the campus revolts in years past (Horowitz, 1988). It became inappropriate for faculty to speak with students on a personal basis and students were considered improper if they approached faculty outside of class (Gordon, Habley, & Grites, 2008). Furthermore, students came to think of faculty as a necessary evil and faculty saw the student body as an unavoidable nuisance (Veysey, 1970). There was a lack of mutual respect among faculty and students during this time, making the work of guidance and acceptance that much harder. The relationships between faculty and students needed to change.
Curriculum changes redefine advising (1870s-1970). Curriculum changes during the 100 year stretch of the 1870s to the 1970s affected the need and definition of advising (Gordon, Habley, & Grites, 2008). At this point advising became a much more developed and defined role in student development in academia with fewer grievances from the student body than the colonial and antebellum eras of tutors.

In 1870, Harvard President Charles Eliot appointed the first administrator in charge of student discipline and development. He also “initiated the elective system that created the need for advisement about course choices” (Tuttle, 2000, p15.). Boston University offered what was considered to be the first freshman seminar for which the focus was extended orientation to college. Lee College in Kentucky may have had a similar seminar in 1882, but records to corroborate this assertion are scarce (Cook, 2001).

More changes took place by the turn of the century. Around 1900, student personnel workers were given titles of monitor or warden because the president of the college needed help in regulating student behavior. This system practiced all the negative aspects of in loco parentis; however it was seemingly a response to the turmoil, violence and rebellion that colleges saw in the 1800's (Raskin, 1979).

Also by 1900, the title dean of women evolved. These deans were charged with handling discipline, extracurricular activities, and resolution of academic problems. Likewise, the title “dean of men” was also said to have begun around this time (Cook, 2001). Following World War I, college counselors were trained to complement faculty advising. Psychological and vocational needs of veterans were addressed using modern psychometric instruments. (Cook, 2001). In essence, colleges began to recognize the need
for advising positions or for faculty to focus on student need. However, administrators
during the early part of the century were uncertain of what system would work best, and
as such, many slow changes took place over a long stretch of time due to trial and error.

**Systems of advising emerge.** By the 1930’s most American colleges had
developed an official system for academic advising (Tuttle, 2000). Following World War
II specially trained professionals were needed on campuses to address the needs of the
WWII veterans who would be attending college in larger numbers under the G.I. Bill
(Cook, 2001). The 1930s and 40s saw a new, more student-centered philosophy which
was detailed in the Student Personnel Point of View (SPPOV) in 1949:

Key elements of a student personnel program that included "the service to the
student of trained, sympathetic counselors to assist him in thinking through his
educational, vocational, and personal adjustment problems. More than anything
else, the SPPOV established the legitimacy of academic counseling along with
personal, vocational and job placement counseling in higher education (Kuhn,
2008, p.6).

In the twenty plus years between 1920 and 1945, college reforms were increasing,
and with it so were the number of students enrolled in colleges. However institutions
devoted very little in the way of expertise and resources towards retention and counseling
during this time. As such faculty was asked to serve as academic advisors to larger
numbers of students. Because of the lack of available time management on the faculty's
part, these advising meetings were brief and uninvolved. Students had distaste for the
required meetings and as a result, drop-out rates skyrocketed (Thelin, 2011).
In the late 1920s and into the 1930s, there was concern over how to assist students and guide them to greater intellectual curiosity even before their college careers began. During freshman week at the University of Minnesota the dean interviewed the ten percent of the freshmen who had the highest college aptitude ratings. The purpose was to see if they had any problems in which he can help them, to give assurance of our interest in them, to arouse or strengthen intellect, and to interest them in scholarship for their own satisfaction (Johnston, 1930). Among these students and others who were interviewed by faculty advisors were those whose problems were such that these students were put in the hands of a group of faculty counselors. These trained faculty members helped students who were having difficulties. The group included psychologists, a social case worker, a vocational adviser for women, and it enjoyed the most direct and cordial cooperation of the student health services with its psychiatrist, the religious-work groups, student-advising committees, the deans of men and women, as well as other agencies. During the first six weeks of the college year the President from the University of Minnesota met all the freshmen for intimate talks with them alone, without upper classmen or faculty. In the process of registration or in other advisory contacts, members of the faculty found students who needed instruction in methods of study. While the case of the University of Minnesota is only one example, their practices did reflect the gradual changes in student advising, as well as the attempt to utilize different methods in reaching out to the student population.

By this time in the 1930s, administration and scholars were continuing to try to connect students and faculty together in hopes of rekindling a greater interpersonal
working relationship. Brumbaugh and Emme (1931) described ideal settings for college counselors or academic advisors:

Faculty members will look upon counselors as agents who are cooperating in an endeavor to aid students in working at their highest level; students will look upon faculty members as friends and guides in their adventure in securing an education; and they will regard counselors as intimate confidants to whom they may go in times of perplexity in the belief that they will receive a sympathetic hearing, no matter what the issue, and all the aid that the counselors are able to give. (Brumbaugh & Emme, 1931, p.18).

Furthermore, the established principles pertaining to the functions of college counseling included: counseling must be organized in the light of the needs of the students, it should be a continuous and unified procedure, it must be made a responsibility of all who deal with students, and informal and unorganized counseling must be supplemented by more systematized procedures on the part of a few better qualified individuals. Though these counseling functions are broad; they did allow for advisors and administrators of the time period to create guidelines and protocols as the field expanded (Brumbaugh & Emme, 1931).

By the late 1960s and into the 1970s, students were demanding more personalized attention in academic planning and advising (Gordon, Habley, & Grites, 2008). In the mid-1960s, English faculty member Austin Patty asked seventy-four freshmen in his first term composition courses to write an essay on what helped most and what helped least in their freshman orientation experiences. One student wrote that his
faculty advisor was least helpful. In detailing his experience he wrote that the advisor looked at the subjects he had chosen hurriedly, checked to see if he had high enough scores, and that was all. He notes that his inspection was so fast that a mistake he had made in scheduling a class went unnoticed until he tried to register" (Gordon, Habley, & Grites, 2008).

This student's experience mirrors many of the decades prior to the 1970s wherein time was not a commodity that advisors or students were granted for advising sessions. Due to the lack of time and lack of staffing, students' advising sessions continued to suffer. The changes in student population reflected the need for increased advising and staffing of those advising positions. However, it wasn't until the 1970s when declining enrollments, high attrition rates, and student demand for improved advising finally resulted in advising programs beginning to receive more serious attention from colleges and universities (Cook, 2001).

**Relationships between advisors and students transition.** Though change was slow to occur, the relationships between faculty and advisees began to evolve. The demand for advisors was growing, and with it was the willingness for students to reach out and stifle the rebellious tendencies of the preceding century. During the early to mid-1900s, the role of academic advisor was established as its own entity; with it creating a need to define the practice and ascertain goals for those with advising responsibilities. However, the new issue at hand was the lack of availability of academic advisors versus the sheer number of college students needing them.
The 100-year gap between the antebellum era of academia and what is considered modern academics saw a shift in relationships between faculty and students. During the early decades of this era, the advisor system seemingly degenerated into a mechanical issue involving only brief, impersonal interviews (Kuhn, 2008). In another sense, there was little available on best practices for advising. Not only was there very little written on the training of academic advisors (especially for first year students), there was almost nothing in the literature on the evaluation of existing orientation programs at individual institutions and on research that explores whether or not a particular institution is compatible with an individual freshman (Patty, 1966). It would not be until the 1970s before research on academic advising became more abundant. In essence, the total number of students versus the faculty assigned to advise them was a steep difference. Faculty who were given advising duties were caught in a time crunch of multiple advising appointments, as well as their regular teaching and research duties. The end result was a lack of time and training required to guide the student and offer mentorship that they needed.

**Re-established advising goals.** Faculty were overwhelmed with work, making their advising duties less than fulfilling for the study body. Colleges were once again on the precipice of change in order to meet the demands of their student populations. With the continuing influx of student enrollment, advisory roles needed to be redefined and expanded. It was at this point in time that academic advising became an examined activity, wherein advisors would compare how they conducted advising to those who advised in other college settings; thus expanding research in the field (Kuhn, 2008).
In the early 1970s, diversity among student populations was on the rise, and with it came the increased demand for individualized attention. Thurmond and Miller (2006) saw academic advising as an important vehicle for assisting individuals with academic planning and noted that O'Banion and Crookston identified a concept of academic advising that had been characteristic of earlier faculty-student relationships. Also around this time, academic advisors were hired as a profession separate from standard faculty. While faculty members still maintained many advising responsibilities; the demand was starting to be addressed (O'Banion, 1972).

Addressing student needs began to change in the early 1970s along with an increase in academic advising and faculty counseling-based research publications. In 1972 the main goals of academic advisors ranged from exploration of life goals to program choice and scheduling courses (O'Banion, 1972). The 1970s also saw the explosion of the community college and new student populations. There was a distinct increase in first-generation and lower-income students, underprepared students, reentry students, disabled students, and international students required individualized academic adjustment and planning; in other words, student in crisis and students with specialized needs. Academic advising became the vehicle for serving these student groups (Cook, 2001).

The close of the 1970s saw a forward-thinking approach to changes needed in advising. Decreasing enrollments in four-year institutions and increasing enrollments in two-year community or junior colleges forced administrators to reevaluate their advising process and to develop a more cost-effective model. Research suggested a comprehensive
and systematic program to prepare faculty, professional counselors, and paraprofessionals for improved student advising in the 1980s; again expanding the field (Raskin, 1979).

**The current role of academic advising.** Previous research on undergraduate academic advising has focused on the role of the advisor in two-year colleges, as well as assessment on the quality of advising (Biggs, 1975; Biggs, Brodie & Barnhart, 1975; Crookston, 1972; Hines, 1981; Metzner, 1989). To Crookston (1972), the nature and quality of the advisor/advisee relationship is most critical. He contends, “The goal of the relationship is toward openness, acceptance, trust, sharing of data, and collaborative problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation” (p. 17). Crookston believes that providing a foundation for understanding the advising relationship within a context that extends beyond simple advice giving and course scheduling is crucial.

A recent resurgence in advising research has focused on retention, student leadership, perception and the current state of advising in academia (Christian & Sprinkle, 2013; McClellan, 2013; Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008; Shaffer, Zalewski, & Leveille, 2010). Bernier, Larose, and Soucy (2005) note that college administrators should avoid considering academic mentoring as a practice that is merely present or absent in their institution, and assuming that a mentoring program is necessarily beneficial to students who use it. The findings of their study suggest that making academic mentoring available to as many students as possible is not enough to ensure students' adjustment and success in college. This implies that specific action should be taken by advisors and university officials to ensure greater student success. The question then is how to identify the students' needs and what can be done to address said needs.
Research on what is considered to be effective advising varies across disciplines and decades. According to Creamer (2000), effective advising occurs only when students, faculty, and institutions are each aware of their respective roles. Students should establish goals and develop plans to achieve these goals by reflecting on their abilities and by knowing about their institution’s resources. Upcraft and Gardner (1989) note that providing appropriate information and developing advising relationships is crucial to academic success in freshman and as such the focus should be on early development of effective relationships. Johnson and Morgan (2005) agree with the argument that being proactive and developing a plan for effective advising is key. This research is one step towards developing a plan for more effective advising by identifying where communication disconnects occur and what barriers are perceived by students. After identifying these potential concerns, research on ways to address and proactively prepare for these barriers can be conducted.

**Advising Models**

As the research in academic advising became more prevalent, so did the establishment of models for advising. Research from the early 1970s saw a focus on identifying and describing different styles or models of academic advising (Crookston, 1972; O’Banion, 1972). Noting the differences in advising models is important because it illustrates the uniqueness of each experience among the students and advisors. Not only do the students have differing needs and backgrounds, but also, advisors are trained differently and execute their job responsibilities using different models and methods. Crookston (1972) defined the style used in traditional academic advising as prescriptive,
which comprised the majority of academic advising up that point. His research notes that an advisor would act in much the same way as a medical doctor would. The advisor would diagnose the immediate needs of the student (assisting in the selection of courses) and then select a remedy (a list of possible courses). The communication in this type of advising session is fundamentally one-way. Crookston (1972) then defined an alternative advising style based on two-way communication and a mature relationship between advisors and students. This was known as the developmental advising style, which seeks to address a variety of developmental tasks and to facilitate a dynamic, educational process.

Likewise, O’Banion (1972) reported similar observations, noting that the modern purpose of academic advising was to help students choose a program of study which will serve them in the development their whole potential. He thus concludes that academic advising is a central and important activity in the process of education. O'Banion (1972) identified a progression of advising tasks that should occur during any advising session: (a) exploration of life goals, (b) exploration of vocational goals, (c) program choice, (d) course choice and (e) scheduling courses.

Current organizational models of academic advising has been further divided and organizationally structured based on needs and approaches (Bloom & Martin, 2002; Habley, 2004; Pardee, 2004). Pardee (2004) divided advising approaches into three groups: decentralized, centralized, and shared. In the decentralized model, all advising happens in the advisor’s office without the use of any coordinated advising office. The centralized model of advising is the opposite in that all advising happens within a formal
advising office typically lead by some type of full-time advising coordinator. The shared model is a mixture of centralized and decentralized characteristics, typically involving both professional and faculty advisors (Pardee, 2004).

Habley (2004) identified seven distinct organizational models for the delivery of academic advising services that were in use at that time:

1. Faculty Only: All students are assigned to individual faculty members for advising. Advising in this model is completely decentralized without any type of an advising office or a coordinator.

2. Supplementary: Like the faculty only model, all students are assigned to individual faculty members, but a central advising office is also used to provide general information. Students can find general advising support in the central office, but are still formally advised by their assigned faculty advisors.

3. Split: A central office advises defined groups of students while faculty advisors handle all other students. In this model, an advising center might handle all undeclared students or probationary students, while all students with majors and good standing are advised by assigned faculty advisors.

4. Dual: In this model, all students are assigned to two advisors – a professional advisor and a faculty advisor. Each advisor covers his or her area of expertise; students will meet with a faculty advisor to discuss their major and related issues, and with a professional advisor to discuss general polices, degree requirements, major selection, etc.
5. Total Intake: All students begin in a centralized advising office and are advised by that office until they meet certain requirements. Once those requirements are satisfied, students transition to an assigned faculty advisor.

6. Satellite: No institution-wide advising system is in place. Instead, each college, school, or department decides how to handle the delivery of advising services.

7. Self-Contained: This model uses a central advising office from start to finish. All students are advised by professional advisors throughout the entirety of their enrollment at the institution.

Two more styles emerged from the mid-1980s through the early 2000s (Bloom & Martin, 2002; Glennen & Baxley, 1985). Advisors who are extremely proactive in initiating contact with their advisees exemplify the intrusive advising style (Glennen & Baxley, 1985). The goal is to increase the frequency of interactions between students and their advisor to monitor progress and quickly resolve problems. More recently, Bloom and Martin (2002) applied the organizational development theory known as Appreciative Inquiry to academic advising to define an appreciative advising style. When implementing this appreciative style, the advisor maintains a distinctly positive emotional tone, and focuses on empowering the student to meet their goals (Bloom & Martin, 2002). These styles are commonly used in current academic advising practices.

**Transfer Students**

An ever-growing population of students in four year colleges and universities are transfer students. As they transition into the new institution and adapt to the different campus culture, transfer students may also have unique needs to be addressed by
advisors. Schlossberg (1989) notes that every transition has the potential for the individual to feel marginalized. Specifically, the issue of credits transferring from their first institution and whether or not the credit is valid at their current institution is of concern. Furthermore, transfer students who have completed an associate’s degree at two-year schools and community colleges are now transferring their degrees to 4 year schools in hopes of earning bachelor degrees. Some of these students may feel that they know what to expect and may not seek out advisors as actively as non-transfer students. Furthermore, they may feel little need to attend orientation or initial advising sessions because of the repetitive nature of these events. In other words, they attended these orientations and events at their first institution and may feel that they will be rehashing information they already know, whereas the new institution may have very different expectations for these students. These attitudes and behaviors may put transfer students at a higher risk of adjustment, performance and retention issues (Hunter & Kendall, 2008; Woosley, 2005).

Davies and Dickmann (1998) note that though community college transfer students perform as well or better than university native students, they also have a high dropout rate before receiving the baccalaureate degree. Their study found that many students felt academic advising to be helpful and complete, however that was not the case for all. Some non-probationary and probationary students had negative experiences including advisors who did not listen, those who made inappropriate comments and some who were not immediately accessible, if at all. Davies and Dickmann’s findings suggest that advisors at the university be required to get to know their advisees earlier in the
transfer process. Additionally, students suggested that their experiences in transferring would be better if a mentor or advisor was provided earlier in the process and if the information regarding the transfer process be accurate and accessible.

Gard, Paton, and Gosselin (2012) researched factors related to transfer success of community college to university. Respondents in the study reported that they were disappointed in the quality of the advisement they received. Students who attended one of the community colleges suggested that the advisors were incompetent and inefficient when it came to transfer information about a specific university program. Advisors would tell students that they could take certain courses but when it came time to transfer to the university, the credits were not accepted.

**Transition and Transfer Shock**

The population that is the focus of this research are referred to as students in transition (Flaga, 2006; Hunter & Kendall, 2008). Advising students in transition effectively may prove to have a positive impact on these students’ overall college experiences. Advisors have an opportunity to engage these students and guide them towards academic success by paying attention to transition issues throughout the advising process (Hunter & Kendall, 2008). Hunter and Kendall (2008) note that academic advisors can play a critical role as students assimilate into college environments and cultures. Likewise, understanding students in transition is not a simple task, but rather an ongoing process that will continue throughout an academic advisor’s career. Hunter and Kendall (2008) conclude that if the opportunity to critically assess student habits and
skills is missed it can be much more difficult for students to develop effective student success habits when their behavior patterns are set.

Flaga (2006) found that meeting with an academic advisor prior to transferring is of utmost importance to the student. Many students in the study were disappointed with how their coursework transferred or were unaware of extra time needed to graduate. The author notes that prior contact with an advisor may help clear up these transfer credit issues and lessen the chances of transfer shock (Flaga, 2006).

Research has shown that transfer students may experience some form of transfer shock as they attempt to assimilate into a new college culture (Hunter & Kendall, 2008). Hills (1965) notes that transfer shock refers to the temporary dip in grade point average during one of their first terms at the new institution. Allen, Smith, and Muehleck (2014) assert that transfer students face psychological, academic and environmental challenges identified as the phenomenon of transfer shock. Likewise, Hunter and Kendall (2008) note that some transfer students make unplanned transfers due to forced relocation for employment, academic failure at a first choice institution, failed relationships or other circumstances in which the student has little control.

According to Allen, Smith, and Muehleck (2014), what pre- and post-transfer students think is important in regards to advising may differ because the two groups are at different educational levels. Furthermore, what is considered important to pre- and post-transfer students may also differ because of unique challenges students navigate while transferring. The type of transfer student may also have an impact on their
behaviors and attitudes towards academic advising.

**Common Types of Transfer Students**

**Community college transfer students.** A common type of transfer student are those individuals who first attend a community college partially, or those who receive an associate’s degree from a community college. Marcus (2013) note that most community college students who transfer do so without having first completed an associate’s degree, and they are slightly less likely to get a bachelor’s degree than students who graduate from the community college first—56 percent versus 72 percent, respectively.

Research suggests that the academic advising culture in community colleges vary from that of 4-year colleges and universities (Allen, Smith & Muehleck, 2013; Flaga, 2006; Gard, Paton & Gosselin, 2012). Allen, Smith and Muehleck’s (2013) study found that pre-transfer students from community colleges felt advising that assisted in choosing among the various general education options and assisting with deciding what kind of degree to pursue were of highest importance.

**Multiple-college transfer students.** Those students who transfer between universities and four-year colleges face similar challenges to those who transfer from community colleges. According to the National Student Clearinghouse, as higher education becomes increasingly mobile, nearly one third of all students transfer at least once in five years and 17 percent at least twice in that amount of time (Marcus, 2013).

This subgroup of transfer students are those who are “swirling” (Tobolowsky & Cox, 2012). Swirling is the term coined by Townsend and Dever (1999) used to describe the process of transferring to two or more institutions. The authors concluded that
swirling was when students, subject to life events, “move from school to school like leaves twisting in the wind” (p.5). Kearney, Townsend, and Kearney (1995) identified four possible trajectories for swirling. Students participated in swirling by transferring (a) from a four-year to a two-year college and then back to a four-year college, (b) from a two-year college to a two-year college then to a four-year college, (c) from a four-year college to a four-year college to yet another four-year college, and (d) from a two-year college to a four-year college and then to another four-year institution (Robinson Brown, 2011).

**Student veterans and G.I. bill recipients.** It is common practice for those who are student veterans or G.I. Bill recipients to begin their college careers in community colleges with the intention of transferring to a 4-year college or university (Herrmann, 2009; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). There is a rich history of war veterans returning home and enrolling in colleges and universities around the nation, tracing it’s roots back to the implementation of the G.I. Bill by President Roosevelt in 1944 (Mettler, 2005). The G.I. Bill was put in place following World War II in an effort to stimulate the economy, and serve as an outlet for veterans to assimilate back into a post-war society (Mettler, 2005). By 1949, over 2 million veterans attended college under the Montgomery G.I. Bill (Bound & Turner, 2002). However, following the September 11th attacks on the United States, the Montgomery G.I. Bill was updated and replaced with the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill (G.I. Bill.com, 2011). According to “The new G.I. Bill: Auspicious beginnings” (2011) the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill benefits include 36 months of education. Tuition and fees are paid by the VA directly to the student’s school up to a predetermined amount, a monthly
housing allowance is offered based on school location, and a book stipend is available of up to $1,000 per academic year (G.I.Bill.com, 2011).

When the new Post-9/11 G.I. Bill took effect in 2009, colleges and universities prepared for an influx of veteran students (Herrmann, 2009). Higher education institutions were concerned that they would be unprepared to meet the needs of this specialized group of students. Thus many colleges and universities put special services in place to aid veterans in the transition from war to the classroom (Herrmann, 2009). However, some concern rests in veteran students’ completion of degree requirements based on the G.I. Bill, and meeting academic needs (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010).

Rumann and Hamrick (2010) found that some students had interruptions of two to four consecutive semesters between departure and re-enrollment, and time to degree conferral was extended even more for those who had to wait to take infrequently offered courses or had been deployed between sequenced courses. These interruptions in enrollment and miscommunications about course offerings may lead to issues in graduation eligibility or an increased level of stress experienced by these veterans.

Some research has begun to emerge addressing the challenges associated with meeting veteran students’ academic requirements and student service needs (Brown & Gross, 2011; Zinger & Cohen, 2010). However, there is fewer research in which veteran students are directly questioned about concerns surrounding their academic and advising needs (Ackerman et al., 2009). Much of the literature centers on veteran transitions to the classroom and their choice of major (Ackerman, DiRamio, & Mitchell, 2009; Lipka & McCarty, 2009). This literature is focused on policymakers and program coordinators.
offering special student services for veterans as they enter college for the first time (Ackerman et al, 2009). Another focus on veteran students physical needs on college campuses (Branker, 2009). Branker (2009) notes that many war veterans who return home have certain disabilities which may make their undergraduate environments difficult to navigate. A connection between the transitional and physical needs of veteran students lie in college-run organizations aimed at these students (Moon & Schma, 2011; Whikehart, 2010).

Morreale (2011) suggests that combat exposure was not related to academic motivation or academic self-concept. However, academic motivation, as well as its subscales, was found to be moderately to strongly related to academic self-concept and many of its subscales. The study provided evidence that select demographic, educational, and military variables can explain proportions of variances in academic motivation: including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and academic self-concept. The study contributes to the literature on military veteran students and to be a guide for both academic and student affairs professionals, and faculty in higher education, by moving away from a deficit model, and instead presenting military veterans' strengths as they meet the challenges of attending and succeeding in college. In addition, Morreale (2011) believes a better understanding this population of students will allow for promoting access and success based on improved services, programming, policy, and administration across institutions.

In direct regards to academic advising McReynolds (2014) suggests professional development related to “battlemind” behaviors. These sets of components describe
military values that student veterans may exhibit and explains how they could be misinterpreted or perceived in civilian life. These values include: (a) buddies working as a team, (b) accountability, (c) tactical awareness, (d) targeted aggression, (e) lethally armed, (f) emotional control, (g) mission security, (h) individual responsibility, (i) non-defensive driving/behaviors, and (j) discipline. These values may be perceived by civilians as isolated, feeling detached, inability to trust, guilt, and difficulty dealing with conflict or ambiguity, among others. Recognizing these behaviors can help advisors play to the students’ strengths.

Wilson and Smith (2012) researched the impact of short-term advising goals versus long-term advising for student veterans. After interviewing 13 soldiers and five academic advisors the authors found that more professional development was needed in regards to advising student veterans. Citing Kroth and Boverie's (2000) model of life mission and adult learning, the authors suggest applying knowledge of military practice with a permanent lens academic goal accomplishment strategy that would best suite the rapport and needs of working with student veterans (Wilson & Smith, 2012).

Furthermore, McReynolds (2014) emphasizes the importance of creating a veteran friendly campus in order to support the varying needs of student veterans. This campus climate may begin with academic advisors’ having a fuller understanding of the transitional needs of veteran students, as well as offering a level of structure and direction that veteran students may prefer (McReynolds, 2014).

**Returning adult learners.** Another emerging population of students who transfer are those adult learners who are returning to college for degree seeking purposes, or non-
degree seeking educational enrichment. Colvin (2011) conducted a study on returning students which linked the use of the G.I. Bill, as well as the challenge of being an adult student returning to higher education. The author notes that the G.I. bill after WWII encouraged education for the older students, the combination of baby boomers and the rise of feminism have prompted a new wave of returning students to academia. The nontraditional student since the 1970s has often been an older female returning for a graduate degree. Making the decision to return has not been easy, and the older student can expect to encounter multiple barriers to her progress before attaining her desired degree. These barriers have been in place and have been the subject of studies for the past forty years, and they remain firmly in place in the new century (Colvin, 2011).

Fragoso, Goncalves, Ribeiro, Monteiro and Quintas (2013) utilize survey results, focus-group interviews and life histories and use them to understand the transition of adult students into higher education. Results include interpretations of the factors that students view as barriers to their participation in higher education, the importance of peer support, and reflections on life histories that provide greater insight into the transitional process. Although several barriers were identified by adult students, there is also a positive impact from transition. The authors believe that academics should challenge traditional views of the transition concept, in which students are considered to be a problem to higher education institutions, because this diverts attention away from the responsibilities of those institutions towards facilitating change (Fragoso et al., 2013).

In advising adult learners Marques and Luna (2005) suggest that the type of support for these students should resemble a trusting peer relationship rather than a mentorship. The
focus of this advising relationship would be ongoing with a professional, full-time advisor instead of a series of brief encounters with faculty. The authors conclude that advisors cannot advise adult learners successfully by using the same techniques used with traditional students. These adult learners are seeking a peer-based relationship of encouragement and care, good advice and decent representation in handling academic issues (Marques & Luna, 2005).

While each of these groups vary greatly, they are all identifiable as transfer students. As such it is important to know how these students approach advising behaviors and their overall attitudes towards academic advising. In order to efficiently research this population, a foundational framework is utilized.

**Theoretical Framework**

The research on academic success and self-efficacy has grown exponentially since the late 1990s (Brady-Amoon & Fuertes, 2011; Moore, O'Hair, & Ledlow, 2002; Quimby & O'Brien, 2004). Students are motivated in different ways, and as such, different theories should be applied to predict or explain student behaviors and motivations.

Theories that may best inform this research come from health communication and organizational sense-making research. For the purposes of this research, Expectancy Value Theory, the Theory of Reasoned Action, the Theory of Planned Behavior, and Self-Efficacy will serve as the theoretical framework (Ajzen, 1991; Bandura, 1997). Expectancy Value Theory (EVT) and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) are described here in order to give a history of this cluster of theories. In each revision of the theory, a new concept is added. Each of these theories has been built upon the former,
leading to the most current iteration: the Theory of Planned Behavior. All three theories are linked to the concept of self-efficacy, which is also utilized in this research.

**Self-efficacy.** Self-efficacy is a concept that has often been linked to the theory of planned behavior relating to health communication research. However, self-efficacy has been used beyond the health communication realm of research and has been applied to some education-based studies (Brady-Amoon & Fuertes, 2011; Moore, O'Hair & Ledlow, 2002; Quimby & O'Brien, 2004). According to Moore, O'Hair and Ledlow (2002), self-efficacy is defined as one's ability to execute behaviors successfully in order to achieve specific goals. Likewise, self-efficacy is empirically associated with adjustment and transition, as well as social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986; Brady-Amoon & Fuertes, 2011; Erlich, 2011).

Bandura (1986) identified four learning sources that build self-efficacy. These four primary learning sources build self-efficacy through (a) observing models (vicarious experience), (b) experience of doing or enactive mastery, (c) receiving encouragement or verbal persuasion, and (d) reducing avoidance anxiety or physiological and affective states (Erlich, 2011). These sources suggest that incorporating these methods into one's teaching or counseling practice, structuring the student learning experience can facilitate students increasing their self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy in research on academia has begun to emerge more frequently. Quimby and O'Brien (2004) conducted a study of nontraditional college women in order to identify predictors of student and career decision-making self-efficacy. The authors found that social support added to the prediction of self-efficacy over the contribution of
perceived barriers. They suggest career counseling interventions to facilitate educational success among these students. Likewise Afari, Ward and Khine (2012) investigated the relationships among global self-esteem, academic self-efficacy and academic performance among college students in the United Arab Emirates. They found that academic achievement was related to having high academic self-efficacy. Zajacova, Lynch and Espenshade (2005) investigated stress and academic self-efficacy. They found that self-efficacy is a stronger and more consistent predictor than stress of academic success. These findings speak to the strength of self-efficacy. Finding the role it plays in students' academic behaviors toward degree completion, and more specifically academic advising for these students, is a primary goal of this research.

One self-efficacy study that helps to inform this research is Brady-Amoon and Fuertes (2011). This article focused on the association between self-efficacy and self-rated abilities (or those abilities that students already perceive about themselves) in relation to adjustment and academic performance. This quantitative study found significant positive association between self-efficacy and self-rated abilities of undergraduates.

Instead of health behavior change, this research focuses on academic behavior changes for students along with self-efficacy. In connecting the constructs of self-efficacy, behavior change and planned behavior, the goal is to find where the communication is lacking between academic advisors and the student, or other barriers transfer students might be facing.
**Expectancy value theory.** A foundational theory linked to the more current Theories of Reasoned Action and the Theory of Planned Behavior is Expectancy Value Theory (EVT). EVT is derived from Uses and Gratifications Theory by Fishbein in the 1970s (Palmgreen, 1984). The constructs of expectancy and value were initially defined by theorists Lewin and Tolman (Wigfield, Tonks, & Kaluda, 2009). Lewin explains that the value or valence of an activity influences its importance to the individual. Likewise, Tolman discusses how expectancies for success can function in a variety of ways.

This theory posits that people tend to orient themselves to the world according to their expectations or beliefs and evaluations (Wigfield, Tonks, & Kaluda, 2009). Utilizing this approach, EVT suggests behavior, behavioral intentions, or attitudes are seen as a function of (a) expectancy or beliefs in the perceived probability that an object possesses a particular attribute or that a behavior will have a particular consequence; and (b) evaluation or the degree of positive or negative affect, toward an attribute or behavioral outcome (Palmgreen, 1984).

Wigfield, Tonks, and Kaluda (2009) note that modern expectancy-value theories are based in Atkinson's work in that they are linking achievement performance, persistence and choice to individuals' expectancy-related and task value beliefs. The newer models expand beyond the study of psychology to other social and cultural realms of research. The history of EVT research has found that individuals' expectancies for success and achievement values predict their achievement outcomes which include performance, persistence and choices of what activities to do (Eccles et al., 1983; Wigfield, Tonks & Kaluda, 2009). Where much of the research has focused on children's
expectancy-related beliefs and achievement through elementary and secondary school years, this research will utilize aspects of EVT in a higher education context.

**Theory of reasoned action.** Ajzen and Fishbein formulated the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) in 1980. This resulted from attitude research from the expectancy value models. Ajzen and Fishbein formulated the TRA after trying to estimate the discrepancy between attitude and behavior (Garg & Garg, 2008). In this case, the TRA was related to voluntary behavior. Later on behavior appeared not to be 100% voluntary and under control, this resulted in the addition of perceived behavioral control. With this addition the theory was called the theory of planned behavior (TpB).

According to Ajzen (1985), TRA suggests that a person's behavior is determined by his or her intention to perform the behavior and that this intention is a function of his or her attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms. The best predictor of behavior is intention. Intention is the cognitive representation of a person's readiness to perform a given behavior, and it is considered to be the immediate antecedent of behavior. This intention is determined by three things: their attitude toward the specific behavior, their subjective norms and their perceived behavioral control. The Theory of Planned Behavior holds that only specific attitudes toward the behavior in question can be expected to predict that behavior. In addition to measuring attitudes toward the behavior, we also need to measure people’s subjective norms – their beliefs about how people they care about will view the behavior in question. To predict someone’s intentions, knowing these beliefs can be as important as knowing the person’s attitudes. Finally, perceived behavioral control influences intentions. Perceived behavioral control refers to people's
perceptions of their ability to perform a given behavior. These predictors lead to intention. A general rule, the more favorable the attitude and the subjective norm, and the greater the perceived control the stronger should the person’s intention to perform the behavior in question (Ajzen, 1985).

**Theory of planned behavior.** Finally, the most current iteration of these theories is the theory of planned behavior (Appendix E). The Theory of Planned Behavior (TpB) links attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). TRA is closely aligned to TpB, however the addition of perceived behavioral control led to the creation of TpB as its own theory after it was found that behavior may not be fully voluntary (Ajzen, 1991). TpB suggests that intentions lead to behaviors and that attitudes can affect behavior only through intentions (Brewer & Rimer, 2008). TpB is an extension of the theory of reasoned action (Henningsen, Valde, Russell & Russell, 2011). This theory provides a systematic method to identify issues that are most important to a person's decisions about performing specific behaviors.

As Casper (2007) states, the Theory of Planned Behavior postulates that intentions are grounded in three factors: individual attitudes towards the behavior, subjective norms and perceived control over the behavior. Individual attitudes refer to the favorable or unfavorable evaluations of the behavior in question. Knowing these individual attitudes can help inform the tailoring of messages that are sent. Subjective norms refer to the perceived social pressures to perform or not perform a behavior (Silk, Parrott & Dillow, 2003). These norms are likely to play a role in determining how and what individuals think about what is being studied. Finally, perceived control refers to the
perceived difficulty or ease associated with performing a behavior. The more favorable the individual attitudes and subjective norms, and the greater the perceived control, the stronger the intention is to complete a specific task or behavior (Casper, 2007; Silk, Parrott & Dillow, 2003).

For the purpose of this research, TpB will be the primary theory upon which the interview questions are derived. Background on both EVT and TRA are offered here in order to provide a broad picture of the beginnings of this theory and how it has evolved into TpB which is used most in research today.

In applying the framework of TpB and Self-Efficacy to undergraduate academic advising, the purpose is to study the communication barriers in the process of degree completion while looking at attitudes, subjective norms and perceived control of students in transition. Past research has used TRA/TpB in relation to health behaviors and decision making. In this research, health behaviors are replaced with transfer students' academic behaviors.

Furthermore, the focus is on students' planned behaviors and self-efficacy while seeking degree completion. In adapting this theory to the current research, TpB may be useful in designing strategies to help students in transition to adopt healthy academic behaviors and to help advisors increase their uptake of guidelines (Francis, Eccles, Johnston, Walker, Grimshaw, Foy, Kaner, Smith, & Bonetti, 2004). These particular theories and approaches are being utilized in this research as a way to expand the existing theoretical perspectives in advising research. As Hagan and Jordan (2008) note, advisors
have license to draw upon an array of theoretical perspectives because of the interdisciplinary nature of advising.
CHAPTER THREE

This chapter describes the methods used to answer the research questions. This research was intended to explore the experiences and views of the participants, with the philosophical assumption that in doing so, it might be impossible to arrive at a universal truth or depiction of reality, but rather, a collection of connected and unique perspectives (Merriam, 1998). The research contributes to the literature on the Theory of Planned Behavior, and how it can be used outside of a health communication context.

This study sought to answer three research questions:

**RQ1.** How do transfer students decide to attend or not to attend academic advising sessions?

**RQ2.** Does self-efficacy play a role in student decision-making regarding advising behaviors?

**RQ3.** How do transfer students describe attitudes towards academic advising?

For this study the researcher focused on transfer students’ attitudes, beliefs and behaviors in regards to academic advising. This chapter addresses the methodological framework posited in the aforementioned research questions. Furthermore, the chapter discusses research design, instrumentation and data collection, and finally, data analysis and validity.

**Methodological Framework**
This study used a qualitative method design, which is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2007). This research utilized a basic interpretive qualitative strategy (Merriam et al., 2002). Specifically, the interpretive qualitative strategy used an inductive approach, collecting data from interviews, observations, or document analysis.

In order to focus on individual attitudes towards, and behaviors related to academic advising for transfer students, interviews and surveys were utilized. Participants were recruited to take part in semi-structured interviews regarding academic advising (Creswell, 2009). Analysis consisted of patterns or common themes and the outcome was a rich, descriptive account that makes references to the literature or theory that helped frame the study (Merriam et al., 2002). Creswell (2009) notes that the theoretical lens should be introduced in the proposal and shapes a directional research question or questions aimed at exploring a problem, creating sensitivity to collecting data from underrepresented groups, and ends with a call for action. In this case, the applied theoretical lens was the Theory of Planned Behavior (TpB) with a focus on self-efficacy. Interview questions were derived and adapted from self-efficacy scales, and interview questions developed by Ajzen (2011) who is the theorist who developed TpB (see Appendix G). The underrepresented groups involved in this study were those students who have transferred from one academic institution to another. Data was collected through individual semi-structured interviews. The interviews were designed to explore in what ways certain external and internal factors may be significant predictors of student
behaviors in academic advising. The qualitative methods approach was utilized with the intention of understanding participant experiences and allowing the researcher to go into the field and examine both actions and thought processes of students (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

**Research Design**

**Role of the researcher.** Qualitative research is interpretative by nature, meaning the researcher interprets or makes sense of meaning gained during the collection of data. The researcher assumes a more participatory role due to interview experience with participants and personal involvement with the research topic (Creswell et al., 2003).

Because of its interpretive nature, one major criticism of qualitative methods is the use of the researcher’s own experience in the research process (Keyton, 2001). Creswell (2007) states that in order to do this, researchers must discuss their preconceptions or biases to help the reader understand how the interpretations and meanings have been placed on the findings. This is done to help the reader understand both the emic, or participant centered understanding, and the etic, or researcher centered understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007).

As the researcher, and also an academic advisor in the Department of Communication at the university which serves as the research location, it is vital to note my own preconceptions and biases. My experiences as an advisor has exposed me to many different types of students. Transfer students are a large number of our advisees in the department, so I have had extensive conversations with many about their transfer experiences, struggles, and future plans as a new student at the university. Likewise, I am
aware of the major and minor students who rarely or never attend advising sessions, and a
number of those are transfer students. This information led me to my research questions
and my desire to know why they are not coming in for advising sessions on a frequent
basis. Also, as an advisor I am always searching for ways to promote good advising
practices and greater access to advisors. Having the opportunity to talk to different
transfer students about their own experiences and decision-making may help shed light
on why some students choose to attend or not attend advising sessions. More discussion
of the researchers role in advising is discussed in the validity section of this chapter.

**Participant recruitment.** Participants for the study were recruited via a
convenience and snowball sample at a large Mid-Atlantic public university in the United
States. Emails were distributed to a college within the university consisting of humanities
and social science programs. Recruitment emails were posted to the college listerv,
department listservs, Facebook, as well as the campus transition and advising center. A
recruitment email was sent to the selected contacts for dissemination on their respective
listservs. Participants who expressed interest in the research were contacted about
attending a one-on-one interview session with the researcher, as well as a follow-up
survey via email (see Appendix E for recruitment letter).

An incentive for participation included the chance for the participants to win one
of two Amazon Kindle Fire E-Readers. The two winners names were drawn at random by
an administrative staff member in the Department of Communication. The recruitment
materials and informed consent addresses the incentive (see Appendix A and B).
There was a goal of 20-30 interview participants. Guest et al., (2006) notes that 12 interviews of a homogenous group are what is needed to reach saturation whereas Creswell (2007) suggests the use of 25 to 30 participants. Being that some interviews may not be very lengthy, the range of 20-30 participants was ideal in order to help reach saturation of knowledge while maintaining parameters for time and resource limitations for this research. A total of 25 interviews were conducted for the study.

Participants. The target population for this research were undergraduate college students who have transferred from another college or university. The participants were 18 years of age or older and must have been enrolled as a student at their current university for at least one full semester. This would give participants an ample amount of time to have sought out academic advising beyond transfer orientation, if they wished. Eligible participants were from any major within a college of humanities and social sciences at the university being researched. All majors within the college were included in recruitment in order to gain a wide range of students and advising experiences. The participant pool was narrowed to the humanities and social sciences college in order to utilize a uniform structure in degree requirements and enrollment through the transfer process. Academic advising practices may vary greatly between colleges, which could have had an impact on student behaviors and attitudes. Thus, finding transfer students who had similar but not equal paths needed to reach degree completion allowed for richness of data, but maintained logical parameters for a study of this kind.

The following is a breakdown of the participant characteristics and demographic information gathered during the interview process. Of the 25 participants in the study, 17
were women and 8 were men. Ages ranged from 19 to 43 with the average age being 24. All participants were recruited from humanities or social science based departments at a large Mid-Atlantic university, so the breakdown of participants’ majors were as follows: Psychology (10), Criminology (4), Global Affairs (3), Sociology (3), Education (3), Anthropology (1) and Neuroscience (1). Thirteen participants identified as seniors, whereas 10 identified as juniors, and two as sophomores. No participants identified as freshman. Fifteen participants identified as part-time, or those taking under 12 credit hours per semester. Ten participants identified as full-time students, taking 12 or more credits per semester (see Appendix H). Six of the full-time students also identified as being residential students, living on campus grounds in residence halls or apartments.

**Data Collection**

**Interviews.** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 25 participants who had self-identified as transfer students. Criteria for the participants included: required undergraduate status, currently enrolled in a degree-seeking program in the college, must be over the age of 18, and must identify with one of the types of transfer students. The participants ranged between part-time or full-time status. (see Appendix H). All interviews were administered by the researcher in a conference room located at the university. Each interview was one-on-one and audio taped following approval of the written informed consent. Before beginning the interviews, each participant was asked to read the informed consent document and if they chose to participate, they were asked to sign the form (see Appendix B). For privacy purposes, no identifying information was used about the participant. Each individual was assigned a code name at the beginning of
the interview process. It was estimated that each interview would last around 40 minutes. The length of the interviews varied depending on the participants' individual experiences. The average length of the interviews were 25 minutes with the shortest being 10 minutes and the longest being one hour and 15 minutes.

The interviews took place in the months of October and November of 2014, which was after the Spring 2015 schedule has been made available to students. As such, this was a busy time for advising for the upcoming Spring term. The first part of each interview addressed demographic information and student status. Interview questions as well as follow-up survey questions were derived from the three main research questions in this study (see Appendix D and E) and were adapted from Ajzen's (2006) Theory of Planned Behavior general questionnaire, as well as Schwarzer and Jerusalem's (1995) self-efficacy scales (see Appendix F and G). The general questionnaire and scales were adapted to a semi-structured interview format with open-ended questions and requests for demographic information. The interview questions focused mainly on how the student perceives the importance of advising, self-efficacy related to choices in reaching degree completion, their prior advising habits and how the student reaches a decision on whether or not to meet with academic advisors. The format of the interview questions were open-ended to allow for a richer analysis and emergence of themes.

In the months following the interviews, a follow-up survey was sent virtually to each participant (see Appendix D). The survey asked if the student had since attended advising after the interview, as well as his or her current attitudes and behaviors towards advising. The survey was sent in February of 2015 after a winter break in order to gauge
any changes in attitude, behavior and self-efficacy. The surveys were given early in 2015 because it follows the Spring enrollment period and came before the Summer schedules are released to students. This was another commonly busy advising time during the academic year for this university.

**Data Analysis**

Interviews were transcribed by the researcher using the speech-to-text software program, Dragon Naturally Speaking. Following transcription, the researcher used a priori coding, followed by open-coding for themes and categories. In starting data analysis, all interview transcripts were read carefully, as well as with analytical memos (Saldana, 2014) written about initial impressions of the data. Those impressions were recorded about each interview. Next, all transcripts and survey data were read for significant statements relevant to self-efficacy and TpB, which were grouped into meaning units, or themes. Because the interview questions were adapted from self-efficacy scales and TpB questionnaires, the related questions were coded keeping the assertions of self-efficacy and TpB in mind. This process is known as horizontalization (or unitizing, according to Maxwell & Miller, 2008). Next, once identified, these themes assisted the researcher in interpreting findings and linking them to the subject being studied (Byrne, 2001). A more detailed description of these procedures is offered below.

A thematic analysis was used to uncover relevant themes and ideas from transcribed interview responses to open-ended questions that investigated the attitudes, behaviors and experiences of undergraduate students and the advising decisions (Byrne, 2001). A thematic analysis is often used in qualitative research with the intention of being
able to pinpoint, examine and record themes within the data. This analysis was performed through coding in phases. These phases included familiarization with the data, identifying initial codes, searching for themes in the codes, collapsing the themes into sub-themes, and producing the final product.

In order for the researcher to familiarize themselves with the data, transcripts were read in their entirety before coding took place. After listening to the interview tapes and reading through transcripts and memos, a line-by-line analysis was used for each interview.

Initially, a priori coding, also known as explicit coding, took place in order to establish initial codes. This occurs when categories are established before the analysis based on a theory or concept (Stemler, 2001). In this case, categories were established from the Theory of Planned Behavior and Self-Efficacy research (Ajzen, 2006; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). The researcher coded descriptions pertaining to attitudes, subjective norms and perceived control as linked to TpB, as well as self-efficacy behaviors as described in the theoretical framework.

Following initial coding, the researcher investigated possible themes within those codes. From there, open-coding of the raw data took place, followed by deductive theme development through the a priori categories from TpB and self-efficacy research. Open-coding entails coding or labeling key words or phrases found in the transcripts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This analysis included encoding qualitative information from the interviews and developed a list of ideas, indicators and qualifications that are causally related (Boyatzis, 1998). Themes were recorded, and broken into textural and structural...
descriptions. Recording themes involved seeing the connections between experiences, rather than simply the similarities and differences (Maxwell & Miller, 2008). After initial themes were established, the following step occurred, which is the process of reducing or collapsing those themes that cannot stand alone, but instead supported another, more established theme. Finally, data was assembled into concluding themes and subthemes.

Connections, similarities and differences across the data were noted by hand. As the researcher read the transcripts and memos multiple times, key phrases and words were coded, and emerging themes were collapsed into sub-themes, all of which were compiled into a codebook. Following the full analysis, the handwritten codebook was typed and saved in a virtual format. The codebook for this study with each category, theme, and key words and phrases is provided (see Appendix J).

The qualitative component of this study allowed the researcher to gain perspectives and experiences of participants, as well as rich, descriptive data from the participants. All data collection tools are provided (see Appendix C and D) in this study and may be informative to other studies related to academic advising behaviors, or research pertaining to education which utilizes the Theory of Planned Behavior, or Self-Efficacy.

Validity

The goal of the qualitative research is to obtain believability (Creswell, 1994), trustworthiness (Golafshani, 2003), and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) through verification procedures rather than traditional measures of validity. Therefore, the final step in this methodology was verification of procedures. For this study, clarification of
researcher bias, discussion of memos, triangulation, rich, thick description and member-checking is provided in this section. Finally, a note on discrepant accounts is provided.

**Researcher bias.** Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue the importance of using personal experience to develop the audience's understanding of a phenomenon. As previously noted, I, the researcher, also work as an academic advisor at the university being studied. In order to control for any conflict of interest, throughout the interview process during data collection, as the researcher I did not interview any participant with whom I had a prior relationship in advising. Furthermore, the department in which I work was not included in the recruitment sample for this study.

During qualitative recruitment, any volunteered participants contact information that I recognized was omitted from the study. In addition, during the data collection procedures, the researcher may have developed cordial and supportive associations with some participants due to the interpersonal nature of the questions during the interview process. All of these experiences introduced a possibility for subjective interpretations of the phenomenon being studied and created a potential for bias (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2014). These arguments, although not strong enough to eliminate the possibility for bias, provided some reasons why I as the researcher decided to conduct qualitative research “in one’s own backyard” (Creswell, 1998; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Furthermore, a careful audit was done by the researcher’s dissertation supervisory committee on all research procedures and data analysis in the study.

Maxwell (2005), notes that qualitative research is not so much concerned with eliminating reactivity between researchers in the values and expectations they bring, but
rather, with understanding how the researchers values and expectations can influence the conclusions of the study. Reactivity is the implication that if cause-effect relationships are found, they may not be generalizable to other settings or situations. Therefore, it is important to understand that the goal of qualitative research is not to generalize findings but rather to interpret events relevant to one sample selected because of their ability to speak on the topic. Thus, the findings of this study are not generalizable to a larger population of students. This is due in part to the nature of sample, which consisted only of those transfer students willing to discuss their experiences. That said, it is possible that the themes that emerged from this data will be similar to those experienced by other transfer students. Therefore, while this study may have limited external validity, the findings are applicable to this population and likely for others who fit the criteria for inclusion in this study.

**Memos.** In order to improve the quality of validity in this study, memos were incorporated into the research. Analytical memos act as mini-analyses of what is learned during the interview process (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). They are typically written both during and after data collection. Memos can be as brief as a couple sentences or as detailed as a few pages in length. Throughout the evaluation the researcher should step back and write about not only the process of collecting data, but more importantly, what they are seeing or not seeing in the data. These memos can be summaries of major findings or they can be comments and reflections on particular aspects of the evaluation.

While interviewing each participant, the researcher analyzed and made note of what was being discussed and possible implications for this. These memos did serve as a
summaries of findings, as well as comments on the participants' responses that were not directly asked in the interview protocol. For example, one participant brought her toddler in with her because she was not able to find childcare that day. She spent the first 10 minutes of the interview explaining what happened and how often this occurred. Thus, memos were taken of her sharing such information, much of which related to some of the findings discussed later in this study. Another way memos were used was to quickly identify statements during the interview that reminded the researcher of the literature related to this study or the theories utilized for this research.

**Intensive data collection.** Another way to improve the quality of validity in this study was through rich, thick description and data collection over time. Both long-term involvement and intensive interviews enable the researcher to collect "rich" data, or that which is detailed and varied enough to reveal a full picture of what is taking place (Maxwell, 2005, p. 110). The interview questions in this study were open-ended, allowing for the participant to elaborate as they saw fit. When participants were less descriptive with their responses, follow-up, probing questions were asked. Verbatim transcripts were used in data analysis, rather than referring to interview notes and analytic memos alone.

Another way to ensure that data collection was thorough was to send a survey to each participant three to four months after the initial interview. The survey questions asked about their advising habits since meeting for the interview, as well as any changes in attitude since the researcher had first spoken to them. Again, the questions on the survey were open-ended, allowing for greater elaboration by each participant. The
participant responses were also compiled verbatim from the survey website, SurveyMonkey©, and used in the data analysis.

**Triangulation.** The term, triangulation, refers to the use of more than one approach to the investigation of a research question in order to enhance confidence in the subsequent findings (Glesne, 2011). As Maxwell (2005) posits, this strategy reduces the risk that conclusions made will only reflect systematic biases or the limitations of a specific source or method, which allows the researcher to gain a broader understanding of the issues being researched.

Triangulation was incorporated here through the use of survey data, semi-structured interviews and analytic memos. First, the interviews were conducted with each participant in a face-to-face setting. During the interviews, the researcher used analytic memos to note possible themes, connections to theory and other observations that seemed pertinent to the study. Months after the interviews, a virtual survey was emailed to each participant for follow-up questioning and feedback. The mixture of these various techniques and instruments for generating data provided a rich and more comprehensive picture of transfers students' advising behaviors and experiences.

**Member-checking.** Finally, during data collection, multiple individuals validated the accuracy of the findings through a process known as member-checking or respondent validation (Glesne, 2011). Member-checking is the process of receiving feedback from participants, which is also discussed for purposes of increased validity (Creswell, 1994; Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007). It is critical to use member-checking in qualitative research studies because these types of studies often involve
interpretation. Thus, without allowing participants to validate the accuracy of their findings, one-sidedness could become a concern. Since the most important issue in evaluating the rigor of qualitative research is trustworthiness, using the strategy of member-checks is critical to minimizing distortion (Creswell, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In this study member-checks occurred informally during the interview process. The researcher often restated or summarized a participant's responses and ask if the summation is accurate. If it was not, the participant would restate their responses to clarify their reasoning and intentions. Due to the fact that the interviews were audio-recorded, all member-checks were also recorded and able to be reviewed in the interview transcripts.

**Discrepant evidence.** Maxwell (2005) reports that another way to check for validity is through identifying discrepant accounts or evidence. In qualitative research, discrepant evidence includes instances that cannot be accounted for by a particular interpretation or explanation. The goal of identifying discrepant evidence is to assess whether or not it is plausible to retain or modify conclusions reached while being aware that there are data that may not fit conclusions. In this situation, asking others for feedback is an ideal way to check biases and assumptions in the researcher's logic or methods.

In this study, discrepant evidence emerged from the survey data. When asked during the interviews if students would see an advisor in the coming months, 16 participants said they would see an advisor, whereas seven of the 25 participants said that
they did not intend on seeing an advisor anymore due to either bad experiences in the past, or that they were graduating that semester and saw no more need to go. Two students were unsure as to what they would do in future semesters. However, when the follow-up survey results were sent in February of 2015, 20 of the participants said that they had met with an advisor for their majors or minors since the interviews took place in October of 2014. Two participants reported graduating and three participants noted that they had not yet met with their advisor. Thus, some of the participants who felt adamant that they would not seek out further advising actually did so anyway, creating a clash in behavioral expectations and actual behaviors. The researcher sought feedback from the committee chair about this discrepant account and both individuals found that this finding still aligns with the Theory of Planned Behavior, and therefore the conclusions remained the same. This discrepancy is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

**Methods Summary**

This chapter addressed the methodological framework used in the aforementioned research questions. Furthermore the chapter discusses research design, instrumentation and data collection. Incentives for participation in the research is explained. The role of the researcher throughout the study is described in detail, as well as implications of ethics and bias. The chapter ends with an explanation of validity in the study. The quality of validity was improved through addressing controlling for researcher bias, the use of memos, triangulation, thick description, member-checking and finally, any discrepant evidence that was found. The next chapter in this study describes the findings in detail.
CHAPTER FOUR

The goal of this research was to identify attitudes towards academic advising, barriers to social and academic progress, and the actual academic behaviors used in regards to advising by undergraduate transfer students. In-depth interviews were conducted with 25 participants who identified as undergraduate transfer students, who are those who have previous enrollment and credits from another institution. Interviews were transcribed and coded for themes and categories. A thematic analysis (Byrne, 2001) was used to uncover relevant themes and ideas from transcribed interview responses to open-ended questions, and compiled findings from a virtual follow-up survey.

This chapter details the findings of the study which sought to identify and understand those experiences of these transfer students and the barriers they faced to degree completion. In addition, this chapter presents findings from the follow-up survey given to the interview participants. Next, the chapter identifies relevant themes that emerged from the interview and survey data. Finally, the findings are related to each of the three initial research questions.

The next sections of the chapter are organized by the emergent overarching themes: behaviors, self-efficacy, attitudes towards academic advising, and confidence levels. Each of the themes that were identified were later broken down into sub-themes (see Appendix I).
Transfer Students Decision to Attend or not Attend Advising: RQ 1

This research focused on students' planned behaviors and intentions while seeking degree completion. In adapting the Theory of Planned Behavior (TpB) to the current research, findings related to the first research question reflected what Francis et al., (2004) suggested in that TpB may be useful in designing strategies to help students in transition to adopt healthy academic behaviors and to help advisors. TpB in this case, worked as a theory that linked to advising, which is consistent with what Hagan and Jordan (2008), noted which was that advisors have license to draw upon an array of theoretical perspectives because of the interdisciplinary nature of advising.

There were many specific factors involved in the participants' decisions to attend or not attend advising. Many of these factors surrounded availability and unforeseen circumstances that prevented them from accessing their advisor in person. Allen, Smith, and Muehleck (2014), noted that what pre- and post-transfer students think is important in regards to advising may differ because the two groups are at different educational levels. Furthermore, what is considered important to pre- and post-transfer students may also differ because of unique challenges students navigate while transferring. This researcher found that students' transfer experiences had an impact on their willingness to seek out advising or not. Those who had a smooth transition post-transfer were often more willing to reach out to their program advisor or set up meetings. However, those who had negative pre-transfer advising experiences, or whose transition to the new school was stressful, were often less willing to seek out advising or to trust the advice that they received. Findings reflected those in Gard, Paton, and Gosselin's (2012) article
which researched factors related to transfer success of community college to university. Students who attended a community college suggested that the advisors there were incompetent and inefficient when it came to transfer information about a specific university program. The student participants in this study who felt they had a poor advising experience at their community college, were either disinclined to meet with an advisor at their current university, or they were surprised at how helpful their new advisors were based on the opposite experience at their former school.

Findings related to the first research question were organized into the category of behaviors. Within that, findings show that decision-making and managing unplanned events and stressors were at the forefront of the participants' minds when enacting behaviors related to their degree progress.

**Behaviors.** The first overarching theme was that of the act of seeking support in some form from fellow students, faculty or the academic advisor. The theme also included actions involving advising and barriers the participants face in reaching goals. This theme relates back to the first research question: How do transfer students decide to attend or not to attend academic advising sessions? These behaviors were broken down into the sub-themes of decision-making and managing unplanned events and stressors that affect the students’ time.

**Decision-making.** Because the focus of advising is to assist students in deciding on their academic choices and then enrolling and taking specific courses, the notion of decision-making fit into the theme of Behaviors. Furthermore, the students decision to attend advising or not is contingent on their decision-making process, which again, is a
behavior. Part of the interview questions (see Appendix C) inquired as to how students made decisions related to their academic career, and there were many findings within that. How each participant made decisions differed, but most all of the participants alluded to past experiences as having a large impact on their current thought processes in making decisions. Kelly, a 22-year-old junior, had less than stellar appointments with her advisors, so she makes course decisions in other ways. "I have trust issues. Like, I know that sounds bad, but I just have had some experiences that have forced me to take my degree into my own hands. So I go onto my degree evaluation and write down everything that it says I'm missing and pick classes from there."

Tamara, a 19-year-old Psychology student, referred to reaching out for social support and well-being. "At my first school I, like, tried to talk to my advisor about a situation I was having and they passed me off quickly to someone else. So here, I don't know. I might not go to them [the advisor] for support if it's not schedule-related." She went on to note that even though her current advisor seems open to talking to her, she has some trepidation in self-disclosing about anything personal.

Some students made decisions based on their own research and then clarify their findings with an advisor. Melissa, a 20-year-old Psychology student, utilizes the university website for her degree information and chooses classes based on that. "I register on my own and then check with an advisor afterwards to make sure they are good [courses]," Melissa noted. Elizabeth uses a similar method in choosing courses for each academic term:
I've been comparing the Degree Works program or the degree requirements page with available classes in the catalog and choose my classes based on what works with my schedule and what fulfills my requirements. I will reach out to my advisor soon I guess just to make sure I'm on track, but mostly to talk about internships and bounce idea off of them for graduation.

Others mentioned going to an advisor to help with decision-making because of high levels of uncertainty. Shelby noted, "Sometimes I feel like I need someone else to just say ‘do this.’ It might be my background in the military. I take direction well, but I also need to be offered the direction at times." She elaborated in saying, "Going from taking orders to having free reign sounds nice in theory, but it’s hard to adjust to. So I’ll go to my advisor with a few ideas and make them tell me what they think I should do. Likewise, Amar mentioned his first generation status as making decision-making a bit more challenging:

I’m the first in my family to go to college, so this is all new to me. I don’t have the older sister or brother who has gone and told me what to expect. So, many times I’ll contact my advisor and just straight up tell them to give me an option for my schedule. Like, they are going to know better than me what I should take. Amar then noted that his confidence in his advisor has helped him trust the advice he has given. “So far it’s been good. So I’m sticking with it.”

*Managing unplanned events and stressors*. Students expressed what actions they took to combat stress and work around unplanned events that changed their priorities. That is why managing unplanned events and stressors was conceptualized as a sub-theme
of Behaviors. This population of students discussed the frequency of unplanned events or stressors that affect their academic performance and advising behaviors. A majority of participants felt that they were constantly having to change their schedule or put off appointments for family or work obligations. Of the 25 participants, only two did not feel that they had many unanticipated events that placed extra stress on them.

Shelby, 23, laughed when asked how often she encounters unplanned events. “Oh my God, every day. Seriously there is always something come up. I am constantly having to rethink what my week will look like. Between my job and school and just being social. Yeah. A lot.”

Some participants mentioned a change in lifestyle due to the stress and unplanned events they faced. Maria, 31, stated, "It has gotten easier for me to stick to my academic plan now that I'm here. But before I transferred from NVCC I had to take time off. Life stress happened and I couldn't. I just couldn't do it all." Likewise, Elizabeth noted that she would have to push school to the side if certain emergencies took place:

I'm a commuter so I would try to work around any problems, but if it affected school I'd have to take a step back. Like if there were an emergency, I wouldn't go to advising or maybe even class. My job and family have to come first. And it seems I'm frequently faced with new stress. So, yeah. I don't know. But it would affect me.

Alex did not offer a specific reason, but he reiterated what others have also said. “I’m just busy. Like, it’s not always something specific. I just get overwhelmed. So, yeah. Constant stress.”
A specific example of these unplanned events and stressors occurred during the interview for participant, Gina. Gina is a 25-year-old Psychology student and a new mom. The day of the interview, she came in with her 10 month old daughter, a book bag, diaper bag, stroller and purse. “I am so sorry. Is this okay? My sitter cancelled last minute and I need to be here today for two other meetings, and I have to bring her. Is this not okay?” After being reassured, Gina sat with her daughter on her lap and began the interview. Gina is not only a new mother, but a single mother who works full-time and takes 9 credit hours per semester, including summers. When asked about unplanned events or stress she laughed. "You mean like right now? Actually, this has happened a few times this semester where the sitter has had to cancel and I can’t really afford daycare right now. So I either have to try to bring her with me, or miss class that day. So far my teachers have been good about it, but I know I can’t keep doing that and expect to do well." Gina’s back up plan for unplanned stress or events is family and friends. My mom just moved to the area so she has been a big help. And one of my best friends who goes here also, will let me bring Jasmine to her on-campus apartment while I go to class. It’s just hard to coordinate.” As far as advising goes, her advisor has met with her through email a few times, but she tries to go to face-to-face meetings as much as she can. "I hate emailing. I feel like I miss so much, and at this point I really need to be sure I am getting done. But my advisor is good when I have to cancel or do a virtual appointment. I do need to see her though. In like the next week or two. I need to find time to make it work."

Self-Efficacy's Role in Student Decision-Making Regarding Advising: RQ2
According to the data here, self-efficacy played a rather large role in student decision-
making with regards to academic advising. These findings are consistent with those in other self-efficacy research from the past decade. Afari, Ward, and Khine (2012) investigated the relationships among global self-esteem, academic self-efficacy and academic performance among college students in the United Arab Emirates. They found that academic achievement was related to having high academic self-efficacy. Those participants who exuded more confidence in their own progress and their advisor, were also those more likely to plan ahead and meet frequently with an advisor to ensure that they were on track. This reflects Afari, Ward, and Khine’s (2012) finding that high self-efficacy had a positive impact on academic progress and achievement.

Zajacova, Lynch, and Espenshade (2005) investigated stress and academic self-efficacy. They found that self-efficacy is a stronger and more consistent predictor than stress of academic success. The findings of this study reflect that of Zajacova, Lynch, and Espenshade. Participants mentioned high levels of stress and unanticipated events placed on them, however, those participants who talked about having a plan and being certain of their degree standing were more confident and talked in more positive tones about their advising experiences.

Likewise, the researcher noted the role of social support in motivation towards advising. This linked into self-efficacy research conducted by Quimby and O'Brien (2004). Their study found that social support added to the prediction of self-efficacy over the role of perceived barriers. One participant specifically stated that she will ask a close friend and fellow Psychology major about course options for the upcoming semester before going to an advisor. She also said that they have tended to schedule advising
appointments around the same time as one another. Other participants who noted that they had friends or family that sought out advising or mentioned advising, were more likely to be willing to attend on their own. Conversely, one participant noted that his social support groups found advising to be a waste of time. He went on to note that he often did not reach out to his advisor because he was uncertain that they were giving good information to him.

The self-efficacy findings in this study can be related to the learning sources that builds self-efficacy as defined by Bandura (1986). The first learning source is an observing model, or vicarious experience. Participants in this research noted using their social networks or family as a source of motivation to seek or not seek out advising. Participant, Yelena mentioned that since she is a nontraditional student, she will talk to classmates and majors about their courses and professors, but then go to her own advisor to clarify if those are good choices. At the same time, Rich noted that his friends don't seem to care much for advising and never talk about it, so he linked it to being seen as unimportant. The second learning source is through experience of doing, or enactive mastery. The participants who had a history of meeting their advisor on a pretty regular basis tended to continue that pattern. The influencing factor here was whether or not those meetings had a positive or negative outcome. However, in general, those who would meet with an advisor expressed that they understood how important it was for them to stay on track. The third source is receiving encouragement or verbal persuasion. The participants who had been contacted by their advisor, or had been recommended to come back to future meetings expressed more interest in attending advising on a regular
basis. The final learning source recommended by Bandura (1986) was through reducing avoidance anxiety or physiological and affective states. When asked what advice they would give to an upcoming transfer student, participants often noted that they should become involved on campus, meet their advisors, and create connections as soon as they can. Likewise, they suggested creating a plan and maintaining motivation through inquiry during their transition from one school to the next. These pieces of advice relate to uncertainty reduction (Berger & Calabrese, 1975), as well as keeping high levels of anxiety and stress at bay.

**Self-efficacy.** Self-efficacy, or one's ability to execute behaviors successfully in order to achieve specific goals, was a prevalent theme (Moore, O'Hair, & Ledlow, 2002). A student's self-efficacy presented itself in a variety of ways. First in their planning and decision making in regards to advising and advisors. Next, was how students managed unanticipated stressors and how they adjusted to the new school environment after their transfers.

**Being prepared.** How prepared a student was when going to advising sessions and progressing through their degree was seen as an indicator of their levels of self-efficacy because it related to their ability to perform these behaviors successfully. The importance of seeking out advising was split among participants. Some felt that when they transferred they should immediately look for a new advisor, whereas others did not feel the urgency to do so. "Yeah. Like before I even came here when I was in my community college I will call and ask 'does this transfer?' I wanted to make sure like, literally like I was on top of everything. If not I feel bad," stated Allison, a 20-year-old
Psychology student. Similarly, Joe, 23, noted that his culture and background as a first
generation college student influenced his feeling of importance in seeking out advising.
"Yes, [it's important] definitely. I never shied away from advising. I am a first
generation immigrant and the eldest in my family. This means I have to go out
there and figure things out, asking the right people. My parents don't really know
and there are no older siblings to ask."

One male participant Jack, 24, noted, "I'm not sure if it's the meeting with the
advisor, or dedicating time to look at the requirements that is the catalyst of greater
understanding. Maybe a bit of both."

Alex, a 26-year-old Sociology student, attributed his success in planning to a
history of being attentive to detail. "I plan to meet my advisor about two times a semester
every semester. I've done that since I started college. Some meetings I probably don't
need because I'm prepared, but I like knowing that I have a guaranteed time to review
how I'm doing with someone else."

Virginia, did not share the same need for detail and planning. "I go once or twice
a year. Really, I kind of figure things out on my own. So like, I don't plan on seeing my
advisor unless I have a specific question or issue. So it's rare."

Adjusting to the transition. Another way self-efficacy emerged through the
research was through the students ability to adjust to transitioning to the new university.
Nine participants emphasized the importance of taking time to adjust to their new
environment. Kelly, 22, described the process as taking a longer time than initially
thought:
Really it comes down to taking the time to adjust. I really didn't expect that to take so long to adjust. So, like, be on campus when you don’t have to be. Get lost walking around. Memorize your surroundings. Seek out your professors and advisors before you need them. That way you’re not a stranger when the time comes that you have an issue.

Twenty-two year old female student, Chelsea, gave this advice: "Try your best to take each day one at a time because if you don’t it can get overwhelming. Adjust to the new environment on your own time to prevent stress. It will get better if it starts off rough at first. Keep your head up and stay strong!"

Allison spoke further about her experiences and related them as advice to a hypothetical upcoming transfer student:

Well obviously I went to my advisor all the time. So I'd say go your advisor and just talk to them. Like get a network connection with somebody. Like if you need help you need to know where to go. Really, you need to know where to go when you need help. You can't just come in and say 'Oh I'll be all right.' No, you need to know. Especially coming from a community college... like my college was so small. Like, and this is so different. Like it's a big change.

Yelena, a Sociology student, noted that there was concern with her transfer credits not counting when she got to the university after transferring from a community college. "It was actually helpful that my advisor reached out when I got here. That was huge to me. Like, I felt like when you're transitioning from something so small to this huge university, it was so refreshing to have someone there to help you."
**Motivation.** Self-efficacy is the enactment of behaviors in the effort of achieving a goal. Motivation is required goal-achievement, thus motivation is a logical sub-theme of self-efficacy. A common theme in the interviews that linked to self-efficacy were the notions of social support from friends, family or their advisor, and the desired act of caring about well-being in advising sessions.

Jack, a part-time male student who switched majors from Anthropology to Criminology felt adrift when he first transferred to the university. This had an impact on his motivation to seek out advising assistance later:

> When I transferred and went to orientation, there was no one from the Anthropology department there. There were no students to ask questions, no professors, no advisors for Anthropology, I had no input on the system and had to crash-course it myself by figuring it out on my own – I thought that was really harsh. I think transfer students will tend to have a better idea of what they want to accomplish, but we still need someone to help us navigate the quagmire that is a university bureaucracy.

When asked if their social support networks discussed advising many reported that they did, or that they would ask for advice from their friends. Allison cited her social support as another source of assistance: "My best friend is in Psychology also, so usually I will go straight to her and ask what can I do. But if not I will go contact my advisor and say 'Oh so I have this problem how can I handle it?'" Likewise, Yelena who identifies as a nontraditional-aged student, noted that she relies on other students for their expertise and experiences. "I'll talk to classmates and majors about their courses and professors, but
then go to my own advisor to clarify if those are good choices for me. But it's important to reach out. They've been there, what do they know? Find out!” Yelena noted.

On the opposite hand, Jack felt a lack of social support input. He noted, "Absolutely not. Most seemed to think that it was a waste, and only went when they wanted to see if a class could count for credits towards the degree or not." Amar also had some mixed ideas about their social networks and advising. "I had a friend at NOVA who thought advising was a hassle, so he'd say it wasn't worth your time. But like, most of my friends would actually remind me to go see them before registration. Which was cool."

The follow-up survey sent in February asked if students had visited an advisor since their face-to-face interviews with the researcher. As of February 13, 2015, 20 of the participants had visited with their advisor either at the end of the Fall term, or at the beginning of the Spring session. Two participants reported graduating and three participants noted that they had not yet met with their advisor.

**Transfer Students' Attitudes towards Academic Advising: RQ 3**

Attitudes were mixed among participants. Many attributed their current attitude towards advising to experiences that they had before they transferred. The findings from the third research question linked into the findings related to the first research question in decision-making. Attitudes towards advising were a large contributing factor in the participants' choice to go to future advising appointments, or not. Specific attitudes emerged from the data including, the desire for connection and well-being, trust, and inclusion, as well as more negative attitudes towards advising included disillusionment with the amount of help offered, or lacking confidence in themselves or their advisor.
A common theme was the notion of well-being and social connectivity between advisor and student. The participants in general were seeking an advisor who they could trust, who would meet their academic needs and who would also offer some level of sincerity and care in their communication with the students. These findings reflect what Bloom and Martin (2002) applied as organizational development theory known as Appreciative Inquiry to academic advising. This was developed and used to define an appreciative advising style. In this appreciative style, the advisor maintains a distinctly positive emotional tone, and focuses on empowering the student to meet their goals (Bloom & Martin, 2002).

Trust became a common part of the conversation with both extremes in mind. A little over half of the participants noted that they trusted the advice of their advisor, or felt more confident after meeting with them. However, there was a substantial group of participants who had high levels of distrust towards their current advisor. Some felt the leftover affects from an advisor they had at their former institution, and that level of distrust came with them to their new school. Another issue with trust was the uncertainty of meeting with the same advisor more than once. Participants mentioned that they changed advisors frequently, or were forced to move from a first-year advisor to one that was part of a specific program. This made them feel that they were starting over in creating a dialogue with the new individual, and that they spent too much time trying to construct a healthy rapport with someone they were not used to speaking to.

Needing inclusion was another attitude that was a mixture of hopeful and positive for some, and pessimistic for others. Participants made note of times that their advisors
reached out to them personally, or spent more time helping them on their needs. There was less of a clinical, detached feeling about advising and more of an interpersonal connection for those participants. As transfer students who are transitioning to a new school, the participants who had a smooth transition mentioned that feeling included or being led to activities or programs that helped ease stress was a catalyst for positive attitudes. However, others felt that there was a distinct lack of inclusion for transfer students. Often they cited that advisors were not adjusting to the needs of those who work full-time, so they had no hours available to attend advising. Others felt that they were cast off after orientation with little knowledge of the campus culture or direction. These participants who had negative transitional experiences urged advisors to create programs that assisted them, including mentoring programs and extending advising hours, or even being available in virtual or telephonic settings.

Finally, there was a mixture of attitudes towards the helpfulness of the advisors' advice, or even the need for advising. Again, many of these attitudes seemed to develop from negative past experiences with advisors, or from finding out that some information that they received was incorrect or misinterpreted. However, from those participants who felt that they were on track to graduate, had a good rapport with their advisor and felt their advice had been useful to that point, they expressed a need for advising and often suggested that other transfer students take the time to reach out. It is important to note that a majority of the participants (16 out of the 25 total) felt that advising as a whole was helpful to the student and saw the need for it.
**Attitudes.** While there were a range of attitudes towards their past experiences with advisors, both positive and negative, a few common sub-themes emerged. These sub-themes included whether or not to require advising, wanting more attention placed on those students who are part-time, as well as developing mentorship programs at universities.

**Requiring advising for new students.** A topic with mixed responses was that of requiring advising for students. Three participants actually changed their answer from "no" to "yes" as they were talking about the question. Others noted that there would be a sense of frustration if they were forced into advising. Yet a slight majority said they saw the merit in requiring advising, especially for new transfer students. These mixtures of positive notions towards requiring advising, as well as negative ones lends itself towards the theme of Attitudes. Allison noted: "I think it should be [required]. Just so you know you're on track. Like you know you're going in the right direction."

Sixteen participants noted that they saw how required advising would be beneficial. Kristen felt conflicted about requiring advising and felt that she would benefit from the requirement but others may not feel the same. Kristen’s response differs from many who felt that advising should be required, but perhaps not for them. Yelena, 37, said that she sees the benefit in requiring advising for new transfers or freshman, but perhaps not for upperclassmen. “I can see where the younger students would benefit greatly, but for me, no. I don’t think so. Not at this point.” Joe, reflected those sentiments: "No. I feel it should be [required] for people who are slacking but I am on top of things. Usually!"
A smaller number of participants felt strongly that advising should not be a requirement. Maria, a 31-year old senior, noted that, "it [advising] isn't required in my major of Psychology. I don’t think it really should be required, honestly. I feel most students should be responsible enough to track what they need to do online with their degree evaluation or if they have questions they should know who to go to for help."

Maria was not the only participant to feel that they could track their own progress without assistance from an advisor. Elizabeth, 24, reflected Maria's sentiments in her response: “I don't think advising is required in my program. And I don't really think it should be required, because many people do not need academic advising to make sure they stay on track with their program.” Elizabeth then expressed how negative experiences with her old advisors have soured her faith in her current advisor. “I unfortunately had to learn how to manage my degree progress on my own from poor advisors at my previous school. So, why require it if the information may or may not be helpful? Just seems like a waste of time for some of us.”

Alex strongly suggested not requiring advising, and even questioned the notion behind it. “Absolutely not. No. I think I would be mad if someone was forcing me to go to advising. Like, I know to go on my own. Don’t people just do that? Do people not go?”

**Catering to part-time students.** Another attitude that participants expressed were feelings of neglect or being overlooked. The overwhelming suggestion was to cater more frequently towards part-time students, thus making it the next sub-theme. A common suggestion from the participants were changes that advisors could make to better
accommodate part-time students. Part-time students in this case were considered those taking under 12 credit hours per semester, usually due to a full-time job or family responsibility that took precedent over school. Yelena described the importance of universities offering assistance to part-time students including evening advising hours:

One time I registered for more than 15 credit hours, which was a mistake. I'm usually part-time and I wanted to do more to save time. Well long story short my daughter needed lots of therapy, so I missed classes and had to drop. I wanted to meet with my advisor before I decided to drop and I couldn't because they weren't there after 5:00p.m. And I work days. So I didn't know I could take a medical withdraw instead of just dropping the course. So like, focusing on part-time students or at least offering different advising options would have been, it would have helped.

Rich, a 33-year-old Education major, noted that when he transferred he wasn't on campus much outside of class. "I didn't feel much need to be on campus when I wasn't in class. I think if maybe at like orientation or a meeting with your major advisor they told you stuff that was going on, or had events for students that work during the day. I don't know, I just think it would be nice, you know?"

Amar, a 23-year-old male Psychology student, reported a time that his advisor scheduled a phone meeting with him when he was concerned about registration and couldn't meet face-to-face. He noted the helpfulness of the meeting, and his appreciation towards the advisor for accommodating to his erratic schedule.
Another way to cater to the part-time student population would be to offer some virtual support. Melissa, a Psychology and Honors student discussed the desire for virtual advising via Blackboard or other electronic means. "I don't always have a ton of questions and I'm working a lot so. I really, I would find the benefit of meeting online and answering a few questions maybe in like Blackboard chat or something. Like just a few questions here and there, or even just more email exchanges." Georgia, a 24-year-old Global Affairs major, also noted that offering email contact has helped her tremendously with balancing her job, “I work strange hours and because of that I'm really only on campus for class. So I've started doing email advising this past Fall and it's worked well! My advisor sends a list of classes I need and asks if I have questions. I usually do so it starts a dialogue with them.” She went on to note, “around registration I try to meet with the advisor, but it's hard to do it before then because no one is around later at night when I'm here for class. So email has been the way to go.”

*Mentorship programs.* Finally, a number of participants suggested that the university develop a mentorship program for new transfer students, expressing optimism as an attitude towards the future of advising. This is why creating mentorship programs is the last sub-theme of Attitudes. The ideal program would use either peer mentors or designated faculty members or advisors that would reach out to new transfer students about their transition into the new university. These mentors would meet with the students on a semi-frequent basis and discuss not only advising information, but also the campus culture, locations, events and social connection. The differentiation between
"advisor" and "mentor" for these participants is that they want a mentor to reach out to them and help them outside of a scheduling context.

Greg felt a great lack of connection when he transferred to the university, so he suggested that someone help them ease into the new school: “Like I said, I had no input or direction, so I crash-coursed it myself. I truly do think that transfer students will tend to have a better idea of what they want to do in general, but we still need someone to help mentor us.” Later in the interview he noted, “A mentor or student or something to just ease us into the new program would be good to have, I think.”

Finding a mentor was a big piece of advice that participants offered to prospective transfers. Shelby, a 23-year-old Sociology student, suggested, "Really, find a mentor. Like, we need that. Someone who can mentor and guide you when you get here. And go to the orientations. Maybe find an advisor or mentor there." Georgia noted that starting a mentorship program as soon as transfers arrive at the new school would provide the most benefit. "We really do need a mentoring system here. Like, right when I transferred that would have been so helpful. This place is big. It's hard to connect early on and you don't know where anything is. Having some guidance would have been enlightening."

Virginia, 42, suggested that beyond having a mentor, students should have more access to faculty:

Maybe a faculty mentor would be good. Though I don’t know with how busy they are. So perhaps just being able to connect with faculty outside of class. Like hosting brown-bag lunches or something like that so we can socialize a bit with
them and see them in a different element. Give us the ability to communicate and ask questions or learn about them but not in a class setting.

Later in the interview she went on to say that she hoped she could connect with fellow students who were upperclassmen and had more knowledge about the campus and culture.

Confidence

A final theme was that of confidence level in the student's own progress, as well as confidence in the advising they have received in the past at their former institutions, as well as their current advising events.

Individual student progress. Many of the participants had positive feelings towards their own progress to degree completion. Joe noted, "I feel really confident and prepared for the next step! I like to be organized so I think that I'll be able to graduate on time!" Yelena mentioned that her age may have something to do with her motivation and progress. "I'm 37 now. I think maybe because of that I am very confident in getting to graduation. Like I'm not taking any of this time for granted." Virginia, another returning adult learner, 42, felt her confidence levels grew quite a bit since her meeting with an advisor after our interview concluded:

I am very confident in my degree progression right now. I was granted the honor society status this semester and now know that with six semester hours before graduating with my BA, I can begin my graduate studies around the same time, or take graduate courses as electives to get ahead. I think they are non-degree classes? But yes, I feel great that I've made it to this point!
Some participants attempted to stay optimistic, but alluded to fears and doubts when it came to their personal progression. Chelsea noted, "I try my best not to stress out but it usually happens anyway. I'm always worried about how I'm doing in classes and that I'm doing the right thing." Melissa felt some disconnect between how she felt about her academic progress and what her advisor may say. "I feel like I'm going to graduate on time, but then I panic before I see an advisor because I don't want to hear bad news. Like, I've put off going this semester because they might tell me I'm not graduating on time. But I think I am. I'm pretty sure I am." Finally, Kelly noted her confidence in progress to this point but hinted at some fears in decision making. "I'm mostly confident. Mostly. I have not taken a class that is not required and I certainly hope it continues that way."

Rich reported a great deal of trepidation in his degree progress. "I mean, I just don't. Well, no, I don't feel confident. Like I don't know if I'm doing the right thing, or like, if I'm going to graduate on time and get a job. *Laughs* I just don't know." Likewise, Alex expressed some concern with his own progress. “I think I might have spent too much time slacking off and like, I didn’t see an advisor for the first year and a half of school. So, like, I’m confident to graduate, but I feel like I haven’t made this any easier on myself, you know?"

**Interactions with an advisor.** Confidence in advising, or specifically, confidence in interactions with an advisor varied drastically. But the common thread was that participants often referred back to experiences they had before transferring and how that has changed their opinions.
Yelena was quick to sing the praises of her academic advisor in Sociology. "My advisor is so relatable. She's a mom like me and just as busy. So she was helpful and understanding of my situation and, like, that part-time was all I could do right now." Yelena went on to describe how her last advisor was helpful but didn't connect with her the same way as her current one has.

Chelsea's confidence in her advisor at her current university changed her view on advising from her previous institution. "I'm very confident here. I felt like I wasn’t going to graduate on time or when I intended to at RBC." Shelby's comments reflected those of Chelsea's. "I felt so confident here with my Sociology advisor. My time at the community college wasn't really bad, but I didn't feel so confident there. Just kind of going through the motions."

A few students related their confidence in their advisor with the interpersonal connections they have developed with them. Maria said, "Honestly, I feel 100% confident about my meetings with my current advisor. He is so incredibly helpful. And nice! Like he seems to legit care about all of us." Gina, 25, said her Sociology advisor is incredibly helpful and approachable. "They are so extremely supportive. My advisor reached out to me to set up an appointment to talk about life and how things were going outside of school. She knew I was stressed and struggling and just offered to talk." Virginia, also felt very confident in her progress because she reported that she emails her advisor monthly and meets with him multiple times a semester. "I like to talk to him [the advisor] to get a second set of eyes on my evaluation, but I know how to pull that up myself, so I
feel pretty good about where I'm at even without talking to him all the time. But his 
reassurance is there."

Though he reported little confidence in his own degree progress, Rich reported 
higher levels of confidence in his advisor. "My advisor here is great. Like, somehow she 
makes me feel good after I leave my appointments. At my old university, I barely saw my 
advisor so, yeah. But no, she's great. I just need to get it together."

Global Affairs student, Mark, did not feel like his advising meetings were helpful. 
"Often times I felt the advisor did not really understand my situation and was giving me 
advice that I knew was wrong – so I would have to nit-pick what information I got from 
them and figure out how to ask questions in a way that did not confuse them."

Greg did not feel much confidence in his advisors, even with meeting them an 
average of ten times a semester:

Honestly, I was juggling so many things, and none of my faculty members really 
cared enough about them all, or they were too busy to really know what was 
going on or how everything worked together, that I did not trust what they told me 
about my academic advising. I would have to triple-check everything on my own.

So, no, I did not feel confident.

The follow-up email asked participants about their confidence level with their 
advisor following their meetings. One participant, Anne, said, "I feel pretty good right 
now. They [the advisor] helped me know what I need to do over the summer to get where 
I need to be." Another student, Lisa, 22, said, "I graduated! I saw my advisor one last
time in December to quadruple check that I was walking and I did! They were so helpful
to me throughout. It was a good experience for me personally."

**Chapter Summary**

To summarize, this chapter presented the findings of the study. The researcher identified the major themes and subthemes that emerged from the data. The major themes included: behaviors, self-efficacy, attitudes and confidence. For the first research question the major theme was behavior. Within that, the subthemes were decision-making and managing unplanned events and stressors. For the second research question, under self-efficacy the subthemes included being prepared, adjusting to the transition, and motivation. Under the third research question, the subthemes for attitudes included requiring advising for new students, catering more to part-time students, and developing mentorship programs. Finally, the subthemes of confidence included advising and individual student progress. These themes were prevalent among participants despite the differing backgrounds and transfer experiences.

Findings suggest that this group of transfer students are actively thinking about and making decisions related to their academic future. They show higher levels of self-efficacy when they interact with an advisor that they respect advice from. These students saw the benefits of being prepared and being able to manage constant stressors. Likewise, the students interviewed that did not have good experiences with advising at their previous institutions were much more likely to distrust their new advisors, or seek out information elsewhere. Finally, these students expressed the desire for a few changes to the advising structure including: catering more to part-time students who have day jobs,
creating mentoring programs for transfers, and requiring advising for new students or brand new transfers until they are comfortable and more confident in their progress.
CHAPTER FIVE

This chapter offers a discussion of the findings of this study. First, an overview of the research study and review of the findings illustrated in Chapter Four is provided. Next, each research question is analyzed in regards to the findings. The chapter then explores implications of this study, identifies limitations and suggests avenues for future research. Finally, a list of recommendations for practical application in an academic setting are provided.

Overview of the Study and Findings

The study was conducted in a college with humanities and social science programs at a large public university in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The research drew upon previous research pertaining to the history of academic advising, different models of advising, transfer students, as well as transitions and transfer shock. The theoretical basis of the study used the Theory of Planned Behavior (TpB) and Self-Efficacy. TpB was utilized to study the intentions of undergraduate transfer students in their academic advising behaviors. Self-efficacy was incorporated in relation to TpB and its findings were used in recommendations for future research.

Using a convenience sample, 25 participants were selected who were undergraduate transfer students who had been enrolled at their current university for at least one year. The research used one-on-one interviews, which were audio recorded, and a follow up survey were transcribed by the researcher. As previously mentioned, following data collection, a thematic analysis via open-coding was applied in order to
extract overarching categories which contained themes and sub-themes (see Appendix I).

Discussion and Implications

The findings from this research conclude that transfer students are making decisions in regards to their academic progress while using self-efficacy and the different factors set forth by the Theory of Planned Behavior.

Discussion: Research question 1. Research question 1 asked "How do transfer students decide to attend or not to attend academic advising sessions?" The findings of the study were reflective of the tenants of the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985). Students attitudes towards advising and the advisor had a large influence on their decision-making process. Trust and competence were vital for students to want to seek out advising. Likewise, those who have enacted past behaviors that held advising in higher regard were more likely to continue those behaviors after they transferred. Also, those students who saw advising as an important piece of their degree progress, or even a departmental requirement, would more often make the decision to seek their advisor, even if their past experiences were negative. As evidenced in the literature review of this study, the Theory of Planned Behavior has been proven effective in many previous studies over the last three decades in predicting intent in a variety of contexts. This research found that students are incorporating self-efficacy behaviors, as well as intentions denoted in the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985; Ajzen, 2006; Bandura, 1986).

As previously mentioned, Casper (2007) states, the Theory of Planned Behavior postulates that intentions are grounded in three factors: individual attitudes towards the
behavior, subjective norms and perceived control over the behavior. These factors played largely into this findings of this study. Each of the factors are defined and related to the study below.

First, individual attitudes refer to the favorable or unfavorable evaluations of the behavior in question. Knowing these individual attitudes can help inform the tailoring of messages that are sent. In this case, the attitudes ranged from very confident and positive towards degree completion and their relationship with advisors, to very disillusioned and untrusting of their advisor. As previously stated, many of these attitudes developed from prior experiences with advisors that were considered favorable or not favorable. Participants who met with the same advisor multiple times were more likely to speak favorably about their experiences, and enact the behavior of seeing that advisor on a semester-by-semester basis.

Specifically, the participants mentioned that they felt after they transitioned to the school, that they were passed over, or expected to assimilate without any guidance. Likewise, those participants who work full-time also suggested that advisors don’t cater to their needs of being on campus later in the day. If they work until 5:00p.m. and advisors only hold hours during regular business times, they will not be able to meet. This led to the suggestion of accommodating full-time students by offering later advising times, or even using virtual or phone advising as an option. Also, there was mention of offering a mentor program wherein transfer students were paired with another student or faculty from their major to help them adjust to the new environment. If a mentoring program is not feasible, departmental or college advisors may offer introductory advising
sessions after orientation where they focus mainly on answering the transfer students questions about the campus and providing lists of resources and pointers to help them adjust to the new setting.

Likewise, something as simple as asking a student about their previous experiences with an advisor may help the current advisor assess how to tailor messages to that student. It would also indicate the level of rapport-building that is necessary to develop a healthy relationship with the advisee. Berger and Calabrese (1975) developed Uncertainty Reduction Theory which asserts that when interacting, people need information about the other party in order to reduce anxiety and uncertainty about them. In this case, both the advisor and advisee should take the time to use uncertainty reduction strategies in order to develop a more positive and beneficial interpersonal relationship.

Uncertainty reduction strategies include passive, active and interactive strategies. For student advisees, a passive strategy may be observing an advising session (when appropriate), or attending an orientation or advising expo. An active strategy would be to ask about a particular person or event without asking that person directly. So for student advisees, they may ask their social support or fellow classmates about advising meeting structures, content and their overall attitudes towards it. This may allow the student to know what to expect and look for, which may alleviate uncertainty. The final strategy is interactive. In this case, the advisor and student advisee would converse together about the structure of advising as well as the student’s needs and advisor’s expectations. This
aspect of the first research question links directly into research question three which asks about students’ attitudes towards advising, which is discussed later in this chapter.

Subjective norms refer to the perceived social pressures to perform or not perform a behavior (Silk, Parrott, & Dillow, 2003). These norms are likely to play a role in determining how and what individuals think about what is being studied. Participants had become accustomed to meeting with an advisor each year tended to maintain that behavior, even if they had some negative experiences. Those participants who did not receive messages urging them to attend advising, or who felt that advising was not a priority, were more likely to assume that they did not need to attend very frequently, if at all. The subjective norms for each student participant seemed to differ based on the department that they were in, which makes sense. Even within the same college, each academic department will conduct and advertise academic advising differently. Thus, the departmental norms would be unique to them and not necessarily to the university as a whole. This factor can influence the difference in options on the importance of advising. Of the majors represented in the study, only one student believed that advising was a requirement for them. All other participants noted that to the best of their knowledge, advising was optional in their department. Ten of the participants noted that while advising was not required, they were urged by department staff, advisors and faculty to seek out advising on a yearly basis. Other students mentioned that they received virtual communication reminding students to attend advising sessions, but did not receive the same suggestions face-to-face.
Perceived control refers to the seeming difficulty or ease associated with performing a behavior. The more favorable the individual attitudes and subjective norms, and the greater the perceived control, the stronger the intention is to complete a specific task or behavior (Casper, 2007). To the students who felt superior levels of self-efficacy, the perceived control was considered to be greater. These student participants were also more willing to schedule advising appointments on a regular basis. However, if a student felt that scheduling an appointment was too difficult, or even felt that they had a strained relationship with their advisor, the control is considered to be inadequate. The participants made suggestions related to making advising more accessible for part-time students. They also suggested implementing virtual or telephonic advising sessions as an alternative to meeting face-to-face. These suggestions work to improve perceived control.

These attitudes, subjective norms and perceived control all culminate into behavioral intentions and finally, the actual behaviors of the students (Ajzen, 2006). The behavioral intentions of 16 participants were that they intended to go to visit an advisor at least once a semester until graduation. Seven participants said that they did not intend on seeing an advisor anymore due to either bad experiences in the past, or that they were graduating that semester and saw no more need to go. Two students were unsure as to what they would do in future semesters.

It is interesting to note that the actual behaviors of the students showed a slightly different path than the intentions suggested. When the follow-up survey results were sent in February of 2015, 20 of the participants said that they had met with an advisor for their majors or minors since the interviews took place in October of 2014. Two participants
reported graduating and three participants noted that they had not yet met with their advisor. One noted that they intended to meet with one later in the Spring semester to discuss summer internship options. Thus, even though some students reported not intending to go to advising, their behaviors were the opposite. A visual of the findings related to the Theory of Planned Behavior is provided (see Appendix K).

Discussion: Research question 2. The second research question asked, "Does self-efficacy play a role in student decision-making regarding advising behaviors?" Self-efficacy has often been linked to the theory of planned behavior in communication research, and as such, the findings here are related to self-efficacy and TpB. According to Moore, O'Hair, and Ledlow (2002), self-efficacy is defined as one's ability to execute behaviors successfully in order to achieve specific goals. The findings of this study show that self-efficacy was at the core of student decisions to go to advising and to help themselves in their degree progress. Self-efficacy findings were broken down into subthemes of being prepared, adjusting to the transfer transition and motivation. Student participants in this study mentioned the importance of asking questions, seeking out advice, planning ahead, being on campus and spatial awareness, as well as attempting to prevent stress and quell feelings of being overwhelmed. Specific terms associated with self-efficacy are included in the codebook (see Appendix J).

Bandura (1986) identified four learning sources that build self-efficacy. These four primary learning sources build self-efficacy through (a) observing models (vicarious experience), (b) experience of doing or enactive mastery, (c) receiving encouragement or verbal persuasion, and (d) reducing avoidance anxiety or physiological and affective
states (Erlich, 2011). These sources suggest that incorporating these methods into one’s teaching or counseling practice, structuring the student learning experience can facilitate students increasing their self-efficacy.

Based on the findings of this research, there are a few ways that advisors could incorporate these methods of self-efficacy building. First, through observing models or vicarious experience. Student participants in this study requested the presence of a faculty or student mentor to help them adjust to the new school. One way to utilize this mentorship is by offering a model of advising practices. Discuss with new transfer students the ideal advising practices that they [the advisor] recommends. Furthermore, a peer mentor could be assigned to incoming transfer students with the intention of discussing their experiences with advising, what they can expect at the new school and what the culture in the department is like. This may offer a new peer-based perspective for the transfer student to use as a guide for assimilating into the new campus.

The next way to incorporate self-efficacy building strategies is through the experience of doing, or enactive mastery. The challenge that advisors face is often getting students to advising appointments in the first place. However, once they commit to an advising appointment, the advisor is able to set the tone for expectations, and the type of interpersonal connection that they can form with the student. If a transfer student is coming from a negative advising environment, or even no advising environment, this gives the advisor the opportunity to break that negative perception and re-establish the need for this relationship to develop and the level of helpfulness that advisors can offer. By promoting good advising practices, emphasizing the importance of being prepared
and by insisting on having students visit an advisor each semester, they are fostering self-efficacious behaviors in their transfer student population.

Receiving encouragement or verbal persuasion is another way to build self-efficacy behaviors. This can come from two different places. First, if a transfer students’ social support offers positive feedback about advising and the benefits of it, this may give the student higher expectations for a successful meeting. Other ways to promote this is by the advisors themselves. Telling the student that they are glad they came in or that they are doing the right thing by reaching out for advising can go a long way. Likewise, if a student comes to a meeting prepared with an outline of what they want and a list of questions, the advisor should offer positive feedback about those behaviors. The student is already showing higher levels of self-efficacy by being prepared and by doing their own research into their degree requirements. Positive reinforcement in this case can act as a way to support the continuation of these behaviors. Another way to verbally persuade transfer students is to spotlight advising through the school or university. Advisors could talk to other students who have gotten good advising feedback about their experiences and promote that on the advising website or office area.

The final way to promote self-efficacious behaviors is through reducing avoidance anxiety. If a student is nervous to meet an advisor one-on-one or they don’t know what to expect, then the advisor may be able to make that decision easier a few different ways. First would be offering a time during the semester before registration dates open, where advisors can gather and have information sessions on campus. These may not be actual advising sessions, but rather, places to answer general questions and
explain the process of a standard advising meeting for that department. Or even just to serve as another way to encourage advising habits that are beneficial. Furthermore, advisors can open walk-in advising times where appointments are not necessary. This takes the clinical aspect of the meeting away and gives the power to the student to make a decision to go or not to at their convenience. Lastly, an advisor or advising team could consider emailing their student body about advising. They can take the time to detail where to go to make appointments, the structure of a meeting, anything the student should expect or bring with them and how frequently they hope for students to attend advising sessions. Offering more information to the students can reduce anxiety and uncertainty about advising.

**Discussion: Research question 3.** Research question 3 asked "How do transfer students describe their attitude towards academic advising?" Many of the participants mentioned trust as part of their positive or negative attitudes towards their advisors. Advisors should seek to reduce uncertainty and dissonance within the relationship by reaching out to students and opening an ongoing dialogue in regards to their degree progress. Trust is developed over time and as such, the advisor can assume that role of stability for the student as they progress towards degree completion. Advisors should push for consistent communication with students and may even want to plan future advising appointments with students that are new transfers. If an advisor encounters a student who shows trust issues, they should make it clear that they have the students' best interest in mind and want to help create a working plan for the student moving forward.
Cognitive dissonance may be taking place for those participants who have negative attitudes towards advising (Festinger, 1962). Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance focuses on how individuals attempt to find internal consistency. When dissonance or discomfort is experienced, individuals tend to become psychologically uncomfortable and they are either motivated to attempt to reduce this dissonance, or actively avoid situations and information which are more likely to increase it. Five participants noted that they either have avoided advising because of past experiences at their initial schools that has led to distrust. The students experiencing this dissonance may be actively avoiding contact with a new advisor. Three students mentioned that they met with multiple advisors within their majors and/or minors before settling on one that they liked and trusted. All three previously mentioned that the experiences they had with the advisor they met with when starting college were negative. Festinger (1962) identified factors which were vital to attitude changes.

The first factor is forced compliance behavior. According to Festinger forced compliance occurs when an individual performs an action that is inconsistent with their beliefs. The behavior cannot be changed, since it has already occurred, so dissonance will need to be reduced by re-evaluating their attitude to what they have done. This can explain why some of the participants strongly disagreed with the idea of requiring advising for students. If they truly do not want to seek out advising, but are forced to do so, this would create dissonance.

The second factor is decision-making, which relates directly to one of the themes that emerged from the data. Festinger (1964) notes people have several ways to reduce
dissonance, defined as discomfort, that is aroused by making a decision (Festinger, 1964). One thing they can do is to change the behavior. As noted earlier, this is often very difficult, so people frequently employ a variety of mental maneuvers. A common way to reduce dissonance is to increase the attractiveness of the chosen alternative and to decrease the attractiveness of the rejected alternative. This is what Festinger (1964) refers to as spreading apart alternatives.

The final factor in influencing impact on attitude is effort. If an individual puts effort into a task and the task turns out poorly, the individual may experience dissonance. This is due to the fact that individuals tend to value goals or items that require considerable effort to achieve. In this case the effort is put towards a college degree. At a more specific level, the student may feel the effort is toward reaching an estimated graduation date. And along with attending classes and interacting on campus, part of their efforts are involved with going to academic advising. If a student hears bad news from an advisor, has a negative rapport with an advisor, or finds that they are not graduating when expected, the dissonance will occur. This could prevent the student from attending further advising sessions. Thus their efforts may turn elsewhere. Some participants who did not seek out advising frequently noted that they would either search the university website for courses they need, or access their degree evaluation on their own and interpret what they should take in upcoming terms. The same dissonance can occur here if the student makes an inaccurate choice and it prevents them from graduating when they hope to.

Advisors can actively help abate this dissonance by working to create an adaptable plan of work with the student. This plan can be a living document that the
student and advisor works on each semester in planning the upcoming year. Likewise, the advisor can provide positive feedback and motivating statements when students make decisions relating to their degree, or show high amounts of effort in preparing for upcoming terms. Bloom and Martin (2002) applied the organizational development theory known as Appreciative Inquiry to academic advising to define an appreciative advising style. When implementing this appreciative style, the advisor maintains a distinctly positive emotional tone, and focuses on empowering the student to meet their goals (Bloom & Martin, 2002). Finally, advisors and departments may avoid requiring advising for students who have been at the university for more than a semester, but perhaps they could require advising meetings for first semester freshman, or new transfer students. This minimizes the forced compliance behaviors, but still allows for the advisor to connect with the new students and start enacting uncertainty reducing behaviors, abating cognitive dissonance, as well as working towards building rapport with the student.

**Transitions.** Transitioning to the new environment was a major part of the conversation in these interviews that links the findings of each research question together. Regardless of where they transferred from, what their work or home life situation was, or even how old they were, they each mentioned the importance of having a smooth transition to the new university. The participants discussed how they coped with transitioning to a new school and offered words of advice for future transfer students to consider. Schlossberg (1995) explains how adults experience transitions. In fact, Schlossberg’s (1995) dimensions of transitional experiences are somewhat similar to the
cognitive structures used in phenomenological descriptions. Both are sets of factors that shape how individuals perceive a given experience. Schlossberg (1995) identified four dimensions related to individuals’ ability to adjust to that transition (situation, self, support, and strategies). *Self* describes the personal context of transitioning individuals and *situation* describing how the transition relates to that personal context. *Support* includes the network of people who can help the individual adjust after the transition, while *strategies* include individuals’ own personal coping behaviors.

Different types of transfer students would utilize different strategies that worked for them based on experience and their own transition. This research can easily be related to Schlossberg’s (1995) transitional dimensions. The first two dimensions are self and situation. Each student participant felt the need to explain their own personal situation and reasoning behind transferring. These explanations were unprompted by the researcher. However, in each of the 25 interviews, at a certain point, the participant would describe their life at that point and why they transferred to their current university. Next is support. Those individuals who felt support from their social circles, family or faculty and advisors often described a smoother transition to their new school. Those who felt disconnected or ignored by social circles and advisors often expressed disdain over their transition. Furthermore, they were more likely to express distrust in advising or at very least a lack of need for attending advising on a frequent basis. The final transitional dimension is strategies. The participants offered a plethora of strategies to make the transfer transition much less turbulent. While there were wide ranges of suggestions, a few were repeated by many of the participants. First, make a plan. A majority of the
interviewees mentioned needing to plan ahead when transferring and look two or three semesters out. Next, find some social connection on campus. Participants noted the benefit of expanding social circles with classmates when they arrived at school. The faster they created friendships, the less tension they reported in the transition period. Following that was the strategy to engage with the environment. A common comment from participants was to be on campus when you don’t need to be. They suggested spending time wandering and getting lost, or exploring new buildings and offices.

Each of the discussed types of transfer students found in the literature were present in this study. The most common type of transfer students in this study were those individuals who first attended a community college partially, or those who receive an associate’s degree from a community college. Research suggests that the academic advising culture in community colleges vary from that of 4-year colleges and universities (Allen, Smith, & Muehleck, 2013; Flaga, 2006; Gard, Paton, & Gosselin, 2012). Findings in this study reflect the different advising cultures from those who transferred from a two-year institution. The student participants who went to a community college first noted that the often met with multiple advisors. Furthermore, many noted that there was higher uncertainty during their transfers because they were unaware of certain programs offered to help them transition, and they were not well enough informed about the process of transference of credits and guaranteed admission options.

A subgroup of transfer students in this study were those who were considered “swirling” (Tobolowsky & Cox, 2012). Swirling, coined by Townsend and Dever (1999), was used to describe the process of transferring to two or more institutions. The authors
concluded that swirling was when students, subject to life events, “move from school to school like leaves twisting in the wind” (p. 5). In this study, three students had multiple transfers. One participant, Kelly, transferred from three different colleges since 2010 before settling at her current university.

Military veteran students were also a represented population in this group, with at least six student participants having mentioned military service before returning to school. Another two participants mentioned using the GI Bill for their degree. Rumann and Hamrick (2010) found that some students had interruptions of two to four consecutive semesters between departure and re-enrollment, and time to degree conferral was extended even more for those who had to wait to take infrequently offered courses or had been deployed between sequenced courses. These interruptions in enrollment and miscommunications about course offerings may lead to issues in graduation eligibility or an increased level of stress experienced by these veterans. Wilson and Smith (2012) found that professional development was needed in regards to advising student veterans. This research found similar preferences from those veterans who participated in the study. Virginia, a female veteran student, discussed having a proposed plan that the advisor and student creates, as well as looking ahead more than one semester, and creating a strategy for having students be required to attend advising sessions.

The last population of transfer students who were represented in this study were those adult learners who returned to college for degree seeking purposes. In advising adult learners Marques and Luna (2005) suggested that the type of support for these students should resemble a trusting peer relationship rather than a mentorship. The focus
of this advising relationship would be ongoing with a professional, full-time advisor instead of a series of brief encounters with faculty. The authors concluded that advisors cannot advise adult learners successfully by using the same techniques used with traditional students. These adult learners were seeking a peer-based relationship of encouragement and care, good advice and decent representation in handling academic issues (Marques & Luna, 2005). The findings from Marques and Luna is also present in this research. Of the 25 participants, seven were over the age of 30 and discussed that they were, or are currently, in the workforce and returning to school. A few of these participants also noted a social disconnect due to the age gap between themselves and other students.

Trust. Trust was the binding factor in this research, connecting all parts of the theory of planned behavior, as well as self-efficacy and transitioning to a new environment. As mentioned in the findings from each research question, levels of trust students had with advisors greatly impacted their attitudes and behaviors. When students felt that their advisors were not giving proper advice, or that they were unapproachable, they were much less inclined to make appointments to see them. This had an overflow affect on advising behaviors at their new university. These students openly admitted that they were not inclined to seek advice from a new advisor because of their prior experiences. Likewise, these students with trust issues held very negative opinions on being required to see multiple advisors. On the other hand, those students who had positive experiences with former advisors, or found that they received sound advice, were
much more open to communicating with an advisor. These students even made it clear that they did not mind seeing multiple advisors as much as those with trust concerns.

The impact that trust had on behaviors in this research was highly notable. It became a driving force behind these participants' decisions and attitudes. The implications of this finding are paramount to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TpB). Attitudes were influenced both positively and negatively depending on how trustworthy the student felt their advisor was. These attitudes stayed with them through their transition to the new university. Likewise, if the student felt their social networks found advising to be valuable, they tended to also trust their friends and classmates' opinions. This had a direct impact on their own decision-making related to advising. If a classmate in the same major mentioned meeting their advisor and having a good experience, the participant expressed being more inclined to meet their advisor as well. Finally, in relating trust to perceived control, the participants noted that their behaviors were often contingent on their own confidence levels and how much they trusted not only the information an advisor gave, but also information they looked for on their own. External to TpB, trust was found in the transitioning experience that each transfer student went through. The student participants discussed looking for connections early on and finding someone knowledgeable that they could rely on. Thus, including trust in future studies using TpB may prove beneficial to researchers; even those who are not using TpB in education research. More discussion on trust and TpB is found in the section on future research.

**Limitations and Future Research**
This section identifies the limitations in this research as well as a variety of avenues in which to take and expand this type of student development research.

**Limitations.** Though efforts were made to keep limitations to a minimum, there were some to mention. The sample size is one limitation common to a study of this nature. The college from which participants were recruited included over 22 majors and a number of transfer students within that. However, only 32 individuals elected to participate in the study initially. From that, three individuals did not meet the age requirement, two individuals were graduate students who were not eligible, and three never responded after their initial contact with the researcher. From the 25 participants, there were eight majors within the college that were represented.

The sample of the study was limited to transfer students from the college of humanities and social sciences. However, the experiences of transfer students from other colleges within the university may have different perspectives and experiences. Expanding the parameters of the study to include other colleges, or to make it university-wide would allow for a multitude of perspectives and experiences to analyze.

As with any survey, the researcher must factor in social desirability and self-reporting bias. Students may have answered in ways that they thought were correct so as to make a good impression with the interviewer. Furthermore, the participants may have feared that the interviews and surveys were not private enough and may have modified their responses in case their interviews were somehow viewed by their academic advisors. The same can be said for the follow-up survey. Students may have answered
the follow-up questions in a way that they feel would give a better impression than the truth.

Another limitation of the study was the limited amount of time spent with each participant. This study took place from September 2014 to February 2015 and within that time, each participant was contacted twice. An area of future research could incorporate a longitudinal study that tracked transfer students' advising experiences beginning with their first advising session post-transfer, through to their graduation or when they exit the institution.

Further research. This study could also be replicated a few different ways. Researchers could focus on non-transfer students, or even pre-transfer students at a two-year institution. Furthermore, the Theory of Planned Behavior is often used in a quantitative context instead of qualitative. Thus, utilizing Ajzen's (1996) scale and creating a quantitative survey would provide some generalizable data. Another way to research transfer students' advising behaviors and attitudes may be through a different theory or lens. Perhaps using Transition Theory (Schlossberg, 1995) in relation to TpB would heed different results. Finally, researchers could replicate the study using a specific type of transfer student. This study incorporated a sample of each, but a more directed study could focus on veterans, returning adult learners, multiple transfer students or those transferring solely from a community college.

Age in relation to academic advising may be another area in which this research could expand. Those participants who were older than 30 discussed their transition in greater detail, and had more suggestions for changes to advising. A future study could
focus on these non-traditional aged college students and how their experiences differ from those individuals under the age of 30.

Similarly, a future study based on this research could identify the differences in experiences between those students who are identified as full-time or part-time students. In this study, those who identified as part-time made it very clear that they felt neglected, or that advisors were catering mostly to the full-time or residential student population. A study could expand beyond part-time transfer students, and include students who are not transfers but still identify as part-time, which is most commonly those undergraduates taking less than 12 credit hours.

Because trust was such a large finding in this study, other studies utilizing the Theory of Planned Behavior (TpB) could also test for trust as an influencing factor. This is not limited to using TpB in education research. It may also extend to health communication, which is the primary research in which TpB is applied. Trust in any dyadic relationship may have influence over behaviors and attitudes. Further TpB research may examine trust in patient and provider relationships, as well as relationships between such dyads as lawyer and client, psychologist and patient, manager and employee, or politicians and constituents, among others.

In summary, this study does present a few notable limitations, but also foundational strengths. Studying student decision-making and behavior is an area of research that is constantly changing with the vicissitudes in academic culture. This study illustrates the need for additional research on student behaviors and attitudes, as well as expanded research in the experience of transfer students, and finally, incorporating TpB
in academic studies unrelated to health communication.

**Recommendations**

The findings of this study were congruent with relevant existing literature (Allen, Smith, & Muehleck, 2013; Bloom & Martin, 2002). The Theory of Planned Behavior can help educators to better understand the factors that motivate college students to engage with advisors and to stay on course for degree completion. Beyond that, this research identified practices in advising that students favored and those that students disliked. Based on these findings, and the prevalent theme of the importance of trust in this dyadic relationship, some recommendations for academic advisors are as follows.

There are quite a few recommendations based on the findings of this study. The six recommendations that developed from this study were as follows: (1) practice appreciative and developmental advising with students, (2) training advisors in transfer processes, (3) be proactive in reaching out to transfer students and promoting consistent advising habits, (4) develop mentoring programs for all students, (5) adapt to part-time students by expanding hours, and (6) promote student self-efficacy through plan development and structure. More details on each recommendation is provided.

Due to the fact that trust was so prevalent in the findings, the first recommendation is to practice appreciative and developmental advising with students. While focusing in disseminating the appropriate information needed for degree completion, advisors should also use positive tones and emotional connections with their students (Bloom & Martin, 2002). This reaffirms Allen, Smith, and Muehleck's (2013)
findings that students want their advisors to assist them in connecting their academics, career aspirations and life goals to one another.

Mottarella, Fritzsche, and Cerabino (2004) reiterate this finding with their study on what students want from advising. Many interpersonal and relationship factors are woven into and subsumed under the developmental approach of advising, and these may be the factors that lead to student satisfaction. Relationship variables of support, warmth, and respect are associated with the developmental approach and may be mutually exclusive of the prescriptive approach. The transfer students in this research expressed a deeper desire to not only keep their same advisor the whole way through their academic career, but also that they want their advisors to know them as individuals instead of just degree evaluations. They were seeking out more meaningful, interpersonal connections with advisors, while receiving sound advice on their degree progress. The advisor, then should focus on a more holistic approach to advising rather than focusing solely on academics. Incorporating rapport-building conversation and uncertainty reducing strategies are an important part of helping students reach degree completion. If students have good working relationships with their advisor and have established trust, the student may be much more likely to seek out their advisor for academic information moving forward.

Second, the researcher recommends training academic advisors in the transfer process. Often, advisors are trained in degree progress and specifics to their college or department. However, advisors should also be aware of how transcripts are evaluated and where to access transfer course information for each student. During one of the first
advising sessions, advisors could request that the student bring an unofficial transcript from their initial institution, or even a transfer equivalency form. Then the advisor and student could review what transferred to the college and what did not. At this point the advisor could work with the student to evaluate the credits for the possibility of transfer, and direct them to any campus resources that would help them navigate the credit transfer process.

Training for transfers should also include a variety of areas that the advisor should be familiar with, or have easy access to information pertaining to advising transfers. While it would be impossible to know the requirements and transfer credit acceptances from each national and international institution, the advisors can work at an individual level with a student early-on to identify what the next steps are for the student in the transfer process. When a new transfer student declares a major or program of study, they should work closely with their new advisor in discussing the steps taken during the transfer process, and reviewing the credits that came over from their previous institution. This would also be a beneficial time to start developing a healthy rapport with the student and even ask them about their experiences with advisors at their old school. This may give the current advisor a context for how the student makes decisions and what their attitude is towards the importance of advising currently.

Next, advisors should be proactive in reaching out to transfer students and promote consistent advising habits. Aside from a few students who would receive mass emails reminding them of registration dates and promoting advising as a whole, many saw a lack of interactions with advisors outside of meetings. Taking time to promote
advising habits on campus may serve to benefit a larger number of students than just reaching out via mass emails. Showcasing advising events or workshops may prove beneficial on the campus. Also, reiterating in advising meetings of how often the advisor wants to see the student and perhaps even setting a future appointment date could prove beneficial to students who may not seek out consistent advising on their own. In large departments it would be difficult and time-consuming to reach out to each student individually and as such it is vitally important to use virtual means to connect with the student body. Email reminders to students about upcoming priority registration dates, how to schedule advising appointments and even some information on their departmental advisors.

Along the same lines, is the development of mentoring programs for the student body, and especially for transfer students who are adjusting to a new college environment. Those who mentioned incorporating the programs suggested that they be either faculty or staff driven, with a smaller number suggesting the use of peer mentors. These programs serve to work outside of general advising wherein new transfer students would meet with a mentor on a semi-regular basis in order to learn about the campus environment, resources, events and organizations, as well as create an early social connection. In this sense, a peer mentor would be the most appropriate. This mentor would complement the work that the academic advisor does by addressing more well-being based issues and social aspects of the campus.

The fifth recommendation is that advisors should attempt to adapt to part-time students, or those who work full-time and therefore have less on-campus time. One way
to address this is by extending advising hours past the standard 9:00a.m. to 5:00p.m.

Working professionals often work until 5:00p.m. and therefore have little to no access to their advisors in-person. Expanding hours to the evening or earlier in the morning will offer access that these students may not normally have available to them. Furthermore, offering a secure system of telephonic or virtual contact with advisees is an option.

Emailing advisees with information pertaining to their progress may serve as a convenient way for part-time students to connect while they are not on campus. Saving these virtual interactions on a secure server may also offer a form of streamlined filing for student folders. Furthermore, this offers the advisor a running list of interactions with the student that can be referred to over a period of time as the student progresses towards degree completion. Another virtual method of contact may be via chat programs. Many schools offer virtual teaching tools that advisors could also incorporate. Blackboard Learning System© offers chat rooms and Blackboard Collaborate© which allows for text-based communication as well as video conferencing. While this form of contact may be utilized less frequently, the research suggests that having the other options available shows the students that they are being considered.

The final recommendation is to promote student self-efficacy through plan development and structure. Research has shown the benefits of structure for veteran students (McReynolds, 2014; Wilson & Smith, 2012), but this practice may prove highly beneficial for a wide variety of student types. During advising sessions, students and advisors can review degree requirements and build a plan for the upcoming semesters. Furthermore, the individuals should plan times of year that the student should come in for
advising and even be as specific as planning meetings around one main topic such as internship searches, graduation intent or even well-being checks. Creating some level of structure and future planning with the student may foster an attitude of preparation and planning that extends beyond the scheduled meetings with advisors.

Conclusion

The researcher intended to (a) identify factors that contributed to college students' decisions to attend or not attend academic advising, (b) to reveal instances of self-efficacy among college students in regards to degree progress, and (c) to determine what the transfer students' attitudes were towards advising and advisors. The research questions created for this study were adapted from the Theory of Planned Behavior questionnaire template and Self-Efficacy research scales.

It was found that major themes included: behaviors, self-efficacy, attitudes and confidence. Subthemes were as follows: For behavior, the subthemes were decision-making and managing unplanned events and stressors. Under self-efficacy the subthemes included being prepared and adjusting to the transition. Subthemes for attitudes included motivation, requiring advising for new students, catering more to part-time students, and developing mentorship programs. Finally, the subthemes of confidence included advising and individual student progress. An underlying commonality in the findings is the notion of trust and developing a trusting relationship between student and advisor.

Findings suggest that these particular transfer students are actively thinking about their academic progress. Likewise, they are focused on making decisions that would advance them towards degree completion. As a whole they show high levels of self-
efficacy when interacting with an advisor that they respect and with whom they have
developed a good rapport. These student participants saw the benefits of being prepared
and being able to manage steady levels of stress. The students interviewed that did not
have good experiences with advising at their previous institution were much more likely
to distrust their new advisors, or seek out information elsewhere. Finally, these students
express the desire for a few changes to the advising structure including: catering more to
part-time students who have full-time careers, creating mentoring programs for transfer
students, and requiring advising for freshman students or new transfers until they are
comfortable and more confident in their progress. Academic advisors may be able to use
this information in order to create positive changes in their advising structure and models.
Furthermore, the research offers recommendations for department-level and institution-
level changes that puts academic advising in the forefront of the students' minds and
offers more accessibility to an ever-growing population of transfer students at higher
education institutions. These proposed changes hope to create more inviting and
appreciative interpersonal communication patterns between advisors and students, and
may promote healthy academic behaviors that assist students in successful degree
completion.
APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

(insert name of interviee):

I am a PhD student in the Higher Education program working on my dissertation.
The study focuses on transfer students' views, behaviors and experiences regarding academic advising.
If you could circulate the note below to all of your current undergraduates, it would be most helpful.

Respectfully,
Megan Tucker

Dear Student,

I am writing to ask for your participation in a doctoral dissertation research study that I am conducting this year. Your assistance would be most appreciated!

This study looks at undergraduate transfer students' decisions and experiences involving academic advising at the university and their former institutions.

If you are a transfer student and choose to participate you will be asked to meet with me for a one-on-one interview which should last around 40 minutes. A follow-up questionnaire will be sent to you virtually after the interviews are complete.

After the interview you will be able to enter your name for a chance to win one of two Amazon Kindles. An administrator in the Department of Communication will select the two winners at random after all interviews have been completed.

Please contact me at mtucker6@gmu.edu in order to schedule the interview and thank you again for your interest.

Sincerely,
Megan Tucker
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT: ACADEMIC ADVISING BEHAVIORS OF TRANSFER STUDENTS

Informed Consent

RESEARCH PROCEDURES
This research is being conducted to analyze the issues surrounding college students and the barriers they have faced in reaching degree completion. If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed about your experiences as a transfer student, educational background, information, concerns or communication barriers, and the role of advising in degree completion. Interviews should take around 90 minutes. A follow-up questionnaire will be sent to you via email following the interview.

RISKS
No foreseeable risks.

BENEFITS
There are no direct benefits to you as a participant in this research other than to further research on student development and success.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The data in this study will be confidential. Names will not be reported with surveys. Names will not be included on the interview. Through the use of an identification key, the researcher will be able to link the interview to participants’ gender and age, but not their identity. Only the researcher will have access to the identification key. Audio tapes will occur after you give consent and begin answering questions. Taping will end with the last answer, prior to debriefing. Audio tapes and transcripts will be kept secure in a password-protected file folder on the researcher’s computer. The audio files on the recording device will be deleted as soon as the files are transferred to the encrypted folder on the computer which is not a shared PC. The data will be kept for the allotted 5 years and since the files are virtual, they will be deleted when there is no longer a need for the data. The code given during the interview today will be the only identifier. Only the research and co-researcher will have access.

PARTICIPATION
Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no coeds to you or any other party. To be eligible to participate you must be 18 years old or older, a transfer student, and enrolled in an undergraduate program in the College of Humanities and Social Science at George Mason University. A random drawing for two Amazon Kindle FireHD will occur in early Spring 2015. To be eligible, each participant must have completed both the interview and the follow-up questionnaire.

CONTACT
This research is being conducted by Dr. Todd Rose in the Department of Higher Education, and Megan Tucker in the Department of Higher Education at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va. Dr. Tucker and Dr. Rose may be reached at (703) 993-3012 for questions or to report a research-related problem.
You may contact the George Mason University Office of Research Integrity & Assurance at (703) 993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

_________________________  __________________________
Signature                          Date

Office of Research
Integrity & Assurance

Project Number: 668453-1

IRB: For Official Use Only

Page 1 of 1
APPENDIX C

TRANSFER STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: Academic advising behaviors of Transfer Students

As researchers and members of the George Mason University Department of Communication and Department of Higher Education, we ask for about 20 minutes of your time to discuss challenges you face as an undergraduate transfer student regarding academic advising.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in an interview discussing your experiences. **Read Consent Form**

Thank you for choosing to participate.

How old are you?

What year are you in school (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior etc)?

When did you first enroll in college?

What school did you transfer from? How long were you at your initial school?

What major or area of study are you working in?

Have you changed majors/minors during your time in school? What were they and what are they now?

[Direct Measures of Perceived Behavioral Control, Subjective Norm, Attitude, and Intention]

Do you visit an academic advisor?

   How often? When was your last meeting?

Please describe a typical meeting with your academic advisor.

How often do you intend to meet with your academic advisor?
Is academic advising required in your program? Do you feel it should or shouldn’t be?

After meeting with an advisor how confident do you feel about your degree progress?

When you transferred here did you sense that it was important to seek advising?

Do you intend to attend advising meetings in the future?

Does your advisor contact you outside of scheduled advising sessions?

How do you choose classes for each term?

[Motivation to Comply]

Generally speaking, what does your advisor think you should do when it comes to advising?

Generally speaking, how supportive do you feel your advisor is in helping you make academic decisions?

Generally speaking, how supportive do you feel your advisor is in helping you with decisions related to your well-being?

[Behavioral Beliefs]

Do you feel that attending advising meetings on a regular basis will help you to gain a better understanding of your degree requirements?

Do you feel that attending advising meetings will help you to graduate on time?

[Control Beliefs]

How often do you encounter unanticipated events that place demands on your time?

How often do family obligations place unanticipated demands on your time?

How often does work or employment place unanticipated demands on your time?

How often do you feel your advisor's advice has been helpful?

What reasons were behind your transfer to this university?
[Self-Efficacy Factors]

If you encountered family or work/employment problems that placed demands on your
time, how would it impact advising meetings?

How easy or difficult is it for you to stick to your academic aims and accomplish your
goals?

When you are confronted with a problem academically, what do you do?

List any factors or circumstances that would make it easy or enable you to attend
advising more frequently.

[Normative Beliefs]

How often do you think your academic advisor feels that you should attend the meetings
on a regular basis?

Do your social networks think that you should attend advising meetings on a regular
basis?

What advice would you give to upcoming transfer students in their first semester at a new
school?

Would you like to add anything to this discussion?

Would it be alright for me to email you with follow up questions?
APPENDIX D

FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

In the time following our interview, have you visited an academic advisor?

If so, would you describe the meeting?

If not, do you plan on meeting an advisor this semester?

Why or why not?

Do you intend to attend advising meetings in the future?

How confident do you feel about your degree progress to this point?
APPENDIX E

THEORETICAL MODEL

Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Behavior

ATTITUDES
(Behavioural beliefs x Outcome evaluations)

SUBJECTIVE NORMS
(Normative beliefs x Motivation to comply)

PERCEIVED BEHAVIOURAL CONTROL
(Control beliefs x influence of control beliefs)

BEHAVIOURAL INTENTIONS

BEHAVIOUR
APPENDIX F

SELF-EFFICACY SCALES:
http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~health/engscal.htm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I can usually handle whatever comes my way.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 = Not at all true   2 = Hardly true   3 = Moderately true   4 = Exactly true

The self-efficacy scales were used in developing interview questions. The scales were adapted from the Likert format to open-ended questions.
THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR GENERAL QUESTIONNAIRE FORMAT

APPENDIX G

Formative Research

Defining the Behavior
Before any work can begin, the behavior of interest must be clearly defined in terms of its target, action, context, and time elements.

*Example: Physical Activity*
We could define exercise behavior as follows (see Terry & O’Leary, 1995): “Exercising for at least 20 min, three times per week for the next three months.”

Specifying the Research Population
The population of interest to the investigators also must be clearly defined.

*Example: Post-operative patients*
In this example, only individuals who have just undergone major heart surgery would be included in the research population.

Formulating Items for Direct Measures
Five to six items are formulated to assess each of the theory’s major constructs: Attitude, perceived norm, perceived behavioral control, and intention. Seven-point bipolar adjective scales are typically employed. Sample items assessing intention and each aspect of attitude, perceived norm and perceived control are shown below; additional items and instructions to the participants are shown in the sample questionnaire (Part II). Participants are asked to circle the number that best describes their personal opinions. Note that the items are formulated to be exactly compatible with the behavioral criterion and to be self-directed.

*Attitude: Instrumental and experiential aspects*

*Perceived norm: Injunctive and descriptive aspects*
Most people who are important to me approve of my exercising for at least 20 minutes, three times per week for the next three months.

agree : ___1__ : __2__ : __3__ : __4__ : __5__ : __6__ : __7__ : disagree
Most people like me exercised for at least 20 minutes, three times per week in the three months following their major heart surgery

unlikely : ___1__ : ___2__ : ___3__ : ___4__ : ___5__ : ___6__ : ___7__ : likely

*Perceived behavioral control: Capacity and autonomy aspects*
I am confident that I can exercise for at least 20 minutes, three times per week for the next three months. true : ___1___ : ___2___ : ___3___ : ___4___ : ___5___ : ___6___ : ___7___ : false

My exercising for at least 20 minutes, three times per week for the next three months is up to me disagree: ___1___ : ___2___ : ___3___ : ___4___ : ___5___ : ___6___ : ___7___ : agree

Intention
I intend to exercise for at least 20 minutes, three times per week for the next three months. likely : ___1___ : ___2___ : ___3___ : ___4___ : ___5___ : ___6___ : ___7___ : unlikely

Past behavior
In the past three months, I have exercised for at least 20 minutes, three times per week. false : ___1___ : ___2___ : ___3___ : ___4___ : ___5___ : ___6___ : ___7___ : true
(Note that, in the current example, past behavior may not be a good predictor of future behavior because the past behavior would have occurred prior to the heart surgery.)

Administering a Pilot Questionnaire
Eliciting Salient Beliefs
A small sample of individuals representative of the research population (post-operative patients) is used to elicit readily accessible behavioral outcomes, normative referents, and control factors. Although the participants can be assembled in groups, the elicitation is done individually in a free response format.

Instructions: Please take a few minutes to tell us what you think about the possibility of exercising for at least 20 min, three times per week for the next three months. There are no right or wrong responses; we are merely interested in your personal opinions. In response to the questions below, please list the thoughts that come immediately to mind. Write each thought on a separate line. (Five or six lines are provided for each question.)

Behavioral outcomes
(1) What do you see as the advantages of your exercising for at least 20 minutes, three times per week for the next three months?
(2) What do you see as the disadvantages of your exercising for at least 20 minutes, three times per week for the next three months?
(3) What else comes to mind when you think about exercising for at least 20 minutes, three times per week for the next three months?

Normative referents
When it comes to your exercising for at least 20 minutes, three times per week for the next three months, there might be individuals or groups who would think you should or should not perform this behavior.
(1) Please list the individuals or groups who would approve or think you should exercise for at least 20 minutes, three times per week for the next three months.
(2) Please list the individuals or groups who would disapprove or think you should not exercise for at least 20 minutes, three times per week for the next three months.
(3) Sometimes, when we are not sure what to do, we look to see what others are doing. Please list the individuals or groups who, after major heart surgery, are most likely to exercise for at least 20 min, three times per week for the three months following surgery.

(4) Please list the individuals or groups who, after major heart surgery, are least likely to exercise for at least 20 min, three times per week for the three months following surgery.

Control factors
(1) Please list any factors or circumstances that would make it easy or enable you to exercise for at least 20 min, three times per week for the next three months.
(2) Please list any factors or circumstances that would make it difficult or prevent you from exercising for at least 20 min, three times per week for the next three months.

Preparing a Standard Questionnaire

(1) Behavioral Beliefs and Outcome Evaluations
With respect to each salient behavioral outcome, items are formulated to assess the strength of the behavioral beliefs and the evaluation of the outcome.

Sample Outcome: Faster recovery from my surgery

Behavioral belief strength
My exercising for at least 20 min, three times per week for the next three months will result in my having a faster recovery from my surgery.
likely: ___1:___2:___3:___4:___5:___6:___7: unlikely

Outcome evaluation
My having a faster recovery from my surgery is
good: ___1:___2:___3:___4:___5:___6:___7: bad

(2a) Injunctive Normative Beliefs and Motivation to Comply
With respect to each salient normative referent, items are formulated to assess the strength of the injunctive normative belief and the motivation to comply with the referent individual or group.

Sample injunctive normative referent: My doctor

Injunctive normative belief strength
My doctor thinks that I should: ___1:___2:___3:___4:___5:___6:___7: I should not exercise for at least 20 min, three times per week for the next three months.

Motivation to comply
When it comes to matters of health, I want to do what my doctor thinks I should do.
agree: ___1:___2:___3:___4:___5:___6:___7: disagree

(2b) Descriptive Normative Beliefs and Identification with the Referent
With respect to each relevant salient referent, items are formulated to assess the strength of the descriptive normative belief and the identification with the referent individual or group.

Sample descriptive normative referent: My friends - Descriptive normative belief strength
Most of my friends who have undergone major heart surgery have exercised for at least 20 min, three times per week for the three months following surgery.
false :___1__ :___2__ :___3__ :___4__ :___5__ :___6__ :___7__ : true

Identification with the referent  
When it comes to matters of health, how much do you want to be like your friends?  
very much :___1__ :___2__ :___3__ :___4__ :___5__ :___6__ :___7__ : not at all  
(3) Control Beliefs and Power of Control Factors  
With respect to each salient control factor, items are formulated to assess the likelihood that the factor will be present and the factor’s power to facilitate or impede performance of the behavior.

Sample control factor: Physical strength - Control belief strength  
I expect that I will have physical strength in the next three months.  
likely :___1__ :___2__ :___3__ :___4__ :___5__ :___6__ :___7__ : unlikely TPB  

Power of control factor  
Having physical strength would enable me to exercise for at least 20 min, three times per week for the next three months.  
disagree___1__ :___2__ :___3__ :___4__ :___5__ :___6__ :___7__ : agree  

(4) Direct Measures  
Another element of the final questionnaire are the direct measures developed on the basis of the pilot data to assess attitudes, perceived norm, perceived behavioral control, and intentions. In addition, the questionnaire will usually also include a measure of past behavior, as described earlier.

(5) Other Measures  
The final questionnaire also includes measures of all demographic characteristics, personality variables, and other background factors the investigator decided to retain.

(5) Behavior  
Three months following administration of the questionnaire (or another period as defined by the behavioral criterion), the participants are recontacted and asked to report whether they had exercised for at least 20 min, three times per week for the past three months.

The TpB questionnaire scales were used in developing interview questions. The scales were adapted from the Likert format to open-ended questions.
### APPENDIX H

**SUMMARY DATA FOR PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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## APPENDIX I

### THEMES AND SUBTHEMES

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## Qualitative Codebook

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**Confidence**  
Individual Student Progress  
"I don't know how I'm doing"  
Stressed  
Confused  
Graduating on time  
Interactions with an Advisor  
"I feel confident in..."  
"I'll go to my advisor"  
Trust
APPENDIX K

FINDINGS RELATED TO TpB

TRUST

ATTITUDES
Neglecting part-time needs
Feeling lost in transitioning
Confidence in degree progress
and advisor

SUBJECTIVE NORMS
Social network behavior and attitudes
Requiring advising
Advisor is helpful or unhelpful

PERCEIVED BEHAVIORAL CONTROL
Self-Efficacy
Preparation
Motivation

BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS
Sense of importance to go to advising
Students to attend advising when possible
Look up degree information on their own

BEHAVIORS
Visit advisor they trust or have a good rapport with
Look for alternatives when they’ve had negative experiences
Try to plan ahead in advising — coming to meetings prepared
Review degree evaluations without attending advising
APPENDIX L

IRB APPROVAL DOCUMENTS

DATE: October 27, 2014
TO: Todd Rose, PhD
FROM: George Mason University IRB
Project Title: [668453-1] Academic Advising Behaviors of Transfer Students
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project
ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: October 27, 2014
REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category #2

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Office of Research Integrity & Assurance (ORIA) has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

Please remember that all research must be conducted as described in the submitted materials.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be submitted to the ORIA prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

If you have any questions, please contact Karen Motsinger at 703-993-4208 or kmotsing@gmu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within George Mason University IRB's records.
REFERENCES


Habley, W. R. (1994). Key concepts in academic advising. In Summer institute on academic advising session guide (p.10). Available from NACADA, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS.


Huber, J. & Miller, M. A. (2013). Implications for advisor job responsibilities at 2-and 4-year institutions. Retrieved from NACADA Clearinghouse Resource Web Site:


Wilson, K., & Smith, N. (2012). Understanding the importance of life mission when advising soldiers. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 136, 65—75. DOI:10.1002/ace


BIOGRAPHY

Megan Hanna Latwinas Tucker graduated from Nandua High School in Onley, Virginia in 2003. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Communication and English (Journalism) from Christopher Newport University in 2007. She received her Master of Arts in Communication from George Mason University in 2009.