March 2023

Academic Advisors' Perceptions of Implicit Bias in Interactions with Students: An Exploratory Case Study

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Academic Advisors’ Perceptions of Implicit Bias in Interactions with Students:

An Exploratory Case Study

by

Bobby A. Brown

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
with a concentration in Higher Education Administration
Department of Leadership, Policy, and Lifelong Learning
College of Education
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Date of Approval:
February 22, 2023

Keywords: College Advising, Stereotypes, Attitudes, Assumptions

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the Brown family: my mother, father, sisters, and brother. I understand how much getting an education is valued in Jamaica, and I just want to make you all proud by completing this task.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

One aspect I have learned through the dissertation process is how much I relied on the support of family and friends. Now that I have completed this process, I truly realize that I did not accomplish this feat by myself. At this time, I would like to thank my major professor, Dr. Thomas Miller. I appreciate his guidance and patience with me throughout this entire process. At this point, I am sure that you were tired of answering the same questions over and over from students; however, never once did you make me feel like I couldn’t ask you a question. I sincerely thank you for that. I am the utmost fortunate for the support of my doctoral committee, Dr. Judith Ponticell, Dr. Jennifer Schneider, and Dr. Amber Dumford, for their continued feedback and assistance with my dissertation. It is because of you all that I made it through this process.

Dr. Ponticell, if I did not meet with you on that day when you advised me to simply change a few words around for my dissertation proposal topic, I would probably still be thinking about what topic to explore. The assistance and feedback you have provided for me during my entire time in the program and through the proposal defense is invaluable. Thank you for guiding me to this research.

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Nicholas Bardo. I appreciate the time spent reviewing transcripts, analyzing data, checking data codes, and providing feedback on the case study. Thank you for assisting me with this research.
I would also like to thank my mother, Marie Brown, for constantly checking on me and asking how I was doing during this process. At one point you were reaching out each day to check on my progress. Little did you know, you motivated me to remain focused during the final pieces of this process. Thank you, Mom! Thank you to my brother for deciding to pursue his graduate degree in business management. He also helped motivate me to continue moving forward despite obstacles in the way. I appreciate him more than he knows.

Finally, I want to thank God for showing me that I can do all things that I believe I am able to accomplish. You have been with me since I started this program and continued to be with me as I completed it.
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ABSTRACT

Academic advisors are crucial to the success of students who attend higher education institutions (e.g., Himes, 2014; Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015; Smith, 2005). They guide students to complete their degrees in a timely progression and serve as a contact for students to help increase a sense of belonging on college campuses. Higher education literature presented evidence that suggested academic advisors demonstrate implicit bias while interacting with students they advise (e.g., Bahr, 2008; Grau & Zotos, 2016). Implicit bias may expose academic advisors to errors in judgment and decision making while assisting students. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore academic advisors’ perceptions of implicit bias in interactions with students. Semi-structured interviews illuminated the lived experiences of academic advisors’ prior knowledge about implicit bias and their feelings about it manifesting during their interactions with advising students. Three major themes emerged from the data analysis: 1) participants had prior knowledge and are familiar with the topic of implicit bias; 2) participants believed biased interactions can influence student success; 3) participants’ responses to interview questions displayed implicit attitudes and implicit stereotypes while assisting students. These findings offer insight into meaningful professional development opportunities for academic advisors who are employed at higher education institutions, as well as future research into institutional factors that may contribute to implicit bias in academic advising.
CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

It is well established in higher education literature that college campuses experience many highly publicized, bias-related issues. Ranging from anonymous racial symbols, such as a noose hanging in a tree, to obnoxious verbal comments, and various acts of harassment directed at specific groups of individuals, these incidents are often reported on college campuses (Campus Racial Incidents, 2021). The number of these incidents demonstrates that bias and racism-related incidents remain an issue for students and can influence their experiences on college campuses.

Academic advisors play a salient role in students’ experiences on college campuses. They provide educational planning, institutional guidance, and act as a significant source of information for students. They assist students in getting acclimated to new college environments, collaborate with faculty and other departments to ensure students’ progress toward their degrees in a timely manner, and help students take charge of their learning so they can solidify future career interests (Young-Jones, Burt, Dixon, & Hawthorne, 2013). Himes (2014) suggested that quality academic advisors can promote students’ engagement with their institution by continuously serving as a point of contact for them. This contact enhances students’ connection to campus and encourages a sense of belonging that is linked to higher student persistence rates (Strayhorn, 2012).
There is evidence that suggests academic advisors can demonstrate implicit bias toward students during academic advising appointments. Some research studies suggested that academic advisors’ expectations of their students can influence educational attainment (Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2015), while others suggested that guidance counselors’ recommendations to students differ based on students’ characteristics (Linnehan, Weer, & Stonely, 2011). These characteristics included race, gender, socioeconomic status, and academic performance. Additionally, research studies suggested that college students make educational decisions based on information received from a myriad of resources, including friends, family, and administrative staff members such as academic advisors. The information students receive from academic advisors during appointments may vary depending on the academic advisor’s prior experiences and/or biases (Kozlowski, 2014). Bias may predispose academic advisors to errors in decision making and judgment. It is important that academic advisors recognize their own biases so that they do not negatively influence the quality of service provided to their students.

Implicit bias, often referred to as unconscious bias, is defined as a bias based on implicit attitudes or implicit stereotypes outside of conscious thought (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006). While there are research studies on unconscious bias in other areas outside of academia, for example legal decision making (Harley, 2007), little is known about how implicit bias manifests in academic advisement. This study attempted to address this gap and explored implicit bias with full-time academic advisors at a large, public, research university.

Statement of the Problem

Collegiate academic advisors play a critical role in the academic success of students (Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015). Students’ overall experiences in a college or university setting can be influenced by their interactions with academic advisors (Himes, 2014; Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015;
Smith, 2005). Smith (2005) noted that establishing a personal relationship between advisor and advisee lays the foundation for student success. A large majority of students seek advising within a university to ensure they are on track to meet all graduation requirements and successfully graduate in a timely manner (Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015). Students also meet with advisors to gain information about their overall academic progress (Smith, 2005).

Higher education literature suggested implicit bias occurs in academic advising settings (Bahr, 2008). Bodenhausen, Macrae, and Sherman (2016) suggested biases are automatically activated in the presence of a triggering stimulus. Triggering stimuli can include, but are not limited to race, gender, hair color, grade point average, and academic history (Bahr, 2008; Grau & Zotos, 2016). Depending on students’ characteristics, academic advisors’ bias may automatically activate unconsciously during their interactions with students. Implicit biases can be detrimental for both advisor and advisee. Swecker, Fifolt, and Searby (2013) asserted that high quality academic advising has consistently been reported as an influence on student retention. Implicit bias in academic advisors’ interactions with students could negatively alter students’ career paths, which can impact student retention (Bahr, 2008).

**Significance of the Study**

Student retention is a top priority in higher education. Teasley and Buchanan (2013) asserted that student retention is linked to how connected students feel to their campuses. A significant part of this connection may be based on the rapport students have with their academic advisors (Smith, 2005). Academic advisors have a considerable influence on student decision-making. Smith (2005) suggested that this influence might be attributed to the value students place on academic advisors and the advice they provide. This influence could be the deciding factor in students making life-altering decisions pertaining to their academic careers.
This study explored academic advisors’ perceptions of implicit bias in advisors’ interactions with students. This research contributes to our knowledge of implicit bias in academic advising. This study brings the issue of implicit bias to the attention of academic advising supervisors. This study also brings attention to the importance of implicit bias self-awareness in academic advisors and to the importance of professional development for beginning academic advisors working with a diverse student population.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore academic advisors’ perceptions of implicit bias in advisors’ interactions with students.

**Definitions of Terms**

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions apply:

**Bias.** A prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

**Exploratory case study.** A research study that explores situations, events, and experiences of individuals, or groups, bounded by time and place, to gain an in-depth understanding of situations and meaning for those involved (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017).

**Explicit bias.** Bias based on explicit attitudes or explicit stereotypes inside conscious thought (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006).

**Implicit attitude.** An unconscious action that indicates favor or disfavor toward some object (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006).

**Implicit bias.** Often referred to as “unconscious bias,” implicit bias is a bias based on implicit attitudes or implicit stereotypes outside conscious thought (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006).
Implicit stereotype. An unconscious mental association between a social group or category and a trait (Greenwald & Kreiger, 2006).

Microaggressions. Subtle slights and insults that targets of bias face, most of which occur without the perpetrator’s awareness (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Buccheri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007).

Prejudice. An identity-salient strategic action; the purposeful expression or suppression of behaviors relevant to those norms conventionally associated with a salient social identity (Durrheim, Quayle, & Dixon, 2016).

Stereotype. Mental association between a social group or category and a trait (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006).

Assumptions

It was assumed that all participants would be forthcoming, truthful, and accurate in their responses. It was also assumed that participants were at a sufficient cognitive level to review and reflect on student scenarios and effectively articulate their perceptions.

Theoretical Framework

The construct of implicit bias framed this study. There are two main components of this construct: implicit attitudes and implicit stereotypes. Social psychologists defined attitude as an “evaluative disposition, that is, the tendency to like or dislike, or to act favorably or unfavorably toward, someone or something” (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006, p. 948).

Greenwald and Krieger (2006) asserted that explicit expressions of attitudes occur “frequently” whenever individuals “say that they like or dislike someone or something” (p. 948). For example, the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) has a variety of advising styles that academic advisors use during their advising appointments. Advising styles are
conceptual frameworks used to guide academic advisors’ interaction with students. There are several advising styles available for academic advisor use. Some academic advisors use more common advising styles such as developmental or appreciative advising, while others use uncommon styles such as student-centered or Socratic method. Academic advisors typically gravitate toward an advising style with which they are most comfortable.

Considering Greenwald and Krieger’s assertion in relation to academic advisors, an academic advisor stating a preference for using a particular advising style is an explicit expression of an attitude toward the advising style identified. Greenwald and Krieger would argue that conscious thought was involved in the selection of the advising style as the selection resulted from the advisor’s beliefs about or attitudes toward the advising style selected.

On the other hand, an implicit expression of an attitude is “an action that indicates favor or disfavor toward some object but is not understood by the actor as expressing that attitude” (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006, p. 948). Following this line of thought, an academic advisor might not favor a particular advising style, and the advisor may not even know much about it. The advisor may have an impression of the unfavorable style influenced by an association with someone or something the advisor dislikes. In this case Greenwald and Krieger would argue that the advisor may not even be conscious of the belief or attitude underlying the selection.

Social science research studies have also suggested that unconscious mental processes can have a significant effect on social interaction and decision making (Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Frith & Frith, 2008; Grau & Zotos, 2016; Greenwald & Krieger, 2006; Kozlowski, 2014; Walls & Hall, 2018). Stereotype, for example, is defined as a “mental association between a social group category and a trait” (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006, p. 949) and “can involve associations of either favorable or unfavorable traits with a group” (p. 950). One might associate
height with one social group, intellect with another, or aggression with another. Stereotyping can influence an affective reaction by people in one group toward people from other groups (Rosenthal & Overstreet, 2016).

Bias, like stereotype, can take many forms and can be either favorable or unfavorable (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006, p. 951). However, bias “bears a pejorative connotation” (p. 950). A simple dictionary definition reflects this:

Bias is “a prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair” (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

Greenwald and Krieger (2006) further asserted that attitudes and stereotypes are “plausible causes” of discriminatory biases (p. 950). They also found that “implicit attitudinal biases are especially important in influencing nondeliberate or spontaneous discriminatory behaviors” (p. 966). Consider this line of thought in relation to academic advising, for example. One might argue that a full-time academic advisor who has an engineering background understands what is necessary for a student to be successful in the engineering field. When that academic advisor meets with a student who he/she feels might not be a good fit for the engineering field, the academic advisor might unconsciously re-direct that student to an alternative career choice. What attitudes, impressions, traits, stereotypes, and/or biases “caused” that action?

Greenwald and Krieger (2006) explained the importance of “the new science of unconscious mental processes”:

A belief is explicit if it is consciously endorsed. An intention to act is conscious if the actor is aware of taking an action for a particular reason…In contrast, the science of implicit cognition suggests that actors do not always have conscious, intentional control
over the processes of social perception, impression formation, and judgment that motivate their actions. (p. 946)

This framework provides the impetus for the purpose of this research to explore academic advisors’ perceptions of implicit bias in advisors’ interactions with students.

**Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are academic advisors’ perceptions and understanding of implicit bias?
2. How do academic advisors’ perceive of and feel about implicit bias manifesting in interactions with students?

**Overview of Research Design**

Qualitative researchers have used case study designs to provide thorough investigations of specific situations, events, phenomenon, or individuals (Creswell, 2013; 2018). Case study research describes the context or setting in which a case is situated, as well as the time during which data were collected, and provides detailed descriptions of participants’ lived experiences (Creswell, 2013; 2018). An exploratory case study seeks better understanding of participants by listening to their stories and seeking to uncover their *lived* experiences. This research was a qualitative study, using an exploratory case study design.

This study was situated in a social constructivist paradigm. Vygotsky (1978) and Churcher, Downs, and Tewksbury (2014) argued that knowledge is constructed through dialogue and interaction with others. Churcher et al. (2014) further argued that during the process of social interaction, knowledge is co-constructed in an environment, and individuals use language as a tool to create meaning from knowledge. In this study the researcher acknowledged that use of language would differ among academic advisors, and, ultimately, meaning would vary. As a
result, it was accepted that there could not be a single, sole, objective explanation for an individual’s experience. The social constructivist paradigm provided an appropriate foundation for this exploratory case study research.

The primary method of data collection in this study was in-depth conversational interviews. The researcher sent out a solicitation for participation, following the protocols of the site university. Five individuals responded. In the first interview, participants were guided through open-ended questions to explore their perceptions and understanding of implicit bias with the researcher. For the second interview, participants were provided with a vignette and guided through open-ended questions to analyze the vignette and reflect on their experiences as academic advisors with the researcher. Interview transcripts were analyzed using basic content analysis to identify codes, themes, and relational categories in the data.

Chapter Summary

Chapter One included an introduction to the research study, purpose statement, research questions, theoretical framework, significance of the study, research design, assumptions, and definition of terms. Chapter Two provides a comprehensive review of existing literature relevant to the study.
Implicit or unconscious biases can have an influence on human social interaction (Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Greenwald & Krieger, 2006; Nadler & Nadler, 1993). Despite efforts to reduce implicit bias, research studies suggested unconscious mental processes still affect educators’ social interaction and decision making (Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2015). Research studies have been conducted in areas such as faculty in higher education (Moss-Racusin, Dovidio, Brescoll, Graham, & Handelsman, 2012) and counselor education (Boysen, 2010). However, there is a gap in literature on how bias emerges in academic advising in administrative settings at large, public universities. The purpose of this study was to explore academic advisors’ perceptions of implicit bias in advisors’ interactions with students at a large, public, research university.

This review first provides an explanation of implicit social cognition along with the psychology of implicit bias. Next, different forms of implicit bias and how it emerges in other settings are discussed. Then, there is a discussion on academic advisors in higher education and their influence on students. The chapter concludes with a discussion on how implicit bias may emerge in academic advising.
Implicit Social Cognition Theory

A review of literature on implicit bias showed that researchers have studied implicit social cognition and its effect on human behavior for over a decade (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006; Payne & Gawronski, 2010).

Greenwald and Krieger (2006) introduced the concept of implicit bias, emerging in the “new science of unconscious mental processes” (p. 946). They noted that current views on social behavior perceived “human actors as being guided solely by their explicit beliefs and their conscious intentions to act” (p. 946). The new science asserted that conscious thoughts or attitudes would be considered explicit if they were consciously endorsed or if individuals were aware of the thoughts they were having. On the other hand, implicit thoughts or attitudes are not consciously endorsed, or individuals are not aware of thoughts they are having. Applying this perspective to academic advising, if academic advisors had intentions to act in a particular manner with students they advise, this would be considered indication of conscious thought, or explicit attitude. However, if academic advisors acted in a particular way but were not conscious of the reasons for their actions, this would be considered possible indication of an implicit attitude.

Payne and Gawronski (2010) later defined implicit social cognition as “automatic/implicit/unconscious processes underlying judgments and social behavior” (p. 1). To understand implicit social cognition, it is important to understand the difference between automatic and controlled cognition. Payne and Gawronski (2010) noted that “information processing could be divided into controlled and automatic nodes” (p. 2). Controlled thought processes demanded attention, were limited in capacity, and were voluntarily initiated.
Automatic thought processes needed little attention, were unlimited in capacity, and were difficult to suppress voluntarily (p. 2).

Payne and Gawronski (2010) also highlighted the work of Shiffrin and Schneider (1977) and Posner and Snyder (1975) which showed that learning was essential for automatic processing, as well-learned items would be identified and “retrieved from memory automatically” while items that were not well-learned would require more cognitive effort to retrieve (Payne & Gawronski, p. 2).

Again, applying these perspectives to academic advising, if an academic advisor only used a developmental advising style throughout his/her career, aspects of that style would likely be well-learned and embedded in the academic advisor’s memory. Using developmental advising with students would likely require very little cognitive attention; aspects of the style would be retrieved and enacted automatically. However, if that academic advisor switched advising styles and began using an unfamiliar style, significantly more attention may be required, as retrieving, and enacting the new style would need to be more controlled.

The work of Patricia Devine (1989) was also addressed by Payne and Gawronski (2010) as it considered these theories of automatic and controlled processing in relation to stereotypes. Payne and Gawronski asserted that Devine made an important distinction between “the knowledge of a social stereotype versus the personal endorsement of the stereotype” (p. 2). According to Payne and Gawronski, Devine maintained that “everyone in a culture learns stereotypes” – and learns them well. Whether an individual personally endorses beliefs about those stereotypes distinguishes “prejudiced from unprejudiced individuals” (p. 2).

These perspectives also relate to Greenwald and Krieger’s (2006) research on explicit and implicit attitudes, suggesting to this researcher that academic advisors may have prior knowledge
and/or experiences where they have well-learned knowledge of social stereotypes that may be personally endorsed and contribute to unconscious display of biased attitudes or actions during interactions with students. In other words, an academic advisor may have well-learned knowledge of social stereotypes and may be aware of thoughts he/she is having during an advising interaction. So, the advisor enacts advising strategies to avoid display of biased attitudes or actions. On the other hand, an academic advisor may have well-learned knowledge of social stereotypes and personally endorses those beliefs. The advisor is unaware of displaying biased attitudes or actions that a student may perceive as prejudiced or biased during an advising interaction.

Implicit social cognition has typically been measured by using the implicit association test (IAT). It measures group-valence and group-trait associations that underlie attitudes and stereotypes (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006, p. 952):

The IAT is an implicit measure because it infers group-valence and group-trait associations from performances that are influenced by those associations in a manner that is not discerned by respondents…

The IAT was first introduced in 1998 (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). The authors explained,

Implicit attitudes are manifested as actions or judgments that are under the control of automatically activated evaluation, without the performer's awareness of that causation…The implicit association method may reveal attitudes and other automatic associations even for subjects who prefer not to express those attitudes” (p. 1464).

One of the most “widely used” forms of the IAT is the Race IAT. The race IAT assesses implicit attitudes towards African Americans compared to European Americans. This test
presents African American and European American faces, as well as pleasant-meaning and unpleasant-meaning words to participants. Then, it measures participants’ reaction time to how quickly they associate each word to either African American or European American faces.

The unconscious attitude measure that Race IAT produces is based on relative speeds of participants’ responses to faces and either pleasant or unpleasant words. Greenwald and Krieger (2006) noted that American respondents’ response speeds were often faster when EA faces were paired with pleasant words. They commented, “This frequently observed pattern supports the interpretation that EA-pleasant is a stronger association than AA-pleasant” (p. 952).

The IAT has been used in many areas including law, nursing, and health professions, but there was no literature found for use in an administrative setting such as academic advising. The IAT was not explored in this research study; however, it was an important development in the history of implicit bias.

**Psychology of Implicit Bias**

Social psychology research showed that over time bias, stereotypes, and prejudices become imperceptible to individuals who depend on them (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Pearson, 2016). Bodenhausen, Macrae, and Sherman (2016) and Dovidio et al. (2016) suggested that individuals automatically categorize others into a social group upon meeting them.

Bodenhausen et al. (2016) asserted that stereotypes are “heuristics for judgment” (p. 272). Individuals use “stereotypic beliefs” to provide a quick, heuristic judgment” about others they encounter (p. 272). Bodenhausen et al. also noted that stereotypic beliefs may “guide or dominate the processing of other available evidence” (p. 272).

Dovidio et al. (2016) suggested individuals do this automatic categorization to help with understanding others and to establish connection with them. They further asserted that
individuals do this early in life due to repeated exposure to either positive or negative stereotypes about a social group. This automatic categorization can unconsciously activate stereotypic and prejudicial attitudes associated with that social group. In relation to academic advising, this perspective suggested to the researcher that, when triggered, implicit negative stereotypes and attitudes can influence how academic advisors interact with students based on human characteristics, such as race and gender. This can produce disparities in advice and recommendations academic advisors provide to students.

Dovidio et al. (2016) explained some history related to implicit bias and how it occurs. The study provided insight for this researcher into why some academic advisors may show more implicit bias than others. Academic advisors have different cultural backgrounds and upbringings. They have different past experiences and interactions that help them make meaning of knowledge and establish connections with new individuals. In their experiences of connecting with new individuals, implicit stereotypes or bias may have been used to aid in that connection (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006). Repeatedly doing this may cause stereotypes associated with social groups to gradually become unconscious (automatic). Ultimately, this can lead to disparities in judgment and decision making. Academic advising disparities can create unwelcoming, uncomfortable environments for students and dissuade them from coming into academic advising appointments.

Stone and Moskowitz (2011) argued that individuals acquire stereotypes to help them satisfy a desire for processing and storing information efficiently. Individuals tend to store information economically given their current mental state and time they have available. Stone and Moskowitz further noted that repeatedly using stereotypes can create a psychological system where both the reasons that foster stereotyping and the process of stereotyping itself gradually
fade from consciousness. For example, consider an academic advisor who notices a high academic student profile anytime he/she meets with an Asian American student. Over time, the academic advisor may associate the ethnicity of Asian Americans to higher academic student performances. Subsequently, every time this academic advisor meets with an Asian American student, the academic advisor may have developed an implicit attitude that the Asian American student is a high academic performer. This thought process could occur whether the student is a high academic performer or not, and it could influence the academic advisor’s interaction with the student.

Stereotyping occurs through two phases according to Stone and Moskowitz (2011). Phase one consists of cognitive functions that determine stereotype activation. In this phase individuals categorize others as part of a social group. For example, an academic advisor notices lower grade point averages for a student he/she meets and categorizes the student as underachieving. Once the student is categorized, beliefs about what underperforming students are like, including prejudices, stereotypes, and biases, are triggered. Consistent categorization over time can trigger prejudices, stereotypes, and biases without the academic advisor’s awareness or effort. Phase two consists of cognitive functions that determine if stereotypes are used in judgment and/or action toward others. In the second phase of this process, an academic advisor, for example, utilizes triggered beliefs (prejudices, stereotypes, biases) while forming opinions of students as the advisor interacts with them. Utilizing these triggered beliefs as a foundation to gather knowledge and process it would not require conscious effort or attention on the part of the advisor, and following Stone and Moskowitz’s logic, the advisor may gradually lose awareness that stereotype activation is occurring.
**Forms of Implicit Bias**

During the 1960’s through 1970’s, the United States established significant societal changes including the civil rights movement (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Pearson, 2016). The civil rights movement, in addition to other forces, established societal changes to address racism by White Americans toward Black Americans. Under new legislation from the civil rights movement, it became illegal to discriminate against Black individuals. Dovidio et al. (2016) noted that this extraordinary change in United States race relations influenced the nature of racial attitudes from overt to more subtle forms of racism.

Dovidio et al. (2016) also argued that social norms and values that were influenced by the civil rights era produced obstacles for studying prejudice and racism. Although blatant forms of racism significantly decreased, many individuals still held on to beliefs that reflected negative racial attitudes. The changes in legislation of the civil rights movement appeared to influence individuals’ management of how others perceived their racial attitudes. Although, racism still existed within some individuals’ conscious thought, they did not want others to perceive them that way. Dovidio et al. (2016) argued that this change may have caused the manifestation of subtle forms of racism, such as implicit bias and microaggressions.

**Prejudice**

Bias research theories regarding prejudice asserted that prejudice expressions are strategically responsive to societal norms and are subject to social influence (Dovidio et al., 2016; Durrheim, Quayle, & Dixon, 2016; Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007). Durrheim, Quayle, and Dixon (2016) described prejudice, using Klein et al.’s (2007) definition: an “identity-salient strategic action—...the purposeful expression or suppression
of behaviors relevant to those norms conventionally associated with a salient social identity” (Klein et al., 2007, p. 3).

Prejudice expressions can reflect the dynamic of intergroup context. For example, Noel, Wann, and Branscombe’s (1995) research on public negativity toward outgroups found that peripheral ingroup members expressed higher levels of prejudice toward outgroup members when responses would be visible to the ingroup. This research study suggested that ingroup members were insecure and expressed prejudice to outgroup members only to promote acceptance and establish a sense of belonging within the ingroup. The Noel et al. (1995) study suggested to this researcher that academic advisors may have biases towards non-academic advisors simply to establish connectivity within the ingroup of academic advisors.

Bias research showed that prejudice is also linked to identity (Schaller & Conway, 1999). Prejudice expressions can be adapted to social and situational demands. Schaller and Conway (1999) stated that some individuals tailor their prejudices to social norms so they can maintain a creditable, personal identity. Paluck (2009) found “a functionally interdependent model of belief, norm, and behavior change, in which perceptions of norms shift more readily than do personal beliefs and are more closely related to behavior” (p. 594). Paluck’s (2009) research on the processes of norm change has implications for academic advisors’ direct interactions with students. Academic advisors have professional development opportunities where they meet with other academic advisors to share opinions and ideas about best practices for the academic advising profession. If academic advisors are exposed to the implicit prejudice of other academic advisors, perceived norms could unconsciously influence advisors’ interactions with students.

Paluck’s (2009) research created awareness about individuals’ desire to establish and maintain connectivity with others. Her research suggested that social interaction and emotional
management are likely the mechanisms to inspire social change. This raised a question for this researcher about academic advisors and how much their academic advising reflects their prior history with social interaction with other academic advisors. Academic advisors who have a large social support system and engage in a significant amount of social interaction with other academic advisors may be more prone to the implicit biases of the individuals they interact with, while academic advisors who have a smaller social support system and engage in fewer social interactions may be less prone to implicit biases. Paluck’s work also raises a question about academic advisors’ personality types. Consider academic advisors who have an extroverted personality. They may have an increased likelihood of engaging in social interaction with others. Paluck’s (2009) work suggested to this researcher that more extroverted advisors may be more susceptible to prejudices of the individuals who interact with them. While Paluck’s (2009) research provided another contribution to the literature on the psychology of why and how bias occurs, more research is needed, particularly in relation to the why and how of unconscious bias as it relates to prejudices.

**Microaggressions**

Sue et al. (2007) defined microaggressions as the subtle slights and insults that targets of bias face, most of which occur without the perpetrator’s awareness. This includes hostile communication, derogatory or negative racial, gender, or religious slights to a target person or group of individuals. Sue et al. (2007) argued that perpetrators who exhibit microaggressions are typically unconscious of their actions. They genuinely believe they are not racist or prejudiced, nor do they consciously discriminate; however, they do harbor implicit biased attitudes which may result in discriminatory behavior (Sue et al., 2007). The Dovidio et al. (2016) research study on subtle racism has implications for academic advisors. In this researcher’s experiences, most
academic advisors view themselves as moral and honest people who would never intentionally discriminate against any student for any reason. The work of Dovidio et al. (2016) suggested that while academic advisors may not blatantly discriminate against students, they might still engage in microaggressions which can influence students’ interpretation of advice given by an advisor.

**Stereotypes**

Greenwald and Krieger (2006) defined stereotype as a mental association between a social group or category and a trait. The stereotype may represent a statistical reality, but not necessarily. If the stereotypical association represents a statistical reality, group members are more likely to display the trait than non-members. Greenwald and Krieger (2006) argued that a defining trait “is of little psychological interest” (p. 949). For example, one might expect a higher academic profile for a college student taking all honors courses. However, when the association between group members and a specific trait is “less than perfect, but the trait nevertheless distinguishes members of one group from others,” the stereotype is of greater interest (p. 949).

For example, suppose that 10-20% of college students procrastinate on completing homework assignments, but only 5-10% of college juniors procrastinate on homework assignments. If these statistics were true, they may represent a legitimate association between student class and time management. However, the stereotype would only apply to a small percentage (10-20%) of college students. Even so, it may be a “default assumption” that any college student is likely to procrastinate. Greenwald and Krieger noted that stereotypes “can involve associations of either favorable or unfavorable traits with group” (p. 950). Stereotypes can be problematic as they can produce attitudes and social behavior that can be inappropriate or inaccurate. In these interactions, individuals may attempt to manage their impressions and refrain from expressing negative attitudes or stereotypes (Dovidio et al., 2016). On the other hand, they may not.
Research on Implicit Bias

The concept of implicit bias has been studied in multiple settings, including gender bias in higher education, K-12 teaching expectations, counseling, mental health, health care, and law.

Gender Bias in Higher Education

Literature on gender bias in higher education has shown that women are significantly underrepresented in various science professions (e.g., Moss-Racusin, Dovidio, Brescoll, Graham, & Handelsman, 2012). In a randomized, double-blind study (n=127), investigating science faculty members rating application materials of students, Moss-Racusin et al. (2012) found that science faculty members rated male applicants more competent than female applicants with identical credentials. In addition, the study found that the faculty participants selected a higher earning salary for male applicants.

Some opposers of Moss-Racusin et al. (2012) suggested that gender disparity between men and women in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields reflect women’s personal, life choices, such as caring for elderly parents, limiting their job searches geographically, following their spouses’ career moves, and choosing to defer careers to raise children (Ceci & Williams, 2011). Science researchers argued that these choices are freely made by women and do not reflect gender disparities, stereotypes, and/or biases in STEM fields (Ceci & Williams, 2011).

Literature on gender bias within student evaluations of their professors (e.g., Mengel, Sauermann, & Zölitz, 2019) found that women receive lower teaching evaluations than their male counterparts. In a quasi-experimental study using 19,952 student evaluations of faculty, Mengel et al. (2019) noted the bias was predominantly provided by male students against female professors, mainly in STEM fields such as mathematics. Mengel et al. (2019) concluded that this
level of gender bias could impact female faculty members’ career progression due to a lack of confidence based on student evaluations.

MacNell, Driscoll, and Hunt (2015) studied online teaching evaluations of professors by manipulating information that students received related to the gender of their professors. The study found that students evaluated male identity professors substantially better than female identity professors. Boring (2017) also found that male university students evaluated female professors harsher. Male professors received positive reviews for non-time-consuming aspects of the course, such as leadership skills; however, female professors received positive reviews for more time-consuming skills, such as preparation of classes.

Nadler and Nadler (1993) looked at gender bias within academic advising. They found that communication provided to female students from academic advisors outside of the classroom could contribute to an environment that negatively affected female students’ learning experiences and overall confidence levels. To apply this to academic advising, for example, if a male advisor thought that female students would not make it in a male-dominated field like engineering, he may advise a female student not to waste her time pursuing engineering rather than offering advice and tools to be successful in the field. In this scenario, his personal bias would affect his decision making and subsequently the advice he provides to his students.

Academic advisors receive student evaluations of advising (SEA) at the end of each semester. Hester (2008) analyzed SEAs to determine if there was a correlation between evaluation items and student characteristics. She found negative and positive correlations between evaluation items and student characteristics that are historically representative of good advising. For example, she found a positive correlation between advisors’ professional manner toward students and the frequency of advising sessions. In addition, she found a substantial
negative correlation for students’ class level and ratings of academic advisor’s knowledge. Hester (2008) suggested that SEA may not be the best reflection of academic advising performance.

**K - 12 Teacher Expectations**

Bias is present in the K-12 educational community, and the topic of teacher expectations of students is discussed in both the academic and practical worlds. Jussim and Harber’s (2005) review of 35 years of empirical research on teacher expectations found that teacher expectations may predict student outcomes because teachers believed their assessments of students were accurate. However, some teachers may not believe their expectations differ between students (Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2015; Kozlowski, 2014). K - 12 research showed that students can identify whether a teacher has high or low expectations for them at a young age (Boerma, Mol, & Jolles, 2016). Boerma et al. (2016) conducted a study to examine the relationship between teacher perceptions and children’s reading motivation. Closely monitoring gender differences, they measured 160 fifth and sixth grade students’ self-concept, task value, and attitude. Teachers rated students’ reading comprehension. Boerma et al. (2016) found that teacher expectations had no influence on male reading motivation; however, teacher expectations did predict value placed on reading and reading self-concept for girls.

Weinstein (1993) spent years looking at how students understand their teachers’ expectations without teachers explicitly stating them. Her studies have shown that “differentiation in the curriculum delivered to high and low expectation students, feedback from the teacher, public acknowledgement of achievement, the ways that students are grouped, and the verbal and non-verbal behaviors of teachers enable students to interpret their teachers’ expectations for their achievement” (p. 220). Students who identify in the low expectation group
tend to achieve at much lower rates than their peers who identify in the high expectation group. K-12 research also showed that teacher bias translated into biased interactions between teachers and students (McKown & Weinstein, 2008). McKown and Weinstein (2008) found that racial discrimination increased in high-bias classrooms as opposed to low-bias classrooms. Quintana and Mahgoub (2016) argued that the presence of high bias classrooms can lead to an accumulation of disadvantage consistent with widening racial and ethnic disparities in K-12 students. Furthermore, Babad (2009) reported the following:

Teachers who hold biased beliefs about their students tend to be more dogmatic in their views and more authoritarian in their interactions with students than those who are less biased. Hence, expectations play more of a salient role in the classes of high bias teachers. As a result, expectation effects are much greater. Such teachers are more inclined to judge students based on stereotypical information rather than on objective results and so are also more likely to form biased expectations. (p. 47)

Gershenson, Holt, and Papageorge’s (2015) research found that “teachers expect 58% of White high school students to obtain a four-year college degree (or more), but anticipate the same for only 37% of Black students. This disparity foreshadows a large difference in actual educational attainment, ‘49% of White students ultimately graduate from college, compared to 29% of Black students’ (2016, p. 66). Kozlowski (2014) further asserted that “from elementary to high school, whether because of ‘inappropriate’ dress, language, or class disruption, some teachers negatively perceive and differentially punish some minority students, even when they exhibit the same styles and behaviors as White students” (p. 46).

Using nationally representative data from the kindergarten cohort of the Educational Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten (ECLS-K) and adolescents from NELS:88, Downey
and Pribesh (2004) found that White teachers rated Black students as being poorer classroom citizens, having fewer learning skills and greater problem behavior. Conversely, Black students paired with Black teachers were rated more favorably (Downey and Pribesh, 2004).

Gershenson, Holt, and Papageorge (2015) also explored contextual factors, stating, “Nationwide, on average, Black students are four times more likely to live below the poverty line and 30% less likely to have a college educated mother than White students. Both grade point averages and standardized test score averages are lower for Black students than for White students” (p. 67). The Gershenson et al. (2015) study raised important concerns including the impact that teacher expectations can have on their students’ educational attainment. They also added to the literature with other aspects that contributed to students’ educational attainment, including the impact that parents’ expectations can have on their children.

Morgan, Leenman, Todd, and Weeden’s (2013) study of data collected from 12,509 high school seniors from the Education Longitudinal Study (2002 to 2006) suggested that parents’ educational attainment can impact their children’s decision to attend postsecondary institutions. The authors asserted that family background and parental education level may influence their children’s desire to attend college. They also suggested that parental socioeconomic status contributed to students’ aspirations. Considering children coming from parents with affluent backgrounds, for example, parents may sign their children up for tutoring (if applicable), schedule college campus visits, and provide a home environment that is conducive to educational success (Morgan et al., 2013). They may have the financial resources to ensure their children are set up for success. Parents with non-affluent backgrounds might not have resources to provide the same opportunities for their children.
**High School Guidance Counselor Recommendations**

In addition to K-12 teachers, bias may be present during interaction between high school students and high school guidance counselors. While numerous reasons have been recommended to describe racial inequality in United States education, K-12 research has argued that racism continues to be an imperative factor that contributes to academic achievement disparity between white students and black students (Linnehan, Weer, & Stonely, 2011). The Linnehan et al. (2011) research study on the role of student race, socioeconomic status, and academic performance explored the relationship between student characteristics and high school guidance counselor recommendations. They found that high school guidance counselors recommended community colleges to students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds significantly more than to students with affluent backgrounds. The study also found that white guidance counselors were more likely to recommend admission-related activities for 2-year colleges to white students as opposed to black students. This was an interesting part of the study as other literature suggested that the white counselors would have made more of those 2-year college recommendations to black students, while making the 4-year college recommendations to white students (Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2015). These recommendations support some of the findings of Bahr’s (2008) research study on the effect of academic advisors’ recommendations to students based on their academic profile and students’ chances of college success.

**Counseling and Counseling Psychology**

Implicit bias is generally acknowledged in counseling literature; however, literature noted that despite this recognition, implicit bias continues to be an issue (Boysen, 2010). Boysen and Vogel (2008) investigated 105 counseling students with various ethnicities including Asian American, African American, European American, and Hispanic/Latino. The authors used
Implicit Associating Tests (IATs) to measure implicit bias toward African Americans and lesbians and gay men and self-reported multicultural competency. The authors found significant implicit bias toward African Americans and lesbians and gay men in this study. In contrast, the counselor trainees reported high levels of multicultural competence overall.

In another study, Kopera et al. (2015) investigated implicit and explicit attitudes towards individuals with mental illnesses between non-professionals such as medical students and psychiatrists with at least two years of experience. The authors assessed explicit attitudes via a self-reporting questionnaire. They measured implicit attitudes with a variation of the implicit association test. The study found that mental health professionals reported substantially higher emotions toward individuals with mental illnesses and a lower tendency to discriminate against them. Psychiatrists and medical students reported negative implicit attitudes toward mentally ill individuals. Kopera et al. (2015) suggested that professionals and non-professionals display contradictory attitudes towards mentally ill individuals. Payne and Gawronski (2010) implied this display reflected the presence of implicit bias towards mentally ill individuals.

Boysen (2010) suggested that counselors typically engage in more subtle forms of bias such as aversive racism or microaggressions. Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, and Hodson (2002) defined aversive racism as a broad concept which explains how unconscious bias functions in contemporary society. Individuals who display aversive racism typically deny blatant forms of discrimination and view themselves as unbiased (Dovidio et al., 2016). However, they are likely to engage in more subtle, unintentional forms of discrimination.

Constantine, Smith, Redington, and Owens (2008) studied racial microaggressions Black faculty members in counseling and counseling psychology programs reportedly experienced in academia. They found that microaggressions experienced by the faculty members participating in
the study had harmful consequences for their well-being. The authors also speculated that lack of awareness within these professions could have harmful consequences in practice. This raises questions for this research study regarding academic advisors’ awareness of behavioral manifestations of biased judgment and microaggressions in advisor-student interactions. Smith’s (2005) survey of students suggested that students can feel emotional impact from academic advisors’ behavior towards students regardless of how subtle that behavior is.

**Mental Health Care**

Boysen (2009) asserted that very little is known in literature regarding implicit bias as it relates to mental health. Boysen noted that implicit bias may be an important factor to consider in multicultural counseling. Literature on multicultural awareness used self-reporting multicultural competence instruments. Boysen (2009) noted that many instruments used to assess multicultural awareness were used to assess participants’ *conscious* awareness of their explicit biases and/or prejudices.

Ivers, Johnson, and Rogers (2012) considered factors associated with how self-perceived multicultural counseling awareness (mindfulness) may be perceived as implicit bias in mental health practitioners. Ivers et al. (2012) used a correlational design to examine the association between mindfulness practices and mental health professionals’ implicit bias. Their study found a negative relationship between the observing component of dispositional mindfulness and the implicit racial preference associating White with “good” words. The study also indicated that the frequency of engaging in mindfulness practices negatively predicted implicit racial preference associating White and good.

Merino, Adams, and Hall (2018) stated that implicit bias can preclude certain social groups from accessing mental health services. Apart from other forms of health care, mental
health services are typically provided on a one-on-one basis with the mental healthcare provider acting as the gatekeeper to accessing care (Merino et al., 2018). This gatekeeping function may trigger unconscious biases, resulting in discouraging certain social groups from accessing mental health services. Kugelmass (2016) studied audio recordings of potential psychiatric therapy patients and found that middle-class white women are significantly more likely than working-class black men to get a call back when requesting appointments for mental health services. Merino et al. (2018) also noted that even when members of historically marginalized social groups receive mental health service appointments, unconscious biases may influence how professionals view certain behaviors. For example, consider African American men who grew up in societies where men of color are racially profiled by law enforcement. The African American men’s caution in their daily life routine could be viewed as a result of consistent racial profiling by one mental health professional; however, the same caution could be perceived as paranoia related to a mental health disorder to another professional.

**Health Care**

Bias research indicated that health care providers automatically activate negative stereotypes about minority group members (Stone & Moskowitz, 2011). Stone and Moskowitz (2011) research on stereotyping in medical decision making reported that White medical doctors automatically trigger negative stereotypes when they interact with African American patients. Their study utilized a version of the implicit association test to assess reaction time. Doctors were asked to quickly indicate whether a sequence of words on a computer screen were real medical terms or not. Pictures of either African American or White faces were covertly flashed on the screen prior to each word. The goal of the study was to assess if the medical doctors’ ability to recognize the word was unconsciously impacted by exposure to the picture they were
not able to consciously see. Stone and Moskowitz (2011) found that medical doctors were able to recognize diseases and medical conditions typically associated with African American patients’ pictures faster than with White patients’ pictures. In addition, the study found that doctors showed facilitation for words related to drug abuse when an African American picture was flashed on the screen as opposed to a White picture. The results suggested that negative stereotypes associated with African Americans, which are linked to lower socioeconomic status and crime, seeped into the doctors’ ability to recognize terms as medical terms.

This study adds to the large body of social science research surrounding racial stereotypes in African American students (Kozlowski, 2014; Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2015; Walls, & Hall, 2018). Green, Carney, Pallin, Ngo, Raymond, Iezzoni, and Banaji’s (2007) study on implicit bias in physicians found that White doctors have equally positive feelings for both White and African American patients when measured explicitly. However, they reveal negative feelings for African Americans when measured implicitly. These findings support Schaller and Conway’s (1999) study that linked prejudice expressions to identity. Some doctors may tailor their stereotypes to their surroundings to maintain a creditable, personal identity to others.

**Legal Decision Making**

Jury duty in the United States legal system poses a challenge for summoned individuals. Harley (2007) argued jurors face unconscious challenges such as hindsight bias and it influences their judgment while making legal decisions. Jurors face hardship such as the responsibility of rejudging the past while trying to ignore present information about legal cases. They must evaluate evidence presented at trials and declare a verdict based on fairness. Harley (2007) asserted this responsibility makes them vulnerable to hindsight biases. Fischhoff (1975) defined
hindsight bias as the tendency to exaggerate the likelihood of a given outcome compared to its foresight predictability. Harley (2007) argued that the advantage of hindsight provides jurors the increased ability to recall information that is consistent with the reported outcome and allows jurors to rate the given outcome as more foreseeable. She further argued that hindsight bias influences jurors to discount or even forget event information that is inconsistent with reported outcomes. Harley (2007) found that hindsight bias can influence judgment in legal decisions. Hindsight bias may not have any direct implications to academic advising. This section is included to help further understand bias’s effect on individuals’ judgment and decision making.

**Academic Advising in Higher Education**

Young-Jones et al. (2013) described academic advising as a systematic and developmental process which involves academic advisors establishing relationships with students. The authors noted that academic advisors assist students with developing critical thinking, developing problem solving skills, identifying resources, decision making, and setting goals.

Higher education research studies endorsed academic advising as a successful strategy for increasing student retention, graduation rates, and overall student satisfaction (Downey & Pribesh, 2004). Downey and Pribesh (2004) further noted the importance of academic advising and the impact that it has on higher education institutions.

According to Smith (2005), students desired to maintain personal relationships with their academic advisors. In addition, they preferred to develop their relationships around academic related matters. Smith (2005) surveyed 90 undergraduate students and asked two probing questions: “How important do you think it is for your academic advisor to be personally acquainted with you?” and “Do you think your present academic advisor is interested in you as a
person, and is this what you want from an academic advisor?” (p. 36). Over 83% of students who responded stated that maintaining a personal relationship with an academic advisor was either a priority or a high priority. However, 37% of students mentioned that they did not believe their academic advisors were interested in their personal development. Smith (2005) also surveyed over 100 faculty advisors and found support for the students’ perceptions of their academic advising. The research study found that 30% of faculty advisors who responded indicated that personal development of advisees was not a substantial component of their advising duties (Smith, 2005).

Bahr’s (2008) research on advising in the community college supported Smith’s (2005) findings. If faculty advisors do not believe assisting students with personal development is in their job description, then it is likely they would be apprehensive in making a connection with advisees (Bahr, 2008; Smith, 2005). Bahr (2008) also suggested that some faculty advisors are asked to “cool out” students who are not performing well academically. The term “cool out” refers to dissuading poor performing students from ambitious goals and directing them into a presumed, better academic fit for them.

Since academic advisors play such a pivotal role for the students they advise and the advice that advisors provide can have such a profound influence on them, it is crucial that they are aware of their own biases that can influence their interaction with students. Bahr’s (2008) research study showed the extent of the influence that academic advisors have on students’ chances of attaining their college goals. Smith (2005) demonstrated the desire students have for a personal connection from their academic advisors. Due to the extent that students rely on their academic advisors, it is essential that bias does not influence information provided to students (Smith, 2005).
Academic Advising Styles

The variety of academic advising styles available for use during academic advising appointments may influence how students interpret information. The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) core values guide how academic advising styles are used. The NACADA core values state that an advisor has a responsibility to themselves and their professional practices, their educational community, higher education, their institutions, involving others, and the individuals they advise (NACADA Core Values of Academic Advising, 2017, para. 2). Academic advising literature described several different advising styles that advisors use to help frame the message provided to students (Bloom & Martin, 2002; Drake et al., 2013; NACADA Developmental Advising Definitions, 2014). Five of these styles are described below.

Prescriptive Advising. Prescriptive advising is considered a one-way process between academic advisors and their students (Drake et al., 2013). Research by Crooks (2017) suggested that students view knowledge as a certainty that is held by individuals who hold a position of power. Since academic advisors are in positions of power, students may view information they provide in high regard. In the prescriptive style of advising, students may consider advisors as individuals who have all the knowledge, and students may perceive that they are supposed to accept that knowledge from their advisors. This is an advising style that many college campuses still utilize while advising students. The relationship between academic advisors and students in this style compares to a relationship between medical doctors and patients. Typically, patients go into their doctors’ offices because of an illness or a situation that needs to be resolved, and the doctors are considered the individuals who have all the answers to solve their patients’ problems (Williams, 2007). Prescriptive advising is similar to a formal, strict, business professional
relationship with almost no personal connectivity. The main goal is to disseminate direct knowledge to students. Academic advisors who take a prescriptive approach relieve students of responsibility for incorrect information. The advisor assumes all responsibility and is only there to answer students’ questions.

Prescriptive advising may not be the most desired advising style within the academic advising community; however, it does have its place in advising students. When direct academic advisor instruction is appropriate, students respond favorably to prescriptive advising (Drake et al., 2013). This style of advising can apply to students who do not want to develop a personal rapport with their academic advisors and/or who are struggling with extenuating, outside circumstances. Some students only come in for advising appointments to remove holds on their accounts. This advising style is also used when students are underperforming in their classes. For example, consider students who demonstrate a pattern of procrastination and a lack of performance in classes, some academic advisors may elect to take a prescriptive advising style with them to ensure both are on the same page about expectations. This advising style is helpful in this scenario because students who do not perform well in classes may be overwhelmed or stressed. Prescriptive approaches can create the opportunity for academic advisors to empower students to take charge of their own learning (Drake et al., 2013).

**Appreciative Advising (Inquiry).** Appreciative inquiry is a style of advising that aims to help students identify passions and assist them to achieve their goals (Bloom & Martin, 2002). This style involves skill in asking positive, uplifting, and open-ended questions to allow students to identify strengths and areas for improvement, and to hone in on other unknown abilities (Bloom & Martin, 2002). Bloom and Martin (2002) mentioned that one of the key principles of
this style is that students are considered “heliotropic” by nature, meaning that like plants, students have a tendency to evolve in a positive direction in life.

There are six stages of appreciative inquiry:

- Disarm: creating a welcoming and comfortable environment for a student.
- Discover: working with a student to identify any unique talents or abilities.
- Dream: encouraging students to disclose their future plans and goals in life.
- Design: assisting students in creating an action plan towards completing goals.
- Deliver: actually, putting the action plan into action.
- Do not settle: empowering the student to pursue more goals past their original intention (Drake et al., 2013).

Academic advisors use this style with students who tend to be struggling in college socially and academically. Some underperforming students struggle in college due to personal and extenuating circumstances that occur outside of the academic environment; however, they have a reluctance to share (Hester, 2008). Bloom and Martin’s (2002) research suggested that this stems from embarrassment or pride. Disarming that embarrassment and allowing students to feel like they matter can make a difference in their comfort level while interacting with academic advisors (Bloom & Martin, 2002). Treating all students like a friend or family member during appointments can disarm them and allow them to feel at ease and comfortable, opening up to the academic advisor (Bloom & Martin, 2002). Students who not only make a connection with the campus, but also establish a relationship with a mentor or guide, persist at higher percentages than those who do not make that connection (Bloom & Martin, 2002; Smith, 2005). Appreciative advising has implications for the foundation of trust that academic advisors build with students.
**Socratic Advising.** Socratic advising is the style of advising that incorporates the Socratic method into academic advising appointments. Kuhtmann (2005) noted the Socratic method is a process of logical argumentation that utilizes a series of questions to ascertain truth. Citing Blackburn (1994, p. 356), Kuhtmann noted that the *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, defined the Socratic method as “the method of teaching in which the master imparts no information, but asks a sequence of questions, through answering which the pupil eventually comes to the desired knowledge” (Kuhtmann, 2005, p. 237).

Academic advisors use Socratic advising to assist students with the answers they seek, without directly giving them the answers. This method is beneficial in a multitude of ways: it enhances communication between academic advisors and students, it encourages students to critically think when faced with obstacles, and it fosters innovation by encouraging the exchange of ideas between academic advisors and students during advising appointments. Although it may be less time consuming for academic advisors to simply answer their students’ questions, doing this alone would discourage the cultivation of thought when future problems arise. Through Socratic advising, students are empowered to assess difficult barriers in their path and problem solve until they reach a resolution. Separate from appreciative inquiry, which involves asking uplifting, open-ended questions to allow students to identify strengths and areas for improvement, Socratic advising involves asking questions to help students achieve answers they seek on their own.

**Student-centered Advising.** Student-centered advising is a style that is specifically focused on student learning. For this style to be effective, learning must be at the core of how student success is defined (Melander, 2002). Advising is centered on coaching and assisting students with developing attitude and skills around being a learner. Rather than personal
development, as in appreciative advising, learning outcomes measure student success with this style (Melander, 2002). Melander (2002) asserted that advisors who use this style make it their goal to maintain a rapport with each student; they manage the relationship by keeping all students apprised of pertinent information, continuously passing on relevant sources of information to students, and ensuring that all students receive feedback to measure and assess their learning. Academic advisors who take a student-centered approach assist students in developing attitudes, behaviors, and skills toward learning (Melander, 2002).

For this researcher, Melander's work brought to mind the nature of the advising relationship between a faculty mentor and a doctoral student. While a faculty mentor may keep the doctoral student informed about degree requirements and progress, the relationship between a faculty mentor and a doctoral student centers on focused attention on intellectual development over the course of the doctoral program. Learning is the core of the relationship as cognitive growth and understanding of the research process are essential for successful completion of the degree program.

**Developmental Advising.** Developmental advising is both a process and an orientation for students. This advising style is predominantly concerned with personal and vocational student decision making skills (NACADA Developmental Advising Definitions, 2014). As opposed to more linear forms of advising approaches such as prescriptive advising, developmental advising considers movement and progression of students and goes far beyond simply instructing them on the requirements needed to complete their degrees (NACADA Developmental Advising Definitions, 2014). This style also intends to enhance students’ evaluation skills, interpersonal interactions, and awareness of their own behavior (NACADA Developmental Advising Definitions, 2014). With use of interactive teaching and counseling,
students can achieve specific lifelong learning goals. Students, along with their academic advisors, design goals and use them as a guide for all subsequent interactions (NACADA Developmental Advising Definitions, 2014). Academic advisors use this style to establish relationships and build trust with their students.

Smith (2005) suggested that the relationships between academic advisors and students play an influential role in their personal growth. According to Smith (2005), the development of a personal relationship with advisors has consistently demonstrated to be a strong desire by students. Academic advisors also use this style to empower students by encouraging them to get involved with campus activities. These campus activities help students achieve extra-curricular opportunities and develop skills they utilize while seeking employment after graduation.

Academic advisors also assist students in evaluating what success might look like for them and help students identify interests that lead to other meaningful opportunities, such as an internship that may lead to an employment position (NACADA Developmental Advising Definitions, 2014).

Academic advisors often utilize a developmental advising style to assist struggling students under extenuating circumstances, even if academic advisors predict they will not be successful in their desired goal. They do this because a part of personal growth and development is overcoming obstacles. If academic advisors empower their students to overcome struggles, then the next time students face hardships, they may not need their academic advisors’ assistance with overcoming those obstacles. Instead, students will use the knowledge gained from their advisors and take care of the problem.
Academic Advisors’ Influence on Students

Academic advisors exist because students typically require assistance to successfully navigate obstacles at higher education institutions. There are several individuals at higher education institutions who advise students. These individuals include full-time administrative advisors, graduate assistants, faculty members, adjunct instructors, and other staff members such as academic program specialists who serve in multiple roles (Robbins, 2012). Some higher education institutions even have employees with different titles who technically perform the same academic advising duties. Robbins (2012) suggested that the title “counselor” and “advisor” are often interchanged. Academic advisors are administrators who act in a school counselor type role and typically interact with college students during their academic career (Swecker, Fifolt, & Searby, 2013; Young-Jones, Burt, Dixon, & Hawthorne, 2013). Swecker et al. (2013) contended that academic advisors provide educational guidance for students to successfully navigate higher education. This guidance includes course recommendations, schedule planning, major selection, career planning, emotional and personal guidance, developing critical thinking skills, exploring strategic decision making, and understanding policy (Hester, 2008; Robbins, 2012; Young-Jones, Burt, Dixon, & Hawthorne, 2013). Swecker et al. (2013) provided knowledge necessary for understanding academic advisors’ job responsibilities. Academic advisors’ guidance of students plays a pivotal role in student success.

Paul and Fitzpatrick (2015) suggested utilizing specific academic advising styles with students may be beneficial during particular stages of their academic career (p.28). When students are struggling academically and need concrete direction, Crooks (2017) implied taking a prescriptive approach. However, academic advisors could use a different style. For example, using a developmental academic advising style and attempting to build a relationship with
students could provide a much-needed connection in that scenario. This connection with academic advisors could add meaning to students’ lives and contribute to their persistence in college.

Smith (2005) noted that student satisfaction with advising was positively linked to first- and second-year student retention. Consider students who excel academically, but significantly struggle with social skills. In this scenario, utilizing a prescriptive approach might not be beneficial and might intimidate students. Likewise, utilizing a developmental approach may not be as beneficial because students may be too shy to be open about their personal lives. In this scenario, utilizing an appreciative advising approach may be helpful for students and may disarm social barriers to allow for future use of developmental advising styles to establish a deeper personal connection.

It is important to understand that all academic advising styles have individual benefits for students, and academic advisors typically do not solely practice one advising style. Paul and Fitzpatrick (2015) suggested that academic advisors go through advising styles on a continuum throughout advising appointments. For new students entering a postsecondary institution, academic advisors may choose to focus on a developmental or appreciative advising style to truly get to know their students’ personal and professional goals. After academic advisors build rapport with students, they may choose more of a Socratic or student-centered advising style. This is after a personal rapport with students has already been established. Even predominantly using a developmental advising style, it is not uncommon for academic advisors to cross over into other styles to address certain scenarios during advising appointments. For example, an academic advisor who normally utilizes an appreciative advising style, recognizes that he/she is meeting with a student who is overwhelmed in classes and decides to take a prescriptive
approach for that specific appointment. In this scenario, normally, the academic advisor would be asking several open-ended questions to uncover essential knowledge about the student to disarm social barriers. However, the academic advisor recognizes that the student is overwhelmed and, instead, chooses to be significantly more direct with his/her communication. Asking too many questions or presenting this student with a surplus of options may be counterproductive and end up overwhelming the student even more than before. Paul and Fitzpatrick’s (2015) research on investigating student satisfaction uncovered that students achieve satisfaction with their advising experience when academic advisors move through a continuum of multiple advising styles. In addition, Kuhtmann (2005) noted that Socratic activity could be utilized in all advising relationships. Academic advisors should focus on empowering students instead of devoting allegiance to a particular advising style (Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015).

**Academic Advisors and Implicit Bias**

While we know much about academic advising and its influence on students, research on implicit bias in academic advising is lacking. Bahr’s (2008) research on “cooling out” students in the community college suggested that students may misinterpret prescriptive advising styles as academic advisors having biases against them. Students may view the cooling out process as insensitive, seeing academic advisors as trying to dissuade students from pursuing certain career paths because advisors do not believe in students’ abilities to be successful in that career path (Bahr, 2008). Since prescriptive advising is a one-way process and is mostly authoritative, some students may not be able to make the connection they desire with an academic advisor (Drake et al., 2013). Bahr (2008) suggested this advising style may not contribute to a conducive environment for student personal development and, thus, can take away from the interpretation of communication received from academic advisors.
Robbins (2012) asserted that students may interpret academic advising interaction differently depending on their class level. Some research studies suggested that first year students prefer an authoritative, prescriptive advising style (Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2015; Robbins, 2012; Smith, 2005). On the contrary, upper-level students may prefer more developmental and intrusive advising styles (Robbins, 2012). Students’ class level may influence feelings of bias in academic advisors’ interactions with students.

Some research has pointed to gender bias in academic advising. Nadler and Nadler (1993) reminded us that communication provided to female students from academic advisors outside of the classroom can contribute to an environment that negatively affects female’s learning experiences and overall confidence levels. If a female engineering student met with a male advisor who thought that she would not make it into the engineering field due to being a female in a male-dominated field, then it could potentially alter the advice and guidance that the male academic advisor presents to the student. Instead of offering advice to provide her the tools to be a successful female despite the male-dominated field, he may advise her to stop wasting her time pursuing engineering because he thinks that she will not be successful in the field. In this scenario, his personal bias would affect his decision making and subsequently the advice he provides to his students.

Academic advisors receive student evaluations of advising (SEA) at the end of each semester (Hester, 2008). Boring (2017) implied that female academic advisors may receive harsher evaluations from male students. However, Hester (2008) suggested that SEA may not be the best reflection of academic advising performance. Hester (2008) analyzed SEA to determine if there was a correlation between evaluation items and student characteristics. She found negative and positive correlations between evaluation items and student characteristics that are
historically representative as good advising. Hester’s (2008) research on SEA challenged literature on gender bias in teaching evaluations, suggested there may not be gender bias within academic advising, and provided suggestions to improve SEA.

The following study of legal decisions deviates from the scope of higher education; however, it contributes to questions that might be of interest in thinking about academic advisors and their interactions with students. Danziger, Levav, and Aynaim-Pesso (2011) examined judges’ legal decisions in a study conducted with eight parole judges in Israel. The authors noted that judges tended to spend very little time reviewing cases right before lunch and even less time reviewing them later in the day once fatigue set in. The authors found that approval ratings for individuals on parole increased significantly right after a lunch break and that approval ratings were significantly lower right up to the point of lunch time (Danziger et al., 2011). Is it possible that hunger or fatigue might affect academic advisors’ decision-making abilities? Are advisors more likely to take a personal, developmental approach with their students if they are not hungry or tired? Might experiences with hunger or sleep deprivation influence the attitude of academic advisors and their patience, for example, during their interactions with students? Might this lead to perceptions of bias or misinterpretation of advice provided to students?

Chapter Summary

Social psychology research on implicit bias demonstrated that although there may be many biases which are deliberate and consciously activated, the outward display of bias is unintentional because individuals typically retain negative attitudes and stereotypes at an unconscious or implicit level. Hence, implicit biases may creep into the way academic advisors acquire information and interact with students during academic advising appointments. Research suggested that students view academic advisors as authority figures and thus will accept and implement information received through advising appointments. However, there was little
research found that addressed implicit bias in academic advising. This study's exploration of academic advisors' perceptions of implicit bias in advisors' interactions with students builds on existing research on implicit bias and adds to the lack of literature on implicit bias in academic advising.
CHAPTER THREE:
METHODS

Student retention is a top priority in higher education. Teasley and Buchanan (2013) asserted that student retention is linked to how connected students feel to their campuses. A significant part of this connection may be based on the relationship students have with their academic advisors (Smith, 2005), individuals who have considerable influence on student decision-making. Bahr’s (2008) study of first-time freshmen enrolled in California semester-based community colleges found that advising is “actively beneficial” to students’ chances of success in college (p. 704). Bahr also acknowledged that biases and stereotypes can emerge in academic advising settings.

The purpose of this study was to explore academic advisors’ perceptions of implicit bias in interactions with students. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are academic advisors’ perceptions and understanding of implicit bias?
2. How do academic advisors perceive of and feel about implicit bias manifesting in interactions with students?

Research Design

This was a qualitative research study using exploratory case study design. Case study research describes the context or setting in which a case is situated, as well as the time during which data were collected, and provides detailed description of participants’ lived experiences (Creswell, 2013; 2018). An exploratory case study focuses on what and how questions in order
to discover rather than explain what is already known (Yin, 2014). An exploratory case study seeks to better understand participants’ perceptions and to uncover their lived experiences through the stories they tell. As the goal of this study was to explore implicit bias through participants’ accounts of their lived experiences, an exploratory case study was an appropriate methodology.

Case studies have distinct characteristics. Hancock and Algozzine (2017) asserted that case studies have three main characteristics. First, the research typically focuses on individuals, representative of a group, an organization, or a phenomenon. Second, the phenomenon is studied in its natural context, bounded by specific space and time. Third, the case is richly descriptive because it is grounded in deep and varied sources of information. This study met all three criteria: it explored implicit bias (a phenomenon) with academic advisors (individuals representative of a group) at a large, public university (their natural context) and used in-depth interviews to gather richly descriptive data.

**Social Constructivist Paradigm**

Social constructivism is a theory about learning based on the premise that individuals jointly construct knowledge and understanding about the world. Churcher, Downs, and Tewksbury (2014) applied Vygotsky’s conception of social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) to the use of social media platforms in web course environments. Churchill et al. (2014) described Vygotsky’s work as follows:

Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, regarded as the father of social constructivism, believed that knowledge was constructed through dialogue and interaction with others (Vygotsky, 1978). He argued that knowledge is co-constructed in a social environment
and that in the process of social interaction, people use language as a tool to construct meaning. (p. 35)

In essence, individuals construct knowledge through dialogue and interaction with others. Since individuals’ experiences differ, understanding will vary, and previous understanding may be challenged as a result of the dialogue and interaction.

Vygotsky’s work (1978) contributed greatly to the importance of dialogue and understanding experience and meaning in qualitative research. A study situated in a social constructivist approach believes that learning is an internal meaning-making process and that learning also occurs through dialogue and exchange with research participants. Knowledge can be discovered by exploring and seeking to understand individual experiences. To collect data attending to the assumptions of this paradigm, researchers use interviews, focus groups, observations, and reviewing documents that express individuals’ experiences and beliefs. In addition, social constructivist researchers acknowledge that meaning is created by both the researcher and participant, so the researcher must be cognizant of his/her own beliefs in addition to the beliefs of the participants.

**Researcher Reflexivity**

The researcher plays a salient role in a qualitative research study because he/she acts as the primary data collector. Before conducting any qualitative research study, a researcher should acknowledge any potential biases that the researcher may bring to the study. In this study, it is important to acknowledge that I am an academic advisor. I am a Black, cisgender man who works in an academic advising office in a college of education at a large, research university in Florida. I have been in this role for the last six years.
As an academic advisor, I provide timely, accurate information to students regarding academic program requirements, degree progression, academic policies and procedures, co-curricular activities, career planning, and campus resources. I advise students through scheduled appointments, walk-ins, group sessions, orientations, and class presentations. I engage in analytical problem solving using a variety of data sources to resolve issues in student records, and I collaborate with faculty members to ensure students’ timely progression to receiving their degrees.

I foster an open environment for understanding and working with diverse student populations. One of the main aspects of my advising philosophy is to assist students in obtaining the tools essential to achieve student success. One of my goals is to challenge their critical thinking, problem solving, and analytical skills while giving them adequate support and advice. I empower students personally, professionally, and academically by helping them engage in metacognition, a process which requires thinking about one’s own thinking. I also strive to create an open and comfortable environment for students to ensure the exchange of information occurs during academic advising appointments. I learn just as much from students as they learn from me. Preparing them as they transition from high school to post-secondary education is a fulfilling experience for me.

Thorough critical thinking skills can set students apart from competitors in a high performing, global career market. However, through conversation during academic advising appointments, I have noticed students often lack this imperative skill. During student conversations, I challenge them to reflect on their own thinking until they can piece together the trail of knowledge that led them to a conclusion. We explore this together, as I utilize prompting questions to help them move from a place of rote knowledge and comprehension to synthesis and
evaluation. As I notice progress over time through our discourse, I increase the level of expectation I have for students. Throughout the past year, I have noticed students I advised previously using words such as remember, understand, and apply. These words reflect knowledge utilized from the lower tiers of Bloom’s Taxonomy (as presented in Sivaraman & Krishna, 2015) in their conversation. Now, I notice the same students using words such as analyze, evaluate, and construct. These words reflect knowledge utilized from the higher tiers of Bloom’s Taxonomy.

Bloom’s Taxonomy is a hierarchical model used for classifying learning objectives in three domains–cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. The cognitive domain had six levels: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The levels were revised in 2001: remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, create (Anderson, 2001). Observed student data are used to draw conclusions on the level of achieved cognitive development (Sivaraman & Krishna, 2015). Sivaraman and Krishna (2015) studied the use of the revised taxonomy in examination assessment in the Caledonian College of Engineering.

I assess the students I advise in this manner as well. It is truly a blessing to witness students’ progress from emotional thinking to reasoned thought as they progress through the six levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy. I like to challenge students to reflect on their prior experiences to aid them in making connections to personal and educational goals.

I facilitate a positive acclimatization to the university while developing academic strategies that foster the exploration of careers and majors. Since higher education research asserted that a sense of comfort contributes to student learning, I believe students are more apt to learn and make connection to academic advising material if they feel comfortable and engaged in their surroundings (Strayhorn, 2012). Discomfort typically leads to a lack of sharing ideas and
thoughts. To help ease potential anxiety, I employ a developmental approach to advising students. In this approach, I learn their names and address them as such. I set calendar reminders to periodically check on them throughout the semester in school. I also provide them with a perspective about my personal and professional goals. Connecting to them in this manner adds a humanistic feeling to advising and makes the appointment feel like a genuine conversation as opposed to a formal meeting.

My goal is to assist students in meeting all academic requirements, so they graduate in a timely manner. This is partly why I had such an affinity for conducting academic advising research. I will continue to challenge students to reflect upon their experiences to assist them in becoming successful, holistic, lifelong learners. I hope the value that I place on my students’ success is shared among the academic advising communities. I believe a majority of academic advisors share this sentiment; however, their prior experiences may influence the way they see students, and my goal was to explore that possibility in this research study.

Prior to becoming an academic advisor, I was an admissions recruiter/advisor who managed a geo-market/recruitment territory. During this time, I coordinated with high school guidance counselors and traveled to high schools and two-year colleges to provide advising services. A part of this process included a follow up meeting about next steps with counselors, parents, and prospective students. In this role, I supported the enrollment efforts of a campus, college, school, and department by providing admissions information to prospective or newly admitted students. I provided admissions counseling and information sessions with visiting students and families, in person and in group settings, by telephone, correspondence, and e-mail. I also analyzed data to determine marketing effectiveness and impact on applicant and enrollment objectives for targeted populations. Preparing students transitioning from high school
to post-secondary education is a fulfilling experience. Through the experiences of recruiting students into the university and advising them until graduation, I have the pleasure of observing their growth from the point of admission until they submit a resume for a job after graduation.

I have a Bachelor of Science in Athletic Training and a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction with a concentration in College Student Affairs. I am currently pursuing a doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction with a concentration in Higher Education Administration. I have a student development background, and I truly enjoy assisting others in achieving their goals. Growing up in a lower/middle class African American family in Southwest Florida, I have had quite a few experiences with racism and lack of opportunity as a result. My family moved to the United States from Jamaica when I was two years old. I learned to speak English and grew up learning American history and traditions. All my K-12 education was within the public sector. Every K-12 school I attended had a high percentage of minority students, including Hispanic and African American. A majority of students in the schools were eligible for the federal free and reduced lunch program, and a substantial number of students just came to school to get something to eat because their circumstances at home hindered them from consistently receiving an adequate meal every day. This is one factor that contributed to my interest in this research study. There are other students in my position who are struggling emotionally and financially, and just need someone to believe in them until they have achieved a solid foundation to face obstacles on their own. Biased interaction from academic advisors may take away potential benefit from that foundation.

Another interest in this topic stemmed from a conversation I had with a faculty candidate during a search committee meeting. As the academic advisor for the undergraduate program seeking to hire a faculty member, I was invited to participate on a search committee. During one
of the interviews, I had an interesting conversation with an interviewee about personal training. Since the interviewee was a former personal trainer, I wondered if personal trainers had pre-conceived notions about their clients before training them. Specifically, I wondered if personal trainers had biased thoughts about a person prior to training them. The interviewee and I began thinking about what caused bias and preconception. We ended up concluding that bias could reflect an individual’s past life experiences. Subsequently, I began thinking of my own biased propensity in my current job. Of course, I did not think I was a biased academic advisor, so I wondered if it was possible for an academic advisor to display bias without being conscious of it. This ultimately developed into an interest in implicit bias.

My interest in this topic also stemmed from previous experiences with my high school guidance counselor. This individual ultimately shaped my thoughts regarding success and failure. During senior year of high school, a guidance counselor who thought that she knew me well mentioned there was a good chance of me not getting admitted to college. She also mentioned I would struggle academically moving forward because tests are how students are assessed in postsecondary education; if I had a challenge with them now, it would only get much more difficult from there. I have held a grudge against that counselor ever since that day; however, she was probably the reason I have a high zeal to continue education. In a sense, I feel that I owe her some credit, as her comments have provided the foundation for my insatiable quest for learning and knowledge. Sometimes, I wonder if she noticed potential in me, but also foresaw that I probably needed a nudge of encouragement to take some larger steps in life.

As I continue to develop in my professional career, my mind has started to evolve from rote memory to more abstract thinking. I find myself challenging policies and not simply accepting them as I normally would as a teenager. As I continue to do more research and engage
in reflexive thinking, I have learned more about myself and how biases and assumptions of the world can influence data findings. Post-positivism is the theoretical paradigm that I took an initial interest in; however, I am starting to view knowledge more from a social constructivist perspective as knowledge increases and I face new experiences in life. Truth for me is moving away from one truth only to possible multiple truths and realities. Ultimately, I would like advisors to be aware of potential biases they have, so they can limit the amount of influence bias has on their interactions with students.

**Research Site and Participants**

The study took place at a large, public, research university in Florida with an approximate undergraduate enrollment of over 60,000 students. I chose this type of institution because it was comparative in size and research dynamic to the institution in which I am currently employed. Initially, I wanted to conduct the study at my current institution; however, conducting it at a similar, but different, institution alleviated a potential conflict of interest for participants.

Stake (2010) asserted that the primary criterion for selecting participants is to capitalize on what a researcher can learn from them for the study. Creswell (2013) noted that about four to five participants is ideal while conducting a case study. The minimum desired number of participants for this study was five and the maximum was eight. I believed this range was sufficient to collect enough data until saturation.

I contacted the Associate Vice Provost for Student Success and Advising at the research study site and requested contact information for all academic advisors. I sent out a solicitation email to individuals identified and explained the purpose and goal of the study (see Appendix A). This solicitation email followed all guidelines of my university’s internal review board. Five full-time academic advisors responded to the email, indicating their willingness to participate in the
Initially, I hoped there would be more volunteers, so I would be able to purposefully select participants based on their knowledge and experiences related to implicit bias as they indicated on an intake questionnaire; however, I only secured five respondents/research participants. On the intake questionnaire (see Appendix B), participants described their knowledge of implicit bias and elaborated on any prior experiences related to implicit bias.

Prior to the first interview, I obtained verbal consent (see Appendix H) from participants by informing them about benefits and risks of participating, provided contact information, provided an in-depth explanation of the desired outcome and purpose of the research study and guidelines for voluntary participation. I also indicated that participants were encouraged to communicate freely about their experiences and explained procedures to ensure confidentiality of all participants.

Participants received compensation for completing this research study. They needed to complete both interviews to receive compensation. Compensation was a $20 visa gift card. Compensation was mailed to research participants upon completion of the second interview after member checking responses were completed.

**Data Collection**

The primary source of data for this study was in-depth conversational interviews. In-depth interviews ask open-ended questions to explore respondents’ feelings and perspectives on a subject and provide respondents with freedom to express these in their own words (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011). An in-depth conversational interview is “two individuals discussing a topic of mutual interest and ideally the discussion is relaxed, open and honest (Mason, 1998)” (as cited by Morris, 2015, p. 3).
Interviews were conducted over a four-week period with each participant interviewed twice (see Appendix E). Interviews were recorded and transcribed using Microsoft Office. Interviews were held virtually and recorded with Microsoft’s Teams application (see https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoftteams/teams-overview). Microsoft Teams is a virtual communication tool. This application combines file sharing, chat rooms, videos, meetings, audio recordings, and several other features into one platform. It is beneficial for use during interviews, meetings, and remote communications. Microsoft Teams can record participants’ interviews and store them for data management (see https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/record-a-meeting-in-teams). Microsoft Stream is another Microsoft application and is used to auto transcribe the interviews recorded on Microsoft Teams (see https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/transcribe-your-recordings). Microsoft Stream can automatically create captions for recorded videos using its automatic speech recognition technology. While viewing a recorded interview video, Microsoft Stream allows users the option to view captions at the bottom of the video. Next, the captions are concatenated into a transcript. Finally, captions are indexed to allow users to navigate to a specific location in the video by using the search feature.

In the first interview, participants were guided through open-ended questions to explore their perceptions and understanding of implicit bias. I had considered that engaging with participants around the construct of implicit bias might be uncomfortable for some participants and may interfere with the integrity of their responses. However, the conversational approach aligned well with a social constructivist perspective. It provided opportunity for genuine conversation between one academic advisor and another, as well as opportunity for sharing of experiences and making meaning of knowledge.
For the second interview, participants were provided with a student case vignette(s) and guided through open-ended questions to analyze the vignette and reflect on their experiences as academic advisors (see Appendix F). According to Finch (1987), vignettes are “short stories about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances, to whose situation the interviewee is invited to respond” (p. 105). I created multiple student vignettes and inserted social stereotypes in them to act as triggering stimuli. Social stereotypes included, for example, socioeconomic status, academic performance indicated by grade point average, academic major, race, age, and gender. I asked participants to review and respond to the vignettes and provide their professional opinion on how to best address the situation represented in the vignette. In listening to their responses, I used conversational probes for clarification and extension of information (e.g., Can you tell me more about that? How do you feel about that? Have you encountered this before?).

Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were analyzed using deductive and inductive analysis to identify codes, relational categories, and themes in the data. This analysis followed three phases.

In Phase 1, I assigned labels to pieces of text. Codes/labels assist in categorizing pieces of data so researchers can easily find, retrieve, and group segments related to a research question (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Codes also act as triggers or prompts for deeper reflection on the data’s meanings (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

I used deductive analysis, reviewing literature to identify codes and test a theory (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). I reviewed the literature on implicit bias and identified codes (prejudice, stereotype, microaggressions, implicit attitudes) and characteristics that described the codes. Table 1 presents the codes, literature sources, a definition of each code from the literature, and characteristics described in the sources.
### Table 1

**Codes, Definitions, and Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Prejudice</th>
<th>Stereotype</th>
<th>Microaggressions</th>
<th>Implicit Attitudes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bodenhausen, Macrae, &amp; Sherman (2016)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Purposeful expression or suppression of behaviors relevant to those norms conventionally associated with a salient social identity</td>
<td>Mental association between a social group category and a trait</td>
<td>Subtle slights and insults that targets of bias face, most of which occur without the perpetrator’s awareness</td>
<td>An unconscious action that indicates favor or disfavor toward some object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics described in the study</td>
<td>Social group blamed for economic crisis of 2008. Wealthy, super-rich, bankers, fund managers, and CEOs were singled out and vilified as a “proper” target of hostility. This promoted prejudice: if you are rich, you are bad.</td>
<td>Association of physical stamina for basketball players</td>
<td>Racial Microaggressions described in study as patterns of being overlooked, under respected, and devalued because of your race. Can be delivered in the form of subtle snubs or dismissive looks, gestures, and tones.</td>
<td>A voter voting for a particular candidate even though the voter only knows the candidate’s name.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I then used these codes to label text in the interview transcripts, carefully reading transcripts line-by-line and coding text with the four pre-established codes. Deductive coding
enabled me to focus on each code and quickly identify text that illustrated each code in the transcripts.

In Phase 2, I organized coded text in each interview under each of the four codes. Each code served as a kind of umbrella category under which several related, coded text passages fit. I used a conceptually clustered matrix (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) with columns and rows that bring together items that belong to one another (see Table 2). The matrix enabled clustering of coded text in participants’ responses under each of the four codes. The matrix enabled display of all the relevant responses of all the participants on one sheet. The matrix also helped me to see which of the participants talked about, or did not talk about, each code.

Finally, in Phase 3, I used inductive analysis to identify themes that described the patterns, connections, and meanings across the categories and participants. Inductive analysis enables opportunity for ideas, concepts, or new theories to emerge from data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) to answer the study research questions. Three themes were identified: (1) familiarity with implicit bias; (2) feelings about implicit bias and student success; and (3) participants’ implicit bias. The themes are described in Chapter 4.

Table 2

Distribution of Codes Across Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Prejudice</th>
<th>Stereotype</th>
<th>Microaggressions</th>
<th>Implicit Bias</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethany</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keisha</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darion</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A summary of the data analysis steps follows:

Step 1. Carefully read all transcripts line-by-line and coded text with the four pre-established codes (prejudice, stereotype, microaggressions, implicit attitudes). I also documented my thoughts and determined which participant responses were most relevant using a researcher reflective journal.

Step 2. Created a conceptually clustered matrix, using the four pre-established codes as column headers and participants’ pseudonyms as row labels. Placed relevant coded texts from each participants’ responses into the coded columns.

Step 3. Analyzed coded texts and made comparisons between participants and across participants’ responses.

Step 4. Reviewed data and identified underlying themes that described connections, patterns, and meanings across coded texts and participants.

I also used a software program called NVIVO to help manage data. NVIVO is a data analysis program for qualitative research (Coding Techniques, 2022). This software allows qualitative researchers to store and analyze data from their observations, focus groups, and interviews. It also organizes documents, codes, and creates a backup file for data projects. I used this software specifically to store participant responses, analyze them, and group them into the pre-established codes I identified from the literature.

**Trustworthiness and Credibility**

Creswell (2018) defined qualitative validity as the researcher checking for accuracy of the findings by employing certain validation procedures to establish trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility of the study. Yin (2014) suggested that a key strength of case study research is to
collect data from multiple sources. For this research study, I used a researcher reflective journal, rich description, member checking, a code checker, and triangulation to increase trustworthiness.

**Researcher Reflective Journal**

Ortlipp (2008) argued that a reflective approach to the research process is widely accepted in qualitative research. Researchers are encouraged to talk about themselves during the research process, while reflecting on their preconceived thoughts and experiences. Keeping a reflective journal aims to make visible the constructed nature of research outcomes. Ortlipp (2008) further argued that qualitative researchers should avoid trying to control researcher values through method or bracketing their assumptions. Instead, they should focus on consciously acknowledging their values. A researcher reflective journal is a strategy that can enable reflexivity and identification of preconceived thoughts and beliefs that guide a researcher’s judgment.

I used the researcher reflective journal prior to the study to document my thoughts on the outcome of the study, prior researcher bias, and experiences in academic advising. Next, I documented thoughts, feelings, and reactions to all participants’ interviews. Finally, I journaled analysis and conclusions made from reviewing interview transcripts. I used a reflective journal throughout the entire study to record my thoughts, ideas, beliefs, reactions, and decisions.

**Rich Description**

Qualitative researchers strive for understanding; they ask questions about believability, accuracy, and rightness (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Rich, detailed description of the participants, the setting, and perceptions and experiences related by the participants contributes to readers’ understanding of the findings and conclusions in the study.
**Member Checking**

Member checking is a form of validation to provide participants an opportunity to review the transcripts of their interviews (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). In this study, all participants were given an opportunity to review their interview transcripts, to provide any necessary input, and to correct/comment if there was something they felt did not reflect what they said during the interviews. Member checking provided a way to verify accuracy, provided elaboration on conversations during follow up interviews, and provided clarification on interview responses. As soon as interview transcripts became available, participants were sent an email with their transcripts along with a request to member check. All research participants member checked their transcripts and verified accuracy of their lived experiences represented in the transcripts. Some participants elected to make minor changes after reviewing their transcripts. For example, during the first interview, Bethany mentioned her current place of employment and the name of her department. She wanted to have a pseudonym used in place of that. In addition, Maria mentioned her real name during the interview and wanted a pseudonym instead. Lastly, Keisha made changes to her transcripts such as requesting pseudonyms for names of universities and providing full names for acronyms she mentioned during the interviews.

**Code Checking**

Gurr and Huerta (2013) suggested critical friends are a form of external support for qualitative researchers. This role is dynamic and requires a high level of skill, judgment, and understanding. Critical friends are described as trusted individuals who ask thought provoking questions, offer critiques of another individual’s work, and provide opportunity for data to be examined through another perspective (Gurr & Huerta, 2013). Critical friends may not be experts in the specific area of research being conducted. This can aid the researcher by enabling the
critical friend to genuinely ask compelling questions which may prompt the researcher to think differently about the data collected.

Dr. Nicholas Bardo, an Assistant Professor for Teacher Education in a comprehensive regional public higher education institution served as the code checker for the research study. The researcher does not personally know Dr. Bardo; however, he was highly recommended by his colleagues to assist with this research because of his expertise on the topic. He teaches classes on implicit bias. He assisted the researcher by reviewing qualitative codes, reviewing data analysis, reviewing participant transcripts, and providing feedback.

**Triangulation**

Triangulation is the use of multiple methods or data sources to develop comprehensive understanding (Patton, 2015). In this study data were collected through an intake questionnaire and two interviews. Data were analyzed both individually and across participants.

**Ethical Considerations**

Yin (2014) argued that qualitative researchers must acknowledge a responsibility to ethical conduct of research. A key issue in ethical conduct is protecting the confidentiality of study participants. During data collection, I carefully considered interview questions to avoid putting academic advisors in a difficult place where they might fear their responses would get them in trouble with their current institution. If at any point during an interview a participant seemed visibly uncomfortable, I reminded him/her that the research study was voluntary and that a participant may withdraw at any point.

Since potentially personal and sensitive participant data were shared during the research process, I ensured participant anonymity by using pseudonyms to identify all participants throughout the study. All data collected were stored in a password secure location only
accessible to the researcher. Microsoft Office (2021) has policies for recording and transcription (see https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoftteams/meetings-policies-recording-and-transcription). After conducting each interview, the researcher read the transcript while watching the recorded interview to verify accuracy of participants’ responses. Next, the researcher sent each participant his/her transcript for member checking. Then, the researcher checked the participants’ comments against the recorded interviews. The initial transcript and member checked transcript then became permanent data for this research study that is required to be retained for five years per internal review board (IRB) policy. The recordings will be deleted after five years.

**Potential Limitations of the Study**

In interview studies there is potential for researcher bias. As I am an academic advisor and a Black cisgender man, I acknowledge that my own perspectives and experiences may have influenced the questions I asked and my reactions to the responses of the participants.

My prior personal experiences with bias and racism contributed to the main reason why I was interested in doing this research. I also acknowledge that my prior experiences with this topic could have influenced how I interpreted data findings and how I drew conclusions from the data findings. Prior biased social interaction may have influenced my interpretations of what the participants meant in their responses.

An interview-based study also assumes that all participants would be forthcoming, truthful, and accurate in their responses. So, it is possible that participants may have reacted to my questions or statements or chose to withhold some information influenced by their own perspectives and prior experiences with bias and racism.
Chapter Summary

Chapter Three presented the methods used to conduct the study. First, the research design was described, as well as the social constructivist paradigm underlying the methods. The role of the researcher and reflexivity in relation to the nature of the study were presented. Next, data collection and data analysis methods were described. The chapter closed with description of trustworthiness and credibility strategies, ethical considerations, and potential limitations of the study. Chapter Four will present the research findings and results of data analysis.
CHAPTER FOUR:
RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore academic advisors’ perceptions of implicit bias in interactions with students, using semi-structured interviews as the primary data source. The interviews were designed to encourage active engagement between the researcher and participants and to uncover participants’ lived experiences and perspectives on the topic. This chapter presents findings resulting from deductive and inductive analysis of participant interviews. The chapter is organized in three sections. First, the setting in which the participants worked is described. Next, profiles of each of the participants are presented, based on their responses to the interviews. Then, three themes that emerged from cross-analysis of participants’ interviews are presented.

Setting

The setting for this case study was a large, public, higher education institution in Florida. The institution serves an approximate undergraduate enrollment of 60,000 students. The cost of attendance is roughly $22,000 per academic year. This institution follows a decentralized academic advising model for students. Professional academic advisors are located within their respective academic departments. However, each college has a central advising office also supported by professional academic and faculty advisors. This model provides an opportunity for academic advisors to focus on their area of expertise. Ultimately, this model is intended to lead to better guidance for students, career preparation, and overall academic support for students.
Participants

Five full-time academic advisors participated in this research, four females and one male. The age range for all participants was 26 to 44. The range of academic advising experience was between 1 to 15 years, but most participants had between 3 to 7 years of experience. This study included participants from a variety of ethnicities. Table 3 presents an overview of participant demographic information.

Table 3

Participant Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26 - 34</td>
<td>3 - 7</td>
<td>Master’s Doctoral degree in progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethany</td>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35 - 44</td>
<td>10 – 15</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35 - 44</td>
<td>1 - 3</td>
<td>Master’s Doctoral degree in progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keisha</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35 - 44</td>
<td>3 - 7</td>
<td>Master’s Doctoral degree in progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darion</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26 - 34</td>
<td>3 - 7</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants were provided an opportunity to select their own pseudonyms; however, all of them left the decision up to the researcher. Profiles of each participant follow, as well as researcher observations captured in the reflective journal.

Maria

**Background.** Maria has been an advisor for almost six years. She has worked at the same institution during her entire academic advising career. She is very familiar with her students’ majors because she advises for the program in which she received her bachelor’s degree. She also participates in state, regional, and national academic advising conferences. She has presented at some of those conferences as well. She is currently an adjunct teacher and a student in the higher education leadership program. Prior to academic advising, Maria was employed in office management working for a small company that made software technology for higher education institutions.

Maria chose her current advising position because the institution was her alma mater, a place that she was familiar with since she was previously a student there. Her favorite aspect of academic advising is her ability to orient students to the new university community. She enjoys helping students and their families learn what being a student feels like at her university. Students being positively impacted by the work Maria does is what makes her happy to be in this field.

**Student Population.** Maria advises for the university’s College of Business (pseudonym). She also graduated from the College of Business. When asked if that was one of the reasons she picked her current position, she responded:

Great question. Um, I do not know if it … kind of. Essentially, it was the place I got hired for to be honest. Like, I think if I would have gotten hired in engineering or humanities or
something like that, I would have taken it just again to get back into education. But, I was
insanely grateful that it was my same program because my training was basically
nonexistent because I already knew so much.

Maria estimated her student population to be around 75% female. She also explained that
her student population was “about 65 percent white and 35 percent minority in some capacity.”
The university is a Hispanic-Serving Institution, and Maria sees that reflected more in her
student population, but she does not believe she has the most diverse group of students. She
typically meets with transfer students, who represent approximately around 70% of the students
she advises. She elaborated that students usually do not start off with the College of Business,
they transfer into it. She mainly works with transfer students who are on academic probation and
allows an hour for each of their academic probation appointments. She usually does two
appointments in the morning prior to lunch and two in the afternoon. She does not exceed five
appointments in one business day. Maria’s department has seven full-time academic advisors,
and the college has five majors. All seven academic advisors advise for all five of the majors
housed in the college. They do not have assigned students; all advisors can meet with any student
regardless of major in or outside of the college.

**Advising Style.** Maria shared that the largest piece of her academic advising philosophy
is to incorporate the platinum rule while working with others. One might argue that the golden
rule is to treat others in the way you would want to be treated. Maria’s platinum rule involves
treating others in the way they would like to be treated. She connects with the developmental
advising style but may utilize appreciative advising to establish connection and build
relationships with students. For most students, her default advising style is prescriptive.
**Rapport with Students.** Maria believes she establishes a personal rapport with her students. When asked how she would describe her rapport with students, she responded:

I personally feel like our students, because my bachelor’s is in business and that is what their bachelor’s is going for (sic). For most of them, I feel like we get each other in a way that I’m going out of my way to make this such a pleasant advising experience for you and … and that’s kind of what I operate from. So, I feel like we do have a really good relationship. Um, the students … I feel like that I can’t connect with so much are ones that really did not care to get anything out of their advising appointments. Besides some quick questions they need answered, and then they’re done.

Maria strongly believes she consistently maintains a great rapport with her students. When asked about a student experience that stands out the most to her, she replied:

I feel like the most significant that stands out, to be honest … are the good moments you know where you, you know … student graduates and they come back after graduation to personally thank you or write you a thank you note or you know, share with you about the job they got. I feel like those are some of the most significant ones I remember. Of course, I have some bad ones that you know, students you know, left memorable impressions there, but it is hard to remember those so much as all the good. Students graduating and just being grateful to me as being like one supporter on their journey.

Maria explained that her expectations for her students who schedule advising appointments with her are low, and often still not met. She expects all of her students to arrive on time for their appointments, and, for virtual appointments, have accessed the Zoom link in advance. She expects them to know how to navigate virtual advising appointments, remember their university identification number, and to be in a mindset where Maria’s academic advice can
be received well. She expects students to be respectful of her time and to execute good academic advising etiquette. While elaborating on her expectations for students, she said:

I expect that they're in a place where they can actually receive my message. Well, and I mean that physically, like they're not on somebody's boat, they're not in the car on the way to like the dentist because … if they're not in a place where they can … at least I don't mind if you're in your living room and your family's around. I don't mind all that. I mind when you're not stationary and you're trying to multitask getting advising assistance and doing something else. I feel like it's kind of a disservice to the student and kind of disrespectful to the advisor’s time as well.

Maria establishes professionalism with students by showing up to work ready to assist them with their needs. She is courteous towards all students, punctual, and will apologize for being late; however, she will not spend time talking about why prior appointments may have gone over the allotted time. She likes getting right into assisting students with their questions. Maria further mentioned:

Professionalism for me too is making sure that I ask them what they need so that I can give them … like the best help. I don't like to make a lot of assumptions, so I like to ask them what it is you need so I can make sure they get it.

Maria also shared some challenges she has with her students. Some of her students do not take accountability for the mistakes they have made. She wants her students to understand that they must hold themselves accountable for their actions, since they are pursuing the bachelor’s degree. She feels challenged while triaging some student inquiries where students have failed to take responsibility for their mistakes. When asked if she faced any student challenges, she responded:
Yeah, I think that is part of the job. I think that the biggest challenge I have right now actually is students that do not take accountability for the mistakes they have made. If you make a mistake, own up about it, we will go out of our way to help figure out how we can help you with it. We have cases where students make a mistake … they did not add themselves to a class in time…. They know they did not get that passing grade…. They did not file their intent to graduate application…. Whatever it is, they made a mistake. And, instead of coming to us and saying I am so sorry, I completely forgot to submit that application on time. That was my apology, is there anything I can do? They come in lying saying I was never told I had to submit an application. I did not have that button on my student center … and it's so much harder to work with someone that is blaming everybody but themselves. And that's where I feel very challenged because at the end of the day, I want students to understand that you have to be accountable to yourself in this journey to get your bachelor’s cause you are the main one on it.

**Researcher’s Observations.** Maria was the first interview conducted for this research study. Out of all the participant interviews, the first one with her resonated with me the most. This is partly because there are many similarities between us, including attendance at national organizations, presenting at academic advising conferences, length of advising employment, being an adjunct instructor, and pursuing a doctoral program. She also shares an identical advising style and approach with advising students. Her advising style is predominantly prescriptive. She had an upbeat, energetic personality for the entire interview and answered each question confidently, with a smile. Maria’s demeanor suggested that she was excited to be doing the interview. She answered each question presented to her thoroughly and with detail. There were several times when her responses answered multiple questions on the interview protocol. At
the end of her first interview Maria expressed that she was happy I was exploring this topic. She explained that it is necessary for academic advisors to connect in this way and engage in discourse about a sensitive topic. She thinks that bias is discussed in various diversity related aspects; however, more should be discussed within higher education and K-12 schools.

Maria’s second interview was similar to the first one in terms of her temperament, demeanor, and detailed answers. I found myself excited going into this interview with her. Maria’s answers to the case vignettes displayed a genuine care for students and their success. She answered all questions confidently and with conviction. Her advice for future academic advisors and prospective individuals who are interested in this field was to do what works best for you. She encourages individuals to take time for themselves to avoid burnout in this field.

**Bethany**

**Background.** Bethany was born in the Philippines and lived there until she was five years old. She speaks a mixture of her native language, which is Tagalog, and English. As a young girl, she had challenges with certain aspects of communication because she was learning English in school, but her native language was spoken at home. She became heavily involved in sports starting from middle school and later ended up coaching student-athletes at her alma mater. Playing sports acted as a stress relief for her. In college she played basketball, volleyball, and tennis. Bethany has two children who take up most of her time outside of her professional career. She has earned associate and bachelor’s degrees. She has a master’s degree as well. In her culture, education is highly valued. She also comes from a generation where respecting your parents is a crucial aspect of her culture. Her parents impressed upon her that attending a higher education institution was an obligation.
Bethany has been an academic advisor for over ten years. Her favorite part of her career is being able to make a positive impact on students and motivate them to achieve their goals. Through the mentoring program at her current institution, she has opportunity to impact students through her advising. Playing sports has been a large motivator for her life, and she wants to assist students in finding a similar motivation so they can meet their goals as well.

Student Population. Bethany advises for several majors in the College of Education (pseudonym). She believes that she advises more female students but was not sure if that was specifically in her major or if it was university wide. She emphasized that the university had a large female student population overall. She mainly advises transfer students but will see a fair number of non-traditional students as well. She estimated that about 80% of her student population are transfer students. She explained that it is rare for her to advise first time in college (FTIC) or freshman students. Typically, she gets students who declared an outside major initially and then switched their major to education. After academic advising appointments with Bethany, students share with her that they believe education is the right fit for them. Bethany was not familiar with the racial demographic of her students or the institution. She estimates her total advising population to be 400 students. Depending on the time of the year, Bethany typically sees around four students a day for about an hour each. When asked the reasoning of only seeing four she said:

Typically, I will only see four students in that day because my appointments are at least an hour long and it takes everything out of me because I mentioned like, being an empath. So, because I used to try to fit a whole bunch in a day and I would just be a total mess at the end of the day. So, I realized four would … is like the most that I'm … that I'm able to like, keep. To say you know, to keep going.
**Advising Style.** Bethany’s academic advising style favors mostly developmental and student-centered approaches. She prides herself in being versatile with all her students. She allows them to lead during their advising appointments and provide her with the information she needs to assist them in the best way. As a result of her being an empath, she described absorbing the students’ issues and treating them like they are her own. During the first interview she mentioned:

I'm an empath. I feel everything so when I see that student, even though it's through the screen, I can … I could tell if they're like, oh my God, I don't wanna be, I don't wanna … like why am I here or why I don't want to get lectured about being on probation or I'm embarrassed like I … I got this I don't why … do I have to listen to her or man I need help I … I really need you and you know I got this going on and, and they … they need to vent. Like, I really go off of that to figure out how I'm going to speak to that student. So, it's very much personalized.

While she is interacting with students, she predominantly relies on her instincts and emotional perceptions of the students she advises. She believes that advising students in this capacity has worked for her over the last ten years, and she has not had many issues. She further elaborated:

I really go off of gut a lot of times to be honest with you and … and a lot of times that pays off. And, then there may be times where I'm off but … but that's what I've done in these ten years. I hope it's been working. It seems … It seems to be working. We have a really high retention rate at our college, one of the highest out of the university. So … so that … so it's not this specific theory you know, advising theory that I use. That I really try to sometimes be more directive when it needs to be that way. Sometimes I put in a little tough love and sometimes I'm in a meeting with a student for an hour and a half.
Getting to that point of like working it in. I'm always like, I'm an active listener and I'm always trying to figure out … ok, where can I put this in? Because this is what needs to be said for.

Bethany used the following example to represent her advising style with students:

For example, one student who was just recently disqualified, she would not say the word disqualified. She said that the … the institution would not let her enroll back in. That was her … her, that she was total, just not. I guess you could say in denial so to speak right? And, so I allowed her to use this verbiage so to speak, and just continue to work through and let her know what she would need to do in order to return. But at the end, I could see that she was opening up to me and listening to what I was saying and I knew that she needed this tough love and I said listen, you have to take accountability when you interview with me when it's time for you to … to return to our college (pseudonym) and you, you want to apply because it's not guaranteed. But when you applied to our college and you interview with me, I need to see a change in your mindset. You were academically dismissed! I, I had to say it to her for her to like, actually admitted to herself in a way like you could see it, but of course you know that's not actually happening. Maybe this is all in my mind. I don't think I don't know. But this is good. This is the type of thing that I'm doing with in my meetings. Like I'm very like … very in it like the, I'm … I'm one of those people where I watch a movie and I'm boohoo crying because I'm really in that movie. But I, I'm like that with my students as well like I'm in it with them when they're talking about their family. You know, passing you know, people have passed away or you know they're working 60 hours because they need to, you know? Be able to, to you know, it's their livelihood, and so on and so forth.
Rapport with Students. Bethany is very confident in her ability to connect with students. She believes she has established a highly positive rapport with all her students. She oversees a student mentor program as a part of her job responsibilities. This program assists students who are struggling academically and on academic probation. Bethany explained that she has many students who will meet with her because it is a requirement since they are on academic probation. However, even after they are off academic probation, they still choose to meet with her because of the deep connection she tries to establish with every student. She has established and retained this rapport with students even during the COVID-19 pandemic. She elaborated:

I love my mentoring programs. Specifically, I have a deep relationship with them and, and I love it that way. I will say, you know, with us being remote in these past two years, that … that has been a difficult thing to do. But you know before that, um, you know a very good relationship. Like I, I am there to guide them and mentor them and try to help them to be the best that they can be and you know they have my cell phone number. They text me, they … I've written millions of recommendation letters. I just wanna see them get their dream job and … and go on for their masters if that's their goal. So, you know that, that I pride myself when I start, you know, when I have orientation, I tell them if they see me talk to me … like there is a many of you, but I want you to know that I want you to, to be in my life.

Although Bethany has established a positive advising rapport with her students, she often questions if she has made herself too accessible to her students. I specifically asked her what she considers professionalism and if she had any challenges in advising her students. She replied:

I, I think that's a really, really great question, because I, I wonder sometimes, am I too accessible to them. You know, I mentioned earlier about my … my text, you know that
they text me and there are sometimes where they're texting at a crazy time and they'll be times where I'll, I'll respond because it … it's really important or I want to. I want to make sure that they know I'm there. And then there's other times where I'm like I need to make sure I have boundaries and that, that I … I can't just text this at midnight. You know that they're … that they're needing something, and so I think that's a struggle with, with me because I really do want to be there for that student and build that trust with them. So, it's really tough, but I, of course, that professionalism is there in terms of … like they know that they can't like, I'm not gonna uh, what's the word? I mean, no one's ever done this like you know I, I don't even know how to answer that to be honest. Like it, I'm, like if you ask people in the office, am I professional? Yes, you know I, I make sure that I'm never like I'm, I'm always doing my job. I show respect to others and show respect to my students but, am I giving them too much? I, I don't, I don't know that is that's so. Is an objective? What does that word objective? Is that subjective? I always mix up the two, but I, I think that's a subjective question you feel and then objective is how someone else might feel. It's really hard. Like I, I think I have … that they know not to like, ask me to go to a bar, you know they know … like they, they look at me as the … It's a mentoring program, so they're looking at me in that way. That's my experience.

I noticed that she hesitated and paused for a brief moment before answering this question. Her nonverbal body language, pausing, and response suggested to me a degree of apprehension in answering this question. To be clear, her response did not suggest any form of negativity; however, I did notice a change in her body language prior to and after answering this question.

**Researcher’s Observations.** Bethany was the second person to respond to the recruitment email. She was excited at the possibility to discuss this topic with a fellow academic
advisor. Her academic advising style was predominantly developmental. She described herself as a highly empathetic person who was conscious of her students’ emotions. She wanted to ensure that once students were finished with their advising appointment, she had addressed all their emotional needs as well as their questions and concerns. Bethany spent a lot of interview time elaborating on all questions that she was asked. She provided many details and examples to provide a full understanding of her intended message.

During the first interview, Bethany shared some personal information while answering one of the interview questions. After sharing this information, I noticed she began to tear up and start crying for a brief moment. I asked her if she was alright and paused the interview to allow her a moment to compose herself. Shortly after, she continued her response to the interview question and explained why she became overwhelmed with emotion during her response. During this interview, I had a significant challenge in following Bethany’s train of thought. There were several times where I had to ask her to elaborate on a question because I could not understand her intended message. I noticed a large number of repeated words and stuttering during this interview. Bethany ended up disclosing that she just previously was not feeling well and was in the process of getting better while she was conducting the interview.

In the second interview, Bethany provided elaborate examples to the case vignettes. She explained that her main priority was the emotion of her students. She considers herself an empath and is extremely invested in the emotion of her students. Bethany’s answers to the case vignettes were so detailed that only two case vignettes were investigated as opposed to all four of them. She appeared and sounded better during the second interview.
Sara

**Background.** Sara has been an academic advisor for almost three years. Her advising style is prescriptive. A couple years ago she had a career change from athletics where she worked as a college coach for 17 years. She just recently started advising right before the COVID-19 pandemic. She explained that she only has the perspective of advising students post COVID-19 pandemic. She earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees. She is currently working on her doctoral degree. She is starting her research proposal, but still in the early stages of her dissertation. Her research interests are implicit assumptions in academic advising. Since her research interests are similar to this research study, she thought it would be beneficial to participate in this case study.

Sara’s favorite part of being an academic advisor is that she works with students of various backgrounds and majors. She advises for several majors and enjoys it because she meets students with different backgrounds and believes it is important for them to feel connected to their university. She advises freshman, transfer, and international students. She enjoys orienting them to their new university communities.

**Student Population.** Sara advises for a variety of majors in the College of Arts & Sciences (pseudonym). She was not familiar with exact numbers or percentages for the student demographic in her college but shared some generic information about her student population. She predominantly sees females while advising most majors in the college. She also advises significantly more transfer students than first time in college students. She is not sure if that is associated with her majors or if that is representative of the entire institution, but she believes there are more females pursuing undergraduate degrees than there are males.
Sara was only working for about a month prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Academic advising practices which affected the way students scheduled appointments changed heavily after COVID-19. Prior to COVID-19, Sara only advised students in person; however, after COVID-19, Sara only advised students virtually. Although, she has designated majors she advises, Sara can see current or prospective students. She typically works with students who are on academic probation via 30-minute advising appointments.

**Advising Style.** Sara’s academic advising style is mainly prescriptive. However, it is not because she has an affinity to the prescriptive approach to advising students, it is because she believes it is the most practical as an academic advisor. During her first interview, she shared that she has done significant research on academic advising practices and has created an academic advising philosophy. She could not remember her exact verbiage in the advising philosophy, but she did remember that it reflected the academic or student-centered advising style. She read literature about academic advising styles, wrote an advising philosophy, and intended on utilizing it with her students, but she expressed that incorporating the developmental advising style into appointments was not practical because it could be time consuming; neither was it thoroughly explained how to actually use it with students. Overall, she connects more with the developmental advising style, but she defaults to a prescriptive one. She elaborated on using the prescriptive style and mentioned:

I think what I've … what I've read in the literature … As it seems I don't know, I wouldn't say taboo necessarily, but it seems like prescriptive advising kind of has a bad rap. And I know that there's a big push for developmental advising. But what that really means, I don't know. I don't have like, my caseload is huge. I don't get to connect with students as much as I feel like a developmental advising approach would call for. I don't know my
students that well. Basically, our model of advising is students come to us and that's normally when they have a problem with something. We do outreach, but we can only do so much and we can also only engage them so much, and so I think that the push for developmental advising, which is what I like of course, and the kind of impact that I want to have on students is there, but I don't know if that's the reality. And so, my advising philosophy, honestly, I don't like … I honestly don't even remember what I wrote a year and a half ago, just because it's just kind of on my shelf now and I'm not … I just don't think it's something that I've ever really been able to…. to implement.

**Rapport with Students.** Sara appears to be very passionate about advising students in her majors. She advises them to the best of her ability and maintains a positive, professional working rapport with all students she advises. However, while interviewing her, she made it clear that she was not here to befriend students, she was here to advise them. She wants to be a guide for them along their academic journey, but also wants to hold them accountable for their actions. She prides herself on giving students the right information to best address their individual needs. She described her rapport with students as:

> Giving them the right information. Um, and helping them along their path, and helping them understand what they need to do to get to where they need to be with their academic plan, and also just to provide clarity on policy that maybe they don't know to ask about or that they need to know about and some other like … process things.

Sara wanted to make clear that she tries to be friendly and approachable with students but prefers to establish and maintain professional rapport with students at all times. This is what makes her the most comfortable while advising her students. She provided the following example:
For example, our law students with getting their professional licensure exams, things like that. They don't always know to ask those questions and so I think my rapport with students … I'm, I'm not there to be their friend. I do have boundaries in that I make it really … I believe I do. I make it explicit off the bat, what my expectations are of them with our appointments and if they are not following through., um, I'll point that out to them and say that we need to reschedule for whatever reason. So, I think I … I would say … I guess it's you know if there's something in their professional life that I feel is a little sloppier, unprofessional, I think that I will gently nudge them to recognize that and give them opportunity to see that. Which I think is my job, honestly, um. I like to be a part of helping them kind of develop in that way. Um, but that's again just like kind of my own, my own perspective. So, I'd say a professional rapport, I think, is probably the most sensible answer for that.

Sara sets very clear expectations for her students and holds them accountable. She believes that she is stricter on her students than co-workers in her current office. During this portion of her interview, she explained this confidently. She mentioned there being a time when she first started working in an advising office where students’ expectations were far more relaxed, but that dynamic changed after COVID-19. Specifically, she mentioned:

My expectation for students is that they're present, that they're engaged in the appointment and sometimes, you know I'll have an appointment with a student that we set-up a week before and they'll be driving, you know, wanting to talk about their advising or so. When we send them appointment notifications and we schedule appointments with them, it's pretty explicit. It's you know, assuming they read their emails, but when they get the notification, we say exactly what we're expecting of them.
We want them to be signed on to their computer. We want them to be ready for their appointment. We want them to be ready to listen, distraction free if possible. Again, COVID, I know that. You know people are home and that's hard to do sometimes, but we try to stay we need you to be present for your appointment, and so sometimes it's challenging. And, so for me, um, it depends on the situation, but I don't like to just, I do not e-mail students their schedules because I don't wanna be an emailing advisor. I like to, uh, when they come in for an appointment, I like to teach them and show them how to use their degree audit so that they can see for themselves what classes they need. But I will help guide them. Of course, anytime they want to meet with me if they want to go through that, we've got different tools they can use to see their schedule. So, I tried to just give them the tools honestly and then we can go through it together in terms of their class schedules and stuff like that. But if there's a student driving or there is a student that is just not… if they're at work, you know, and they're trying to call me on their 10 minute coffee break so that they can get their schedule planned for the next semester, Nope! We're going to reschedule, and they get mad, but I'm like, sorry you know this is what we're doing, so and it's, it's always it's … It's been ok. Like I've had students that are like I'm sorry. You know the next time we circle back and we meet and they're like, I'm sorry, that was rude and I'm like it's ok, like you're busy, you're trying to figure it out. How do you learn like … Whatever. So, it usually it's it works out. But my expectations, like I've … I've got some non-negotiables and that certainly is one that I will not talk with you while you're driving unless it's an emergency which can't imagine you calling your academic advisor for an emergency. So, you know what I mean. So, those are my
expectations is that they're just present and they're available and that they're listening and they're in a place where they can do that. So yeah, those are my expectations.

Sara did have some challenges while advising students. She believes her largest challenge is students not coming prepared to her advising appointments. She has had prior experiences with students who expected to attend advising appointments and be provided a piece of paper with their academic plans on there and not be held responsible for putting any effort into their appointments. Sara expresses to all her students that there is not a one size fits all approach to advising them. Students are different and have different needs so she cannot give them their class schedules only and end the appointments because not all students will react positively to that approach. Sara mentioned this example while working with transfer students:

Our transfer students for example. I mean it takes weeks and weeks and weeks for transfer students, transcripts, and test scores. And you know whatever it may be, to be updated on their degree audits. And so, I really rely on them to work with me in terms of like, you know, there's classes on their degree audits that are showing them on credit for, but maybe they've taken these classes and so I need them to be engaged with me so that they can help me like, see like, have you taken this class before? Like, does it sound familiar? So, we really need to work together on that, and I think sometimes students get frustrated when that stuff isn't there or I think sometimes … I think they think that I know a lot more than I do about their specific needs and their case by looking at their degree audit and I just have to remind them that this is the first time we're meeting and like they need to help me know their background and like help me understand where you're coming from in terms of what classes you've taken and what do you want to do. Where do you want to go? If you don't know, ok, you know like I just need them to work with
me a little bit more too. So, I think sometimes the challenge is just … I think it's helpful when I lay out the expectations that I have up front, but also ask them what. What are you looking for from advising, like what … what are you hoping to get out of this? Um, how can I help you? Um, what are you here for? Like what help do you need? Do you need help like? But again, some of it too. Yeah, I don't know. I don't know if it's like. I'm not sure of what the solution is for the challenge of students maybe not coming to advising prepared, and it's not all students that are like that, but I'd say probably more in my experience are a little bit less prepared for advising appointments than are not, and I'm not sure if it's like that in all colleges. I'm not sure if it's like that with all students. If it's a transfer student or a freshman thing. Yeah, I … I'm not sure what the solution is necessarily, but I think that would be my biggest challenge is them, maybe not being as prepared for advising appointments as I would expect them to be, but also what their expectations? Um, just trying to figure that out as well, because I don't think they all even know if I ask them. You know, they're like I was told to come here, so I'm like, ok. Yeah, tell me how many times I've heard that one.

**Researcher’s Observations.** Sara was the third participant to respond to the recruitment email and conducted her first interview during her lunch break. During the first interview, Sara explained that since she was working on an implicit assumption research proposal, she was trying to separate her own personal thoughts away from some of the research she has reviewed while providing responses to interview questions. During the first interview, when I began inquiring about implicit bias specifically, I noticed a subtle change in response time to these questions as opposed to prior interview questions. I also noticed brief pausing in between answers shared related to implicit bias. Her responses in the beginning of the interview were
shared much quicker than her responses toward the ending of the interview. Sara’s responses to
the case vignettes in her second interview suggested that she was mildly uncomfortable with the
case scenarios. I noticed she was hesitant to answer them directly. Sara had no regrets with
academic advising, and her advice for future advisors was to take your time while you are
advising students. She believed it is imperative that academic advisors provide accurate
information to students.

Keisha

Background. Keisha has been working in higher education since 2010. She started as an
academic advisor in 2016 and has continued in her current position since then. Keisha earned her
bachelor’s and master’s degrees. She is currently working on her doctoral degree. Her research
interests are in educational leadership and adult learners. She became an academic advisor
because she wanted to provide students with a better experience than she had as a college
student. When she was in college, she did not have an academic advisor. At her undergraduate
institution, the faculty members advised for their programs. She had several challenges with
faculty advising, so she began to self-advice. She does not believe in students self-advising, so
she wanted to provide them with top quality academic advising services. Her favorite part of
being an advisor is building relationships with students. Her advising style is predominantly
developmental. She enjoys helping students create goals and seeing them through to completion.
Her interview responses suggested she was deeply invested in the academic success stories of her
students.

Student Population. Keisha advises for the College of Behavioral and Community
Sciences (pseudonym). She was not familiar with the exact student demographic of her majors
but shared she has noticed some of her majors have mostly transfer students and some have
mostly women. Depending on the time of year, she advises anywhere from eight to ten students per day. She also works with certifying students for graduation, so this takes up the afternoon portion of her day. Her advising appointments are typically 30-minutes each. She was not aware of her total academic advising student load, but she mentioned the institution’s ratio for her college was about 1800 students to one advisor. Keisha mainly works with transfer students; however, she can meet with any student who wants to speak with her. When asked if she only advises students in her college, she responded:

I can see any student, so like if you had a student that was interested in my … my majors in my college, I can see them. They can schedule an appointment with me the way they have. The software is called … well, they call it EAB software. I believe the student should be able to schedule an appointment with me even if they’re not in my college, but generally I see students just within my college. But, I have seen outsiders that are planning to change their major or they're interested in the minor or something to that effect.

Advising Style. Keisha mentioned having a written academic advising philosophy, but that she was not aware of it at the time of the interview. She shared that she identified with the developmental advising style. This was largely because she was indoctrinated into developmental academic advising at her previous higher education institution. Her previous institution focused heavily on building rapport with its incoming FTIC students to ensure they were personally and academically prepared for higher education. Although her style is developmental, she believes that advisors should utilize certain advising styles depending on the students they are advising. She elaborated:
You have to flip flop, you have to because you kind of have to read the student, um, as far as what they're coming in for. I think since I've been at my current institution, it's been a hard fight to try to hold on to that philosophy that I have that I came in with because culturally, at this school it's mostly prescriptive. They say appreciative, you'll hear people say that, but the students have been trained that it's mostly prescriptive because ... and the way you know this is because of how they approach you, they treat it like it's the call center. They don't treat it like it's somewhere that I'm getting support while I complete my degree.

Keisha strives to ensure students’ academic needs are met, but she wanted to make it clear that she prefers “teaching fish” as opposed to “giving fish.” Keisha explained that she prefers to teach students how to navigate higher education institutions as opposed to providing all the answers to their questions without them thinking about it first. She was not concerned if students had experiences with previous advisors who provided them with every answer they needed, she would like to challenge students to take charge of their own learning with her assistance.

**Rapport with Students.** Keisha described her rapport with students as “pretty average.” She previously did a mentoring program to assist academically needy students, and some of them still kept in touch with her. She believes this is a testament to the quality of her academic advising ability. She does not think she has a bad reputation within the college, and overall, students like her. In her current college, she does not face challenges with students; however, she wanted to share the following example of a previous challenge she faced prior to advising her current students:
So, I've gotten yelled at just last year. A parent and a student. So, this unnamed department that has a required internship did not inform the student that she didn't need to do her internship because I guess some type of work experience or something to that effect. But she had a hard time getting in touch with them. This girl ended up going to Kansas for an internship. Her parents pay for housing, all this stuff. Just for her to find out, like midway through that she didn't really need it. It was just a hot mess, um, we and how did this all come out? It's because when the graduation part comes up and I start doing my cleanup process, I catch stuff and that's when it comes out and I ended up having to get my director looped in because at that point it was beyond my control. It wasn't much that I could do. We were like a few weeks out from graduation, so the deadline to participate in the ceremony had passed to be in the book, like your name printed in the book. All of that had passed. It was just terrible. And she was going off on me at I can't lie. I had to change my tone a little bit because I'm human. She wasn't going to go off too much and her mom on the phone. Long story short, we ended up with my director ended up getting the admissions, I'm sorry, the registrar's office to get a book that was going to be printed specially made with her name in it and get her a last minute way into the ceremony. But she ended up just saying “ok, I'll just wait until fall and I'll just walk in fall” But scenarios like that. Yes, I've been a part of where I've been yelled at, or had the outcome come out on me, especially like in orientation. I remember last year and this is kind of what prompted even with my doctoral research with adult learners because I had a student who was onboarding and she was just very upset. I was the third person she got to, but I was able to just walk her through it. I don't know why the other two coworkers couldn’t, but she was like “I don't know why I applied here. I regret coming
here” and she was just going off, but by the end of it we got her in at least 2 classes and she worked, so that's all she needed anyway. Um, and she's an older woman. She's not like a 21-year-old in school like she's grown like in her 40s or 50s or something like that. And just kind of navigating those types of scenarios, even though I didn't start it, I’m willing to still take the hit and we'll just go through it from there.

**Researcher’s Observations.** Keisha was the fourth participant to respond about participating in the research. During the first interview, I noticed that she seemed very comfortable in talking with me and explaining her answers. Her thoughts were clear, elaborate, and detailed. She did not stutter or pause much on responses to interview questions. After the second interview, she explained that she has been helping doctoral students out as research participants for the past couple months. She mentioned feeling a sense of obligation to do it since she was currently collecting data for her research project. She also disclosed that she felt comfortable with me as a researcher due to being the same race and explained that it made her comfortable in speaking freely on this topic. She explained that she did not feel any pressure and that she could respond freely to interview questions.

**Darion**

**Background.** Darion has been an academic advisor for almost four years. He predominantly works with freshman students and helps orient them to the institution. Darion has earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees. Prior to being an academic advisor, he worked in the graduate admissions office. He explained that during his previous employment position, he had a challenge in that office. He believed the challenge was because he was the only black male professional who worked in the office. Darion wanted to become an academic advisor so he could work directly with students. He enjoys working with them in an orientation capacity. His
advising style is predominantly developmental. He likes to watch them grow and develop during their academic career. He wants to develop strong rapport with students, so they feel comfortable enough to share what they need to be successful so he can assist them. His favorite part of being an advisor is orientation, welcoming new students, and watching them matriculate to graduation.

**Student Population.** Darion advises students in the College of Behavioral Sciences (pseudonym) but was not as familiar with exact details about his student population. When asked about his student demographic, he mentioned that he predominantly sees “white females.” He believes the college mainly houses transfer students, but he typically sees FTIC students. He later mentioned that a large aspect of his job is to welcome students during their orientation to the university. He considers himself the “windows” to the university in that the FTIC students will see him first. He does meet with transfer students on occasion, but primarily FTIC because of the programs he advises. Darion usually has around eight or nine 30-minute appointments and an advising ratio of roughly 200 students per advisor.

**Advising Style.** While describing the style he incorporates into his interactions with students, Darion did not mention a specific academic advising style, but he did describe characteristics that reflect a developmental advising style. He explained that some students create a “monster” in their heads to represent meeting with academic advisors, meaning they are scared to meet with their academic advisors. As a result, Darion likes to welcome students to the new university community and make them feel comfortable enough to be themselves around him. He believes that some students have pre-conceived notions about meeting with him which can create barriers to meaningful interactions between them. He likes to make students feel “as comfortable as possible, but also well informed by the time that they leave” his academic advising appointments. Darion further explained what he wants:
Create an environment that lets them know that I want you to be successful as a student.

And, I also want to give you information so you can be a part of our university community because you're not just going to represent yourself when you … you know when you go out and you know you're going throughout all the university things, you're also going to be, you know, a part of the part of the university community as well, so you know just making sure that you know I'm just kind of meeting them where they are and just letting them know that. I'm a resource for them. While they're … while they're here.

Darion referred to this style as a "wholesome" advising style focused on students’ development where they can feel free to be their “authentic selves.” He understands his authority as an academic advisor but does not want students to distance themselves from him because of a lack of flexibility within advising style. He prefers for their interaction to be respectful for him, and fun and engaging for the students.

**Rapport with Students.** Darion described his rapport with students as “fluid.” It is not only about course recommendations or strictly academic related content, but if students are dealing with personal issues, he always lets them know that if they give him a degree of insight on what is occurring, he would be able to assist and give a second opinion or provide university resources for them. He also enjoys getting to know students personally and learning about their backgrounds. He mentioned that student interaction for him is “always just so engaging.” He further explained:

> [Students] can just come and just sit in my office and we could just talk about, you know, a TV show, or, you know, anything like that if they have some spare time or just to come and vent, um, you know, things of that nature. I have a lot of students like that where we've been able to build up rapport and them feel comfortable enough with me and I with
them to share those type of things with each other to where it's not like when I see their name come across, I know that it's, you know, It can … It can be more than just, you know, I'm telling you what classes to take, you know, sometimes that is just like what gets them in the door. But I know once they get there like we're going to talk about more than just like you know, you know, take this and that, you know, be on your way. So sometimes they'll last for an hour or even two if the schedule will allow that. But I do definitely have enough rapport with a lot of my students to, you know, have those type of things happen.

Darion expects his students to be prepared when they meet with him. He explained that he does not initially have the expectation for FTIC students because they are new. He shared that he was not as prepared for his own academic advising appointments as a new student in college, so he understands if new students share that same sentiment. He does expect for students to be prepared once they have met with him a few times. He typically uses the academic advising appointment with new students to show them how to come prepared to appointments and to take control of their own learning and development.

Darion does not feel like he faces any challenges with students. He believes that due to his personality and age, he can connect with a majority of students. During his orientation sessions, he incorporates breaks for them to avoid monotony and boredom. He also uses that time to get to know them, so they can establish a connection prior to their academic advising appointment. He further elaborated:

I try to pick up on what some of their experiences have been prior to that and try to, you know, curb that if I can while we're in orientation. So that when they do meet with me, we don't have that, just like that, that film of awkwardness when we meet with each
other. Or at least they don't feel awkward meeting with me because I … I don't, I just, I really just feel comfortable in my role and I would feel comfortable if I had what I had as far as support, or if I didn't. I think I'm just at that point now where I'm just like I'm gonna just be myself as an advisor.

**Researcher’s Observations.** Darion was the final participant to respond to my recruitment email. In his interviews, he shared a unique perspective about some of the employment challenges he has faced related to his race. Often, he did struggle articulating his responses to me. He used many filler words such as um, you know, and like. This made it slightly difficult to understand his overall message at times. He established several points related to race and gender in academic advising that I did not think about before interviewing him. Darion paused during several responses related to implicit bias during the first interview, which led me to believe he was not familiar with speaking on the topic. During the second interview, Darion responded to all case vignettes with slightly more clear responses and brought up some pertinent points related to implicit bias that I did not think about prior to the interview.

**Findings**

After completing the coding and data analysis of 464 pages of interview transcripts, I determined which data were most valuable for presentation in this case study and which data would not be presented at this time. I selected data that best illustrated findings most relevant to the research questions: (1) What are academic advisors’ perceptions and understanding of implicit bias? (2) How do academic advisors perceive of and feel about implicit bias manifesting in interactions with students?
Three major themes organize the presentation of the findings: (1) participants’ familiarity with implicit bias; (2) participants’ feelings about implicit bias and student success; and (3) participants’ implicit bias.

**Theme 1: Participants’ Familiarity with Implicit Bias**

The first theme pertained to the participants’ overall level of awareness of implicit bias and their personal viewpoints about it. All participants were provided with an intake questionnaire prior to their first interviews (see Appendix C). On the questionnaire, participants were asked to define bias and describe any prior experiences related to it. They were also asked the same question during their interviews. All participants provided their perceptions of the definition and described prior experiences with it. All responses suggested the participants were familiar with implicit bias prior to this research study.

**Maria.** Maria had a substantial understanding of implicit bias as well as her own implicit biases. She answered questions confidently and thoroughly during her interviews. She also provided examples of her perceived bias while working with students and reasons why bias may present itself during academic advising appointments.

On her intake questionnaire, Maria defined implicit bias as “our unintentional actions towards bringing forth our own ideals and beliefs to situations.” When asked if she had any prior experiences with implicit bias, she stated:

Yes, I think it’s hard to not subconsciously bring forth your implicit bias into some experiences without even realizing. Having studied the same major as my students, I have my own lived experience of what this program is like, and I often bring forth my own experiences with it (and thus implicit bias) during advising sessions.
Bethany. Bethany seemed to be very familiar with the topic of implicit bias. During the first interview Bethany tried to explain implicit bias. She said:

Um. Something that is unintentional and almost like this automatic thing that you don't even think about sometimes, and it's something where, what has happened to you, whether it's what you were raised like your beliefs and/or just even personal experiences that you have outside of how you were raised might shape and form the way you react to certain things. I strongly believe in that saying that I learned in grad school of … perceptions are real in its consequences. So, if you perceive something to be a certain way, a lot of times the consequences are going to be according to that right. If you perceive something to be evil, then you may be scared, right? That’s your initial thing because you have that perception already of that. But with implicit bias, sometimes you just don't even know that that's even happening. Sometimes that's what's so scary about it, right? You know I love that movie crash that have you seen that movie crash? Oh my God, amazing, right? And you get to see the perspective of others and why they do what they do. And so you know it's so easy to say oh, you're racist or oh, you're, you're this and you're that, you know, and I'm not saying they're not. But, what I am saying is people have, you know, you have experienced something and so like for example if I would were to be burglarized. I don't even speak anything to existence, but you know what I mean? Like your experience shapes you. And so that's the story about it.

On her participant intake questionnaire, Bethany defined implicit bias as “a bias that we have towards a certain group without being aware of this bias.” When asked if she had any prior experiences with implicit bias, she stated:
As an Asian/Pacific American, while growing up (and it still happens) people would be surprised at how well I spoke English. I was born in Philippines and when my language was developing, I would speak a mixture of Tagalog and English. However, when I moved to the United States, I was around age 4-5 and from that point on, I only communicated in English. I remember while growing up how my mother was treated differently by people because she did have a heavy accent. They would speak louder or assume she was unintelligent and over explain things. There are other subtle implicit biases that I have experienced throughout my life including biases that my own parents had as well.

**Sara.** Sara was familiar with the topic of implicit bias. For her dissertation, she is interested in exploring implicit assumptions in academic advising. During her interview she explained implicit bias as:

Assumptions made that maybe I'm not aware of based on various factors about students, about my role in advising, about the purpose of advising at my institution. So yeah, I would just say assumptions that I'm not aware of making about students.

When asked if she thought that she was biased, the tone of her response suggested that she had an acknowledgment of implicit bias but was not comfortable fully admitting that she was biased. She replied:

I mean, yeah, I … I don't want to be and I would like to think of myself as not, but I think that naturally I'd probably inherently have biases that I just, I'm not aware of, but yeah, I'm sure I … I think that we all do so I would say probably.

On her participant intake questionnaire, Sara noted:
I am also a doctoral student, and my research actually involves implicit assumptions of academic advising approaches described in advising literature and theory. Which lends itself to implicit bias. So, I am quite familiar with it from an academic perspective. It appears we may have overlapping research interests.

When asked if she had any prior experiences with implicit bias, she stated:

Undoubtedly, yes. I became interested in the topic as a coach regarding implicit bias in athletics, specifically around coaching theory and coach-student dynamics. I have the same interests in advising regarding advisor-student dynamics. Generally speaking, implicit assumptions about student needs based on institutional labels and the advisor’s role in the process.

**Keisha.** Keisha’s responses to interview questions suggested she was familiar with the topic of implicit bias. During her first interview, she provided many examples to explain her perception of this topic. She specifically said:

I think implicit bias is when people have certain thoughts, stereotype thoughts, or stereotypical thoughts. Or preconceived notions or are presumptuous about certain people, places, things, you name it. For me, as a black woman, first my mind goes to race, but I know that it's not just about race. All of that goes hand in hand, and I think that you will act a certain way towards a certain group of people, places or things, not realizing that you're as they say, “your slip is showing” (undergarment women wear under dresses). Meaning your bias is showing, so to speak, so you may treat a person a certain way, not knowing that you're doing it because of what you think of them in your subconscious or whatever it is. And they're receiving it as what it means, the implicit bias, but you're just treating it like it's nothing. And I think that that's what implicit bias
is, and it's a weird feeling when you're on the receiving end of it, for sure, but the person giving it may or may not even realize that they're doing it. So that's what it is.

Keisha believes that an academic advisor’s past can influence his/her overall judgment. When asked this question, initially she said absolutely and paused, but when asked to elaborate, she said:

I think that. Going back to like what's in your subconscious like when I think of my experience in the College of Nursing. It was traumatic being in that college, but that was with a bunch of old white ladies, and so I always say, well, they grew up when King (referring to Martin Luther King Jr.) was alive, so they know what stuff was like before I was born and they didn't forget that. So, like when this woman comes up and grabs my braids and says “hey, you ought to meet such and such because she wears her hair like yours” Lady … Don't act like this the first time you seen braids. You live in Florida. You might not be from Florida, but you live here and you've seen these braids before and so it's like, I think that this this thing of, um … I think your age has a role in you using your past experiences because your past experiences is based off the time frame that you lived in. So, like I can't recollect anything from the 60s because I wasn't there for it. But if you were your past experience may make you treat somebody a certain way, because that's your foundation. And I think that the foundational years is really what shapes the present. So, like when we say past experience, I don't mean. A week ago, past experience. I mean, when you were in your teens and your youthful years, adolescence, early 20s, those experiences shape a 60 year old or a 50 year old. Not when you were 45. Like you know what I mean. So, I think that those foundational years shapes how people treat situations presently. And depending on what that foundation looked like, will shape whatever that
decision looks like down the road for that person. That has to make the decision, if that makes sense.

On her intake questionnaire, Keisha stated, “It negatively influences peoples’ experiences with others (usually from a position of privilege, i.e., teachers vs. pupils) due to personal biases that people don’t realize they have.” When asked if she had any prior experiences with implicit bias, she stated:

I’ve experienced this both personally (by way of my small elementary school child’s former teachers – including preschool) and professionally in the workplace. The implicit biases were usually race related. Microaggressions, patronizing, experiences in offices where there is extremely low number of underrepresented minorities. I’ve had assumptions made about my personality just because I chose to go for walks on my lunch breaks instead of sitting inside a break room with the group every day (even though on several occasions I have participated in events during the lunch hour). I was informed about this from a White woman (WW) about a group of WW who thought this. The information was provided to me during my exit interview (I left the job right at the 12-month mark). This same individual walked up to me one day while I stood outside of another employee’s office talking to them. They walked up to me, picked up a few of my braids as if she was fascinated by them (as if she’d never seen them before on anyone else) and told me that I should go meet the other coworker (also a Blk woman) who also wears her hair like that. She said it so nonchalantly that I was in disbelief. These are just a few examples of a long list.

Darion. During the first interview, Darion’s responses suggested that he was not as familiar with the definition of implicit bias like the other participants, but he was familiar with
the topic of implicit bias. When asked how he would define it, he did not give a definition, but he provided a specific example of a prior experience he went through that he thought related to implicit bias. He provided the following example:

Uh, yeah, you know, going through a certain situation as far as going through, you know how interviews are, you know, trying to put yourself up in a better position within the office and, and not necessarily going the … the way that, you know, you thought it should go. And everybody coming around you and, you know, kind of treating me like the angry black man. And just kind of assuming, um, kind of the worst with me as far as like my attitude or my approach as if, you know, I was the one that, you know, didn't communicate or didn't, you know, tell exactly what I wanted within, you know, being respected enough to receive the information ahead of time instead of someone else, you know, just kind of filling it out of the heart to be like, hey this is what's going on. They just haven't told you yet, so that's kind of like a … kind of like a slap in the face to me. And then at that point, you know, you get pulled into certain meetings and asked how you're feeling how you're doing. You know that, you know, and it's just kind of like well why, why? Why are you even thinking this? I'm still coming in, I'm doing my job and I don't have necessarily an issue with anything. I'm trying to work through this by myself without causing a real uproar as far as like how I, you know, want to, you know, I internally really want to say things, but I'm not doing that just because I've been trying to keep my job and do my job and things like that. So that was just really tough to kind of go through and experience all of that so. You know, but you know. And then again, being the only black male in that office at that time was just kind of like. You kind of look around and be like, oh man, are you going to staff meetings? And you look around and be
like I'm really the only one in here so you just kind of, you know, be watchful of what you say and how you say it and like that and, you know, and you just kind of feel that people just kind of look past you in some certain respect.

On his intake questionnaire, Darion stated, “I know that implicit bias shapes the actions and decisions in ways individuals are hired or not hired. It can also have an impact on how individuals are unfairly stereotyped, and judgements and decision are acted upon based on those bias.” When asked if he had any prior experiences with implicit bias, he noted:

I interviewed for a job, and ultimately passed over. However, I was never notified and was rather told by the individual who received the job. My displeasure of this not coming from my supervisor was made known and because of that I was told by numerous individuals of the other race to calm down, told I was angry, and pulled into meetings to discuss my actions. I was being viewed as the angry black man in an office where I was the only black man.

**Researcher’s Observations.** Given the lack of research found prior to conducting the study regarding academic advising and implicit bias, the participants’ overall knowledge on the topic was surprising. Participants provided meaningful examples of their thought processes related to this topic and reflected on their prior experiences with bias. Most participants explained that they were well aware that past experiences can influence future decisions and overall judgment. They provided several examples of their perceptions of implicit bias, but it is important to note that due to the perceived sensitivity of this topic, I did not want to pry too far into individual participant responses for further elaboration on their perceptions of the topic after a certain point. I noticed a slight change in demeanor and comfort with responses with some participants as we explored deeper into the implicit bias topic. I asked participants to further
elaborate on some responses; however, when I noticed a change in demeanor after providing elaboration on some responses to implicit bias, I chose not to continue prying into the elaboration provided by the participants. This was to avoid potentially making them feel uncomfortable talking about their experiences with implicit bias.

**Theme 2: Participants’ Feelings about Implicit Bias and Student Success**

The second theme pertained to participants’ feelings about implicit bias influencing their interactions with students and student success. When asked how participants felt about implicit bias influencing their interactions with students, all agreed that biased interactions from academic advisors can influence student success. Each participant also reflected on if they have ever erroneously judged a student. All participants recalled at least one moment where they made assumptions about a student and later found out it was not accurate. Some participants believe implicit bias is embedded within academic advising, and some believe it is simply created based on an individual’s past experiences.

**Maria.** Maria believes that implicit bias is an aspect that is embedded within her job as an academic advisor. Although she makes a conscious effort to keep it at a minimum, she explained that she does have personal experience with the major that she advises. As a result, she believes she brings certain biases to advising appointments that come with her prior personal experience in the major. During her first interview, she elaborated that implicit bias is a kind of bias based on assumptions that individuals have about others, yet they do not realize it. She confidently admitted that she has implicit biases and explained why she believes she has them. She said:

> In my work, I am very certain that I bring forth my implicit bias because I have an experience to connect it to because I got my bachelor’s in the same exact major that they
are getting theirs in. I know what my experience was like, so when I am telling a student, just as an example, intro to business, um, well, actually what I tell them a lot is the law class, the business law class. I tell them that class is not hard work if you just read the material in advance of coming to class, you will completely understand the topic. It will be so much easier for you, but I have to remember sometimes too, that was my experience with that course, that was my key success with learning business law. That is not the case for all of our students, and that is where I catch myself recognizing how much of my own assumptions and my own experience that I am putting onto other students and kind of that bias I have toward some of our courses being easier or harder for lack of a better term because of my take on it. Not because a lot of times too I will say, ok, this class, a lot of students have actually given me the feedback like economics is really hard. It is you know, struggle for me to pass it and I have my own experience of it too. But a lot of times because of the major I had, it does come with me to advising sessions.

Additionally, Maria believes that it is not just about having prior experience within a certain major that can elicit biases to present themselves. She explained that even if an academic advisor advises for a program they do not have a bachelor’s degree in, they still bring other biases while advising students. These biases include the experience of actually being a student, having academic advising appointments with an advisor, and going to university social events and/or utilizing university offices like financial aid. She thinks individuals still have those lived experiences to share with students and that those lived experiences come with implicit biases. She elaborated:
For example, when students get placed on probation at the College of Business or the College of Engineering and then change majors to us. I have to always ask them what were your study habits like there? What was your time management like in your past degree? Because I have to figure out how much of the past was a positive behavior and how much of it was crippling to the student. Being able to succeed in that course to then try to shake some of those past experiences and leave it behind and encourage other past experience that were positive, spring forth with them in their new major.

Maria also reflected on how her biases can negatively affect students. She recalled a time where she may have erroneously judged a male student. She made assumptions about his overall interest in his degree based on his current academic standing and academic advising etiquette while meeting with her. She said:

So, there was one time that this student, um, he was on academic probation. He shows up to his meeting with me on zoom in his car in the driver's seat, but he was pulled over with his seat belt on. And, as I'm talking him through all the things that he needs to do and the certain GPA you need to earn or your kicked out, all of that. He's eating a burrito … like a huge burrito, as I'm advising, and I was like, so annoyed, and to be honest, I thought for myself, ok, he does not care, and he is not going to devote himself to school. And, then after that meeting I was looking into like his transcript and everything … come to find out he was like a … I don't know if he was an actual national merit scholar or like something like that very high end. And, then I'm like how did you even get on probation in the 1st place? Because you are clearly amazingly smart and then even the second time I met with him, he's continued on probation and other semester. I am meeting with him. He is in his apartment this time. He is not in a car and he is chugging out of like a gallon
bottle chocolate milk and I am just like this guy really doesn't care. He really doesn't care. And, then it is so funny because when I would finish meeting with him he would have such words of gratitude and appreciation to me of thank you so much, I have so appreciated it, and he would actually always choose to meet with me instead of other advisors because I guess we developed a relationship. That at first, I'm judging you for kind of being rude and like etiquette rude and then here you are actually appreciating the help I am giving you that you meet with me now every semester and talk about your life and your family and all of that. So, I definitely judged him hard not only because of the like the disrespect in a way of the meeting, but also his prior grades and how did you get on probation so should not have judged that hard on that one.

Maria believes that biased interaction from academic advisors can influence overall student success. She explained that higher education literature informed her that students desire a sense of belonging while attending post-secondary institutions. If they do not, their retention rates can be affected. When asked how she feels about biased interactions influencing students, she said:

The literature tells us and we just know it as practitioners, we know that you know, students need to feel that sense of belonging and sense of connection, and when they don't, they're more likely to drop out, feel unsupported, and I think that especially, I'm just assuming because I don't work in any of those majors and never have very competitive majors like engineering for example, where you have to hit the mark on a class, or you're out. If an advisor brings forth that implicit bias with them to say “the students never gonna make it because they didn't pass this class with this group” just for example, the students will also get in their heads and say, ok, maybe I don't belong in this
major. Like maybe this isn't a fit for me and that impacts student success, their retention, and their graduation. So unfortunately, I do think implicit bias does impact student success.

**Bethany.** When Bethany was asked about her feelings of bias influencing interactions with her students, she did not fully admit to being biased during interactions with students. When asked if she thought that she was personally biased, her response suggested she did not want to admit it. She said:

I'm sure I am. Because of what I mentioned that we all have certain biases because of our personal experience. You know I was a speaker for the Asian American or Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. We had a little thing and I brought up this story. When I was younger, I got teased because of my nationality and they would do that thing. Chinese, Japanese (makes confused facial expression), look at these right and I would always associate Chinese specifically as something being bad because that's what they would tease me about and so I would disassociate myself from being Chinese because I'm Filipino, right? And I used to for the longest, say that I was a Pacific Islander, and not until like almost adulthood where I realized, oh crap, I'm Asian. I've been saying I'm Pacific Islander all this time because when I was younger. That was being picked at and so, it's so crazy. I remember in high school when I was trying out for the volleyball team and one of the girls we had to go stretch and we went along the bleachers to stretch and she says to me, she says, oh you have Chinese and I was like no with disgust. And then she says to me, oh, I'm half Chinese and the shame and embarrassment that I had of my reaction to her. Because of what was inside me from like this past trauma of childhood. You know, for me to say that to her and she's half Chinese and she was just trying to
relate to me right? And luckily she, I guess because she didn't say anything. So I guess she didn't take it as the way that I meant it I guess. But that really showed me right. I was so embarrassed I could not believe that I did that and you know then I had to wrestle with that identity for a long time, even on applications I used to put Pacific Islander. Pretty embarrassing, right? So yeah.

Bethany acknowledges there may be times where she has made the wrong decision while advising students. When asked this question, she hesitated and asked me to repeat the question. She admitted that she knows there were a few times but could not recall during that moment of the interview. At that moment, Bethany was reminded that if she could not think of a time that we could move on to the next question. Her facial expressions suggested she was slightly nervous to answer this question. For the purposes of this study, I wanted to explore this area with Bethany; however, I did not want to risk making her feel uncomfortable during this interview, so I moved on to the next question and did not follow up with her about this question.

Bethany also acknowledged that she has erroneously judged a student in prior academic advising appointments. It was noted that she did not fully commit to this answer as well. There seemed to be hesitation with this response. Her response suggested she was mildly uncomfortable with answering this question. She noted:

I'm sure I have, you know, um, whether I'd say it out loud like I, I'm very cautious with stuff like, you know, so I … I really do my best to be professional, you know when it comes to my workplace and I, I don't think that's a professional. You know, like you … like I even though I wear my emotions on my sleeve, I also have a pretty good poker face I think, and so like someone can tell me something and I don't know what that is, but I always try to have like this nonjudgment face or like I have this concerned face which is
like a natural thing that I do. It's like this thing. Like my friend used to pick on me about it, but I really … like you could tell me the craziest thing and I'll still be like, like, like listening intently. I don't know why I don't want to give away what I'm feeling inside. I, I don't know what that is but like I … I just I. I think that may be also a sport thing like you don't never let them see you sweat. You know, like you, you, you, you do what you do and, and, and, and that's what it is … you because, because listen when you're in a … in a timeout and you know you in a dogfight and these people got your number you can't tell that, for the team, right? You, you're gonna go in there and say look guys, this isn't looking so good. They're like, hey, we still got, you know. So that's how even with the students that like, so the stacks are up against them. I mean they're having some trouble, but I'm always hoping like, ok, this is what the things that you can do. And maybe you can do this. I'm like a … a problem solver, you know, and sometimes I have to take, take a step back from that too, because you know my friend told me, sometimes people don't want things to … to be solved.

Overall, Bethany believes that academic advisors’ biased interaction can influence student success. She believes that bias from some academic advisors may cause them to re-direct students to outside majors without even having a discussion first. She further explained that it can be detrimental to students emotionally to mention that a major is not right for them without having a discussion first. She believes advisors in those scenarios should share information about all the university resources with students and allow them to make their own decisions. She provided the following sentiment for advisors regarding “cooling out” (Bahr, 2008) students:

I think that's really sad that you would just totally dismiss them. Like have conversation you know, like … like talk about some resources like, like find out why they chose that
major in the 1st place. Don't just say, yeah, this isn't … this isn't for you, like you can't be successful in this. You know, like what … What is that? You know you could just totally shut people down. And who knows if they're even going to. Are they in school at all? Like if that's their experience with their advisor, like what like … you're supposed to be someone in higher Ed that's supposed to help me achieve my goals. And you're just tell … like completely shutting me down like. I don't. I don't think that's what we're here to do in higher ed.

During her final interview, Bethany was asked how she felt about implicit bias potentially influencing her rapport with students. Before answering this question, Bethany asked me to clarify that I was not specifically looking for any right or wrong answers. After I clarified that she was welcome to speak freely, she expressed that she did not think of implicit bias in this capacity until this case study. She also genuinely wondered if having implicit bias was right or wrong. When she was asked to elaborate on her answer during analysis of the case vignettes, she replied:

Actually, when you asked me would I advise the first student differently, and then when I looked back and saw, um, you know that they were Chinese and how I said I would relate to them. That is untrue. I can't say the word on implicit bias, right? So that is because you're making an assumption or a judgment or whatever. And in, in the case that I was doing it, it was to relate to that student. Is that right or wrong? I don't know the right answer. I don't know if there's a right answer to that, but I feel like in that case it could be a good thing to be able to relate. I think as humans, we do that when we walk into a room, right? We're making this assumption right and we might go to the people that look more friendlier that look like me that look. You know what I mean, and I think we do it
naturally right? And, and sometimes we don't mean to and, and, and, and, especially when we're uncomfortable, we do it right when we're in, when we're not in our comfort zone. So, and, and, and, and, I was telling my students to get out of your comfort zone. So, so in that way it might be not so good because you know you should try to network with different people and but I think as, as humans we gravitate towards, you know, what we know right? So going back to your question, sorry … with advising, it could be a negative thing if it's not a way to relate and you're judging that student off of, off of that. Then that can be very detrimental to the student and, and, and, that could impact how you advise them, and I really feel that, that could end up being a negative thing when you are because it's not the whole story. Right? And, and sometimes we have a negative … I, I said in the first interview. Perceptions are real in its consequences, so if you perceive something a certain way, the consequences happen because you perceived it in that way, right? For example, if you perceive someone to be dangerous, then you're going to proceed in that manner as if they are already a dangerous person. You're never going to get to know them. You're holding on to … to whatever cause you think they're gonna do, whatever right, and so that's the consequence of it, and so. Same thing with advising there's a consequence to that and it … it can be a negative consequence.

**Sara.** Sara believes that she has implicit biases while advising her students. She believes she makes certain assumptions while advising some students on academic probation. She does try to catch herself doing so and then adjust her thought processes about her students. Sara explained that if she was evaluating a DegreeWorks audit, she is often surprised when their overall grade point average is higher than their institutional grade point average. DegreeWorks is an electronic checklist of all student requirements for graduation. This tool is used by academic
advisors to help students understand all their academic responsibilities. When I inquired how
Sara catches her implicit bias and adjusts her thought process, she responded:

Sometimes I'm surprised when they're overall GPA is really, really, really good and then
their institutional GPA is really low and I can see that they just transferred here and
maybe they just had one bad semester and I'm like, oh, I find myself, in my head just
saying something like, they just had a bad semester. They're not really a bad student. Um,
and so kind of, just I, I catch myself with the surprise. Not surprise, but like I think that I
just was assuming they were a bad student because they we're on academic probation.
But then I see like maybe they just had one bad semester and this was their first semester
at this institution and like it just, you know, they're on probation now. So in that, even
though I know what I know about academic probation and how that can happen, I still
find myself in those situations where I'm like caught off guard by that when I see like. It's
a discrepancy in their GPA and I'm like, oh, they're not that student, so I think I'm making
assumptions about their abilities. That's one thing that comes to mind, but again, I'm sure
I'm gonna think of now that these I've got these questions in the back of my mind.

Sara acknowledged that there was a time she felt she made the wrong decision while
advising a student. She explained that she felt this way because the advice she gave the student
contradicted one of the university campaign messages that students were receiving. She provided
the following example:

With probation students, but I'm not sure it was the wrong thing, but I guess it's in
situations or maybe not even probation students. Sometimes it's just incoming freshmen
or transfer students. Like, uh, when it's, I've always decided, and my thought of what's in
the best interest of the student? And so. You know it's, I know this is not the greatest
example, but it's just recently happened so it's on my mind, but I mean, yeah, there's a
couple I'd say like if you know the institution is trying to get the students to be full time,
but it's, I don't feel it's in the student's best interest and I can see from their academic
records that they've struggled with XYZ (referring to specific classes), they've got this
coming up on their plate, their timeline is they want to graduate by this date this time, etc.
Like you know they're on probation. It's really kind of thin ice, and I feel they're just
really eager. And maybe, I don't know, I just sometimes … I have in the interests of the
student, um. Advise against what the institution would say in terms of metrics and that
kind of thing. Not a lot, but I think the students that I have gotten to know. In those
regards, um or even like an orientation, students coming in. I know we, at least our
institution, pushes the think 30 and, you know, take this many classes in this semester,
and sometimes students … just maybe that's just not a good idea, you know. And so I
don't know if it's like advising against what the institution says, but I think that just
listening to the student and what they've got going on and what they need and advising.
You know, if they say they're working full time over the summer and they're trying to
take this exam and they're nervous about. College classes and you know, I don't know.
Sometimes just other pressures that they have outside will prompt me to suggest that they
don't take, you know, what's recommended. Yeah, but that's wrong. I don't know, but it's
something that comes to mind.

Overall, Sara believes that biased academic advisor interactions can influence student
success. However, she does not believe that it is exclusive to academic advising. She explained
that advisors may contribute to influencing students in that regard but are not solely responsible
for influencing students’ success at a university. When asked to elaborate, she replied:
I think that maybe advisors would be part of, uh, like the bigger hole of what can impact student success or other personnel in that category. And I think advisors are one part of it. And I guess coming back to that, can they? And do they … like I think they can. I just wonder. I guess it depends and this is my opinion, so I don't even know if there's any grounds for like this is legitimate or not, but I guess it just depends in my mind of how, um, like what does advising mean to the student and how much of an impact does the advisor make on the student? So how important is advising to the student? But I, I do think yes. So, to answer your question, I would say yes overall.

**Keisha’.** Keisha believes that she is very “pro black.” During her interview, she explained that she feels like she connects with particular students who fit into a specific racial category a little more than other students. She does not think she is wrong for this thought process as well. She was asked if she could think of a time where bias may have presented itself during interactions with a student, and she mentioned the following:

Absolutely! But I think that when I interact with, um, with black students that I engage them more and more, specifically, the ones from Ft. Myers area (pseudonym). Because I'm from Ft. Myers, and if they are, especially if they are from inner city Ft. Myers. I definitely double down on them more than I do others. I know that I do that. I'm aware of that and I think it's because I feel that there is something that … like this obligation that I have to them. I'm supposed to do that because if I don't, like … I've had students at my past institution tell me that “I'm coming to you now because X person, just treated me like whatever, and I'm gonna assume that implicit bias is probably why that student said that to me.
Keisha explained that she has an affinity with higher-achieving students as well. During the same explanation, she clarified and said she has an affinity with students whom she perceives as trying, according to their academic efforts. She said:

So, if you have a 1.75 and you're trying then I'm going to cater to you just as hard as I would the person from Ft. Myers. I think where my bias comes in as far as like I don't like this … I want to be spoon fed like (as to say I like to earn things and for others to earn things and not just handed to them) it really grinds my gears. I don't show that at least I try not to, but I just I like it when people are trying because of my own, I guess background and what I've experienced to be able to get to where I'm at. It's like. “How dare you?” with this generation with the helicopter parenting and all that like the student that is trying, I'm probably gonna pour right back into you if I see that you're trying to. I got to experience a lot of that in BCS (College of Behavioral and Community Sciences). Most of the BCS … well, the majority of the behavioral health care students in the College of Behavioral and Community Sciences. You're going to have students that are struggling, especially with that state test. And that's the chance where you get to like pour into the student. That is not this. They're black, they're Ft. Myers there you know what I mean. So, you kind of … gauge it based on that, but I think that that pretty much is my answer for that question for sure.

Keisha believes that biased interactions from academic advisors can influence student success. When asked to elaborate on her answer, she replied with the following example:

And I hate to have to keep using hearsay, but this is my cousin that went through this. My cousin … she's always wanted to be a nurse ever since she was in high school. She did the CNA certificate thing in high school, got to college at a certain school in Gainesville.
Her undergrad advisor there told her “oh this is not for you honey” because she was like struggling in some science or whatever it was and here we are. She graduated, maybe eight years ago now, but sometimes when we talk presently, she still brings that up because it bothered her. Now she's a Health Service Administration person, through and through. That's her like health care is always been her thing, but she still has this desire to be a nurse even though she's now chosen this route. And it's like because one person told her this isn't for you. You tell an 18-year-old that this isn't for you because they're struggling in the class when there's alternative ways to get to nursing, you can get a bachelor’s and do an accelerated degree program. There's other ways to get to it, so I think advisors can influence someone just off of them. Assume, and maybe because she's black because I know even for me, like I think that I judge men a certain way. And I didn't … I, I guess I didn't really realize it until now. You asked me about it and I'm thinking like. Growing up, I think that especially being from Ft. Myers, you don't really see a lot of black men doing like the academic thing or just men in general. So, I think I probably have a slight bias. When it's male versus female when it comes to the academy because, I'm used to the girl being the one that is going to be into it and the boy, not that they won't do it; I have friends that have done it, but I think that going back to my foundation where I didn't really see a lot of that. I saw it in my teachers, but in my peers I didn't see a lot of that, so I think that kind of shapes what I might think when it's a male student, but I get impressed and I think that over the years that's shaped …. that's changing a bit because I've had students. Where I remember, shockingly, um, this one particular student that looks like me had straight A's and was going to medical school in the upcoming school year (had already been admitted), and I almost cried when he left
that office that day because I was not expecting that at all, and I was proud of him. I felt like he was my kid, even though he’s probably only 10 years younger than me. But it's like I will never forget that. That was like four or five years ago now, but I will never forget that one person. That probably was the highest achiever in that college with all the students I've seen. You rarely see a straight A student in a pre-medical track. As rigorous as that program is and was going to medical school. So, I think that that's how I feel about that.

Darion. Darion believes that since he has been advising for so long, implicit biases have come up during his advising appointments. He shared comments he would make prior to and after meeting with students such as “I already know how this is going to go” and “then you meet with someone and you would be like, man, I was not expecting that.” There have also been times where he has made assumptions about the advising appointment based on seeing pictures of students. After meeting with a particular student, Darion remembered himself saying:

Wow, well why was I even thinking? That like why can't I? Why can't I give the opportunity for the meeting to happen? And just like build my own, you know, bias at that point without even having that pre bias.

However, he does not believe that he has implicitly biased thoughts often, and he actively tries to catch himself engaging in those thoughts. He believes that advisors should make a conscious effort to think about implicit bias in this capacity because otherwise it will increase the chance of bias interaction influencing students’ decisions. Darion is not aware of any current biases he has, but he shared the following personal example related to implicit bias during his academic advising appointments:
I do try to catch myself and, you know, just, you know, because for … for a lot of the points too, because I've been doing advising for so long now I at least feel comfortable enough. Sometimes I don't look at notes prior to meeting with the student from someone else or even talk to someone about another professional because I'm not … I don't really do that to begin with. If I've never met with the, you know, certain faculty member or something like that, I don't even try to get any insight on it, and I've learned to do that just because I just want to build my own rapport and relationship with that particular faculty member or staff member and that student. As well, so I try to just eliminate looking at that. And then I build it from there and build the experience and the interactions from that point instead of, you know, starting to look at notes and trying to get little insights here. And there's like I will prepare on my end or what I need to do and what I need to say. And then I'll allow just for that scenario or that situation to play its own self out. So, I don't, you know, start building up any or having any pre biased thoughts that this person is going to say or do things or anything like that. So, uh, because you gotta be real careful about doing that nowadays too, because you'll mess around and say something wrong and you'll be out of a job.

Darion remembered that in the past he has erroneously judged students prior to meeting them. During the early portion of his advising career, he observed pictures and advising notes for students prior to meeting them. He believed that implicit bias may have been presented in some of those reflections on students’ records prior to the advising appointment. It appears that Darion may have had some implicit bias training recently because during the interview, he shared that he no longer reads advising notes or identifies students based on their pictures. He shared the following reason why:
I don't look at like pictures or notes or anything anymore because you'll see like some notes and like how angry or whatever they did with the last advisor. And you're just thinking that they're coming in there, you know, you know, sorry for the analogy, but, uh, guns blazing as far as how angry they're gonna be and or the experiences that they had the last time or whatever the case may be. Or you may look and be like, oh, they probably gonna try to get off on me man like our you know round me up or something I don't know. Are they gonna try to … I think they're gonna want this … I want that and that's as far as from the experience that I had with them so that's why I just try not to look at anything. I see their name and I just, I prepare like that. I see, you know, what major they're in and I try to … I try to guess what they're going to talk about or what they're gonna ask me and prepare that way more so than reading anything. Afterwards or during the appointment I'll look at the notes and be like, ok, I remember this and that happened and blah blah blah. Do you remember that? Ok, yeah, sure or no, I don't remember that happening. Oh ok, well this is how we can correct that now or whatever the case may be. Um, I've never really had like a, you know, I hear some stories with some advisors where they've argued and did all this with students, and I'm like I, I don't know. I don't know if it's you know my demeanor or whatever, but I've never really had an argument or like a, you know, a fight if you will … shouting match with the student about anything or anyone that I've even worked with for that matter. Just because one that is just not my personality to do all of that. And two, is just like I'm, I'm, I'm just not about because I, I know if I start yelling I'm probably gonna be the person in the wrong just because of I'm black honestly. And I'm male and because to then I probably will meet with a young lady more times than not. So that is never going to like look right on my end of it. So, and
again, you know I'm not our argumentative or anything like that to begin with, so but I've never had that type of experience or anything, but I will just like, you know, uh, you know, like early in the beginning, like when I was starting off advising, I was just kind of trying to learn and I was looking at pictures and notes and stuff like that. It's like man, they gonna come in here and they're gonna want … they gonna want me to override them into every little thing and all that because this is the past thing like that and it's like, well, you don't know that until you meet with them. So just kind of learn how to like not to have those, you know, thoughts or, you know, things coming into an advising appointment.

Darion believes that biased interactions from academic advisors can influence student success because academic advisors all talk to each other. He shared that they talk about students, and advisors may judge a student prior to meeting them based on another academic advisor’s comments about the student. Darion has heard academic advisors say, “I have this certain experience with this student, and they're like, oh hey, when you meet with them, this is what you should expect, because this is what happened when I met with them and I meet with them.” Then, it was a completely different experience when Darion met with that same student. Darion said he and the student were “best friends” that discussed everything such as academics, music, and even Netflix series. Darion does not think it’s inherently bad for academic advisors to discuss students prior to an advising appointment, but he does recognize that implicit biases may follow if one is not conscious of the information they receive from another advisor regarding a student.

**Researcher’s Observations.** Churcher, Downs, and Tewksbury (2014) reminded us that individuals construct knowledge through dialogue and interaction with others. Since individuals’
experiences differ, understanding will vary, and previous understanding may be challenged as a result. Participants’ responses in this theme illustrated that the lived experiences they recalled in our interactions during the study provided these academic advisors opportunity to reflect on their past interactions with students and engage in discourse about a potentially sensitive topic. This kind of discussion appeared to open possibilities to learn new knowledge related to the topic of implicit bias and also modify existing understanding. This may be an essential piece in creating personal awareness about implicit biases within academic advising.

**Theme 3: Participants’ Implicit Bias**

The third theme pertained to participants’ implicit bias. Greenwald and Krieger (2006) reminded us that implicit bias is an unconscious attitude and/or action that indicates favor or disfavor toward some object. Implicit stereotypes are unconscious mental associations between a social group or category and a trait (Greenwald & Kreiger, 2006). This study found implicit bias and stereotypes in participants’ responses to the vignettes that suggested favor toward certain students based on student characteristics.

**Maria.** Maria’s response to case vignette number two suggested an implicit attitude based on the student’s major. Maria also acknowledged that this was where she thought her bias would come out “majorly” due to her sharing the same interest in wanting to be an elementary education teacher and receiving a similar perspective from her parents. When asked how she would address the student concern in case vignette number two, she replied:

> My initial thoughts is this is where my bias would come out majorly because I wanted to be an elementary education teacher and my family also told me don't do it. You won't make any money … and I did not pursue elementary education because of what my family said. So, this is a this is a scenario where I would be so emotionally attached to
this situation. Um, personally, the course of action I would take is I would really move forward with this student just kind of reaffirming, asking a lot of questions just to reaffirm that this is actually her passion. This is her dream even though it mentions that like teaching has always been her dream or been her passion. And if so then I would honestly encourage her to continue it to continue pursuing it. I also too, I do let students know a lot that just because this is how they start off in their career … like let's say she starts off with elementary Ed and she loves it and she does it for eight years and then after eight years she wants a challenge and she wants to go back to get her masters to then go into administration in schools, or she wants to go into higher Ed … After that I always want students to know that just because you chose this major and you chose your first job upon graduation in your head that you're like, this is what I'm doing and I graduate. It doesn't mean that it's your life sentence. I use the phrase all the time with students that you're not married to this. This is your life. You can change things up as you want to. And so that's what I would encourage. That's what I would tell her to kind of put her at ease a little bit to say, if this is your passion and you wanna do it, go for it. And if your passion or your dream change or evolves or modifies along the way, go for that too. And then again, I would probably have another conversation with her about the parent aspect of it that, you know, I would ask her like … is it … was that your parents passion? Did they pursue their dream? And depending on what they would say I would always say ok, then have conversations with them that you would like the same chance in life that they had on themselves that you want it for you. So that's kind of how I would approach this one and it would be very close to home with me.
After this response from Maria, I asked her a follow up question on if she believed she would respond any differently to this student if she was not able to personally connect. Maria replied:

Not majorly. Because my style at the end of the day is always like whatever the students’ passion and goal is, I encourage them to do it. But I also ask a lot of questions to really kind of solidify what the student wants. Is this for sure your passion … is this for sure your goal or is this something you're pursuing because your friend did it? Your sibling did it. Your neighbor … did you know the only thing I would probably do differently if I wasn't so emotionally attached is I would maybe say. Well look, you have a great GPA. Why don't you consider taking on volunteer internship or if they're like a little rocky on like, oh this, yeah I like it but it's not my passion. I don't know. I would actually encourage them to say, apply for an internship where you can, you know, shadow an elementary school teacher. Now while you're still a college student to see if you really like it, you know be a teachers aide, a school volunteer or I would even say, you know, have a great GPA. Why don't you go consider like a study abroad or a high impact practice experience where you could decide? Get exposure to other elements, uh, service learning, experiential learning, things like that. So that's I think the only thing I would change if I wasn't so emotionally attached to this.

Maria’s response to case vignette number three suggested an implicit attitude based on race and/or gender. During her analysis of that case, she was asked if race, gender, or grade point average had any influence on her response. She responded:

Yeah, so I'll kind of answer two parts. So, it's funny when again, I wasn't really like … I read the first information, just as like a four-year information type of thing. And yeah, it was interesting because, um, this student reminded me of my sister, actually, who went to
college. She and I went to college at the same time, and she's, you know, in a funny way of the same last name. But she's also Hispanic, female and she would have been around this age and around this GPA. And she also was majorly struggling with college algebra that she actually was very close not to graduating at all because of that class. So, in her case it actually hit close to home because of the demographic info you gave me. I was like yes, I mean sister. But in terms of GPA and do I feel like past GPA, whether it's high school or SAT scores or transfer credit, is an indication of success for me personally. I think it's maybe 10 or 15% of the puzzle, um, there, but I feel that way to be honest because of my doctoral studies in higher Ed, I have been exposed to a lot of literature that has been able to prove that you know, even student departure and students' lack of students’ progress and lack of student success primarily is not about the GPA in terms of like indication from like high school or previous credit. It's predominantly impacted by like, sense of belonging. Um, uh resource like connection to resources, connection to faculty and staff. So normally I don't really look at GPA as something I should even point out to a student in less like they're a transfer student or something.

**Bethany.** Bethany’s response to case vignette number one showed implicit bias toward the student based on ethnicity. During Bethany’s second interview after she responded to case vignette number one, I asked her if she considered any of the student’s demographic in her analysis. She responded:

So, I always look at it. You know, I always look at it so that I have background information, but I don't necessarily use it all the time. So, I saw ethnicity Chinese, but I'm not going to assume that he wasn't born here, right? So? If I find that connection like if let's say, uh like I mentioned before. If it appears that they might be an international
student or they were born here, they have parents that are not. Uh, uh, of uh? If they look like me or of a, you know, then I may bring up what I told you about before about my parents and how I was born. But again, it, it, it, just I think it depends on the flow and I think that is what you're talking about here with them. Now I can't think of the word the whole the whole what your whole study is about. What is it called? Again, yes, that's the bias exactly. I had a brain (participant begins laughing). But I'm looking for those things to connect right to be able to relate to the student. Is it right or wrong? I don't know, but you know, I'm using … I, I'm always using. I'm always trying to figure out a way to connect with the students somehow and, and, and using that to be able to help them. So, I'll use it.

Bethany also shared that when she meets students who “look” like her, she attempts to form deeper connections with them. She does this because she had rough personal experiences related to her ethnicity while growing up as a teenager and assumes that the students who look like her likely had similar experiences. Specifically, she mentioned when she meets with those students, she will “share with them that I'm from Philippines, and then I'll talk about like my culture and my parents and how it's all about education, education and how that can be a challenge for you.” While attempting to relate to students who look like her, Bethany also shares statements such as “my parents weren't able to point me in that direction and so that's when I'm relating to them and then putting in their other things of like … these are the, the resources that we do have.”

Sara. When Sara was presented with case vignette number four, her response suggested that she indicated an implicit attitude toward the student based on his age. She explained that her
age is similar to the student which allowed an opportunity for there to be more of an affinity to connect to the student. Her response was:

This is a hard one. Just because a lot of this … these are just like legitimate concerns.

Um, that I probably. I mean, I'm 39, so I would like … I mean, I find myself relating just like I said because I, you know, am back in school. It was over 10 years since I've been in school and I'm like Oh my gosh, can I do this and you know, like what am I doing? And so, I can relate in a lot of these ways. I don't necessarily talk with students about that, but sometimes I will just so that we can relate. Maybe they just feel like, ok, like I'm being heard, but I just keep coming back to like the plan. I don't know if that's like the coach in me, just wanting to make, like the short term goals for them, just to maybe not feel so overwhelmed and just say like, ok, this is what it looks like. Those are legitimate concerns. These are some resources that we have. If you're interested, let's make a plan. Let's look at your, you know, short term plan of study. You can look at the next year. What do you want to get out of this semester? What do you anticipate your challenges being? You know, what do you think would help you? Would you like to meet? You know, once a semester or twice a semester like maybe just trying to help them. Articulate their own personal short-term goals with their academics as well as just let them see like what are the numbers. I coached a sport that was … It was a really … It was a training sport so it wasn't really a lot of game plays. It was really like. If you want to be this fast, you need to do “ABCD” and this is how you measure it and you know there's certain ways to break it down, and I think that a lot of that for me carries over into if you want an A in the class or if you want a B in the class. This is what you have to do, and if you want to be here in a semester then you have to do “ABCD” and it's really … there's of course
personal things to go into, but you can really just be that logical about it with academic planning. And so, I think that's something that I, I do with students is just to help them see it logically in terms of their academic planning. If they do these things then this is going to help them tremendously, and so I think I would do that with the student just to help them. Maybe find some confidence and having a plan and knowing what it looks like and just trying to map it out with them as well as just letting them feel heard and their concerns, and their legitimate concerns. And they've got a lot on their plate. And so yeah, I think that's how it worked with the student.

**Keisha.** Keisha’s responses to case vignette number four suggested an implicit attitude based on the student’s age. She responded:

I think it jumps out because I'm 36 too and I think that if I try to start a bachelor's degree and go to Med school now, like that's like, I can't even imagine that. And of someone that has a family, he works … And knowing the rigor that it takes to be able to have … to go to classes all the time. Yeah, you have like this time frame just to get that first part done, yet alone the medical school part. And so, I think that the lifestyle of a 36-year-old is kind of what stuck out to me the most.

After Keisha’s response I asked a follow up question on if her feelings for Ladarius (student in case vignette number four) may stem from any aspect of her own personal life. She said:

Yeah, so that's a good question. So, I could possibly be projecting, but I've also advised in a college that had a lot of older students. So, like the social work majors. They tend to be older students. Um, a lot of the behavioral healthcare majors tend to be older students as well, so I think just seeing them kind of as a whole, especially the social work folks. So, I think that. I'm looking at it probably a little bit of both myself may be projecting,
but also after dealing with adult learners that have tried to navigate this coming back to
school thing. I think that has a big part in why I'm saying that too.

While analyzing the first case vignette, a part of Keisha’s response suggested an implicit
stereotype toward Joe Ty Cheung (student in case vignette). She said:

I'm gonna presume from the name that he is probably an Asian student, and I know that,
um, from my friends at our age and they have told me themselves that there is an
expectation … usually … that you should be performing very highly in your academics,
and maybe that's part of it too. That pressure of the parents. So just trying to do my best
to walk him through that and how to address his parents and their concerns with his
education.

When asked if Keisha considered race, gender, or ethnicity in her evaluation of this case
vignette, she responded:

I did consider ethnicity. Because I … I, from my own personal knowledge, and this is
very broad of me to say I guess … to, to put this on a whole culture of people that come
from various countries, but I just know from people that I've met that are Vietnamese,
Philippine, Chinese, like I know that academics is a big thing. So, when a student that
that comes from that nationality says they're worried about their parents. Their … their
level of worry may not match someone else's level of worry when they say I'm worried
about my parents, so I think that is probably what I would place emphasis on outside of
the GPA, not so much the gender, but definitely the ethnicity and the GPA.

Although, Keisha provided insight on where the stereotype may have stemmed from and also
acknowledged her response may be a generalization, they still suggest an implicit stereotype in
addressing the student in this case vignette and also other students who may present a similar scenario.

**Darion.** Darion’s follow up responses to case vignette number three suggested implicit attitude towards students based on race. After Darion addressed the student in case vignette three, I asked him a follow up question on if he considered the student demographic in his analysis. He replied:

> It's not crossing my mind. I well, let me not say is … it doesn't cross my mind. I really, I really have to see that, that, that, that particular scenario. So, I guess to try to be as transparent as possible. Like let's say for example it was a black student. And the black student was in the same situation. I think I am more comfortable in that setting just because I'm black and I can kind of see, engage, and communicate in ways that Hispanic student may not understand or Asian student may not understand, or white student may not understand. Especially if a student has a similar background as far as, you know, struggling through this or, you know, their upbringing where they grew up and things of that nature I can … I can go off of that because I can relate to that student because we are the same ethnicity and, you know, at the end of the day, so there is a natural, you know, I, a natural pool from that for me. If I do meet with the black student, because if they do tell me certain things and we are advising, I do know how to navigate through that water as a … as a … as a college student being black because I was that. So, I think, I don't think that's … I don't think there's anything wrong with that because you are gonna meet people of your own kind and be able to relate in, in ways that other ethnicities just cannot relate. And we … and that … and that goes for me the opposite end. Like I can't relate to anything, I don't say I can't relate to anything Hispanic, but there's some things within
that ethnicity that I'm, I'm just never gonna understand … I'll never get. But at the end of
the day, the baseline of this is education, so I was, I will tell the same exact thing from
every case that you gave me the same way. Now how I say that will depend on the
student, but I am going to give those same answers the same way. I just may say it
differently based off of … of a certain situation, or if a student comes to me, it's like oh
hey man, I like Stevie Wonder, well you got me there because I love Stevie Wonder so
we have a natural, you know, we have a natural foundation to build off of now, but there
are some where you're just kind of like … you just even across the board.

Researcher’s Observations. Several participant responses in theme three suggested
implicit attitudes while interacting with students. Bodenhausen, Macrae, and Sherman (2016)
reminded us that individuals categorize each other into a social group upon meeting them.
Research by Dovidio et al. (2016) suggested individuals do this to help with understanding
others and to establish connection with them. Individuals do this early in life due to repeated
exposure to either positive or negative stereotypes and/or biases about a social group. The
participants in this study appeared to have implicit attitudes toward students who share personal
characteristics with the participant. Participants’ responses suggested they had an understanding
of how implicit bias may influence their interactions with students. Some of them viewed it as a
positive aspect of academic advising and beneficial to those students.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Four presented descriptive findings from an exploratory, qualitative case study at
a large, public research institution. Case study participants included five full-time academic
advisors who were described in some detail regarding background, the student population they
served, advising style, and perceived rapport with students they advised. Findings regarding
implicit bias were organized in three major themes: (1) participants’ familiarity with implicit bias; (2) participants’ feelings about implicit bias and student success; and (3) participants’ implicit bias. Chapter Five presents a detailed discussion of these findings, conclusions drawn from them, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this case study was to explore academic advisors’ perceptions of implicit bias in interactions with students. An exploratory case study seeks better understanding of participants’ perceptions by listening to their stories and seeking to uncover their lived experiences (Yin, 2014). Data were collected through an intake questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with five participants. Data were analyzed using deductive and inductive analysis to identify codes, relational categories, and themes in the data. Findings were described in Chapter 4. This final chapter includes a summary of the findings, implications for practice, recommendations for future research, researcher reflections, and a conclusion.

Summary and Discussion of Findings

This section provides a summary and discussion of the findings, organized by the research questions that guided the study.

Perceptions and Understanding of Implicit Bias

All participants were full-time academic advisors. They expressed that they had prior knowledge of implicit bias and/or that they were knowledgeable about the topic of bias, in general. All participants were able to express their understanding of implicit bias and to give descriptions of experiences with implicit bias.
Table 4

*Summary of Participants’ Understanding of Implicit Bias*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Understanding of Implicit Bias</th>
<th>Example(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>• Unintentional actions</td>
<td>She studied the same major as her students, so she has lived experience of what this program is like. She brings forth her own experiences with the program in advising sessions with students.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Bringing forth one’s own ideals and beliefs into situations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethany</td>
<td>• Something unintentional, almost automatic without thinking</td>
<td>As an Asian/Pacific American, people would be surprised at how well she spoke English. She communicated only in English since age 4-5. She saw how her mother was treated differently by people. She had a heavy accent; people spoke louder or assuming she was unintelligent, overexplained things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Influence by your beliefs and/or personal experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Shapes and forms the way you react to certain things</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>• Assumptions made that one is not aware of, based on various factors about something (e.g., students, one’s role in advising, the purpose of advising at an institution)</td>
<td>Regarding coaching in athletics, implicit assumptions about student needs based on institutional labels and the advisor’s role in the process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keisha</td>
<td>• Having certain thoughts, stereotypical thoughts, preconceived notions or presumptions about certain people, places, things</td>
<td>As a black woman first, her mind “goes to race,” but she knows that it’s not just about race. In the College of Nursing, she described her experience as “traumatic being in that college … with a bunch of old white ladies.” She described a white woman coming up to her and grabbing her braids, telling her that she should meet a person “because she wears her hair like yours.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Treating a person a certain way because of those thoughts and not knowing that you’re doing it</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Darion</td>
<td>• Shapes actions and decisions in ways individuals are hired or not hired</td>
<td>People treating him like “the angry black man,” assuming “the worst” of his attitude or approach. Then getting pulled into certain meetings and asked how he’s feeling how he’s doing. Feeling like people “just kind of look past you in some certain respect.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can impact how individuals are unfairly stereotyped and how judgments and decisions are acted upon based on bias</td>
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</table>
Table 4 provides a summary of participants’ understanding of implicit bias and some examples they provided to illustrate that understanding. Common to participants’ understanding of implicit bias were unintentionality, influence of beliefs and experiences, and taking actions or making decisions based on those beliefs and experiences. Participants’ understandings certainly reflected Greenwald and Krieger’s (2006) definition of implicit or “unconscious bias” as a bias based on implicit attitudes or implicit stereotypes outside conscious thought.

Participants’ understandings also related to Boysen’s (2010) explorations of the psychology of implicit bias in counselor education. Boysen noted that implicit biases become “invisible” over time in repeatedly learned, automatic thought processes. Bethany observed that “perception is real in its consequences.” So, while implicit bias is perceived as unintentional and based on beliefs, attitudes, or stereotypes outside of conscious thought, the actions taken or decisions made from implicit bias have real consequences for those on the receiving end of that bias.

Implicit Bias in Interactions with Students

This section is organized around two components: (1) participants’ perceptions and feelings about interactions with students; and (2) participants' perceptions of their own implicit bias.

Perceptions and Feelings About Interactions with Students.

Participants believed that past experiences and decisions can influence one’s thoughts and actions and provided examples supporting their beliefs (as illustrated in Table 4). Some experiences made participants feel slightly inferior because of insensitive questions, assumptions made by others, and perceived expectations of them while employed. Some seemed hurt, confused, and angered based on the bias of others from their pasts.
In Dovidio, Gaertner, and Pearson’s (2016) research on aversive racism, the authors noted that when individuals meet a person for the first time, they typically place that person into a social category and personally reflect on their prior knowledge of that social category. This reflection and memory recall can include biases, stereotypes, prejudices, microaggressions, and positive and/or negative judgments about that person. These recollections can influence individuals’ thoughts and perceptions about a person’s behavior, mentality, intellect, or personality. All participants were in the 26–44 age range, and a majority had at least three years of advising experiences; certainly, they all had learned things in their lives. During their interviews, and particularly in their responses to the case vignettes, participants shared that they were aware of their own pasts and how their experiences might potentially lead to having implicitly biased interactions with students.

All participants felt they would have a deeper connection with a student if that student belonged to a similar social group category as the advisor. For example, in response to vignette #2, Maria shared that her bias would come out “majorly.” She identified with Sally (a student in the case vignette) because Sally’s major was elementary education. Sally’s parents did not think education would be a financially successful career field, so they pressured her to switch majors. When Maria was in college, she also wanted to pursue elementary education, and her parents felt the same way Sally’s did. Maria shared that she and Sally likely went through similar challenges with their parents, so she would be emotionally connected with this student.

Maria also connected with Maria Gonzalez (a student in case vignette #3) because they were both Hispanic. Maria said she viewed Maria Gonzalez as her “little sister,” so this particular case “hits close to home” for Maria. Maria elaborated:
It was interesting because, um, this student reminded me of my sister, actually, who went to college. She and I went to college at the same time, and she's, you know, in a funny way of the same last name. But she's also Hispanic female and she would have been around this age and around this GPA. And she also was majorly struggling with college algebra that she actually was very close not to graduating at all because of that class. So, in her case it actually hit close to home because of the demographic info you gave me, I was like yes, I mean sister.

Bethany related to Joe Ty Chung (a student in case vignette #1) more since he was Chinese. She had struggles growing up with her parents and communication challenges because of her race/ethnicity. She spoke a mixture of her native language Tagalog and English, causing vocal issues with pronunciation of words. She claimed that “no one understood” her, and she struggled assimilating to United States culture. As a result, she thought that other students who “look” like her may have gone through the same or a similar experience. While advising students who she believes look like her, she takes extra time to try and connect with those students and provide resources to assist them with their perceived challenges. Bethany did not view this as a negative aspect of academic advising. She noted that humans “make assumptions” about people who appear to be friendlier than others. Subsequently, those humans may choose to approach and befriend people who appear to be more friendly. She thinks these assumptions are not inherently bad if she is using those assumptions, in what she perceives, as a positive way to assist students to acclimate better into a new university.

Sara shared feelings of deeper sensitivity and connectivity to Ladarius (a 36-year-old student in case vignette #4) based on his age. Sara explained that she typically did not have certain conversations with students because she preferred to keep conversation with them
professional and always focused on the purpose of the advising appointment. However, there were times when she entertained certain aspects of conversation so she could try to form a connection with a student. Sara explained:

I mean, I'm 39, so I would like, I mean … I find myself relating just like I said because I, you know, am back in school. It was over 10 years since I've been in school and I'm like oh my gosh, can I do this and, you know, like what am I doing? And so, I can relate in a lot of these ways. I don't necessarily talk with students about that, but sometimes I will just so that we can relate.

Sara shared a personal story with Ladarius, trying to establish a deeper rapport with the student. Her explanation implied that if Ladarius were an 18-year-old student, she would have not shared personal details of her life with him to try and relate.

Keisha specifically mentioned that she was “pro black” referring to her connection with and affinity toward African American students. She also mentioned that she has a “soft spot” for students who previously lived in the Ft. Myers (pseudonym) part of Florida because she was very familiar with the area and their challenges, especially black male students. During her academic advising appointments, Keisha wanted to ensure that those students fully understood they can be successful. She said:

I think that I judge men a certain way. And I didn't … I, I guess I didn't really realize it until now. You asked me about it and I'm thinking like, growing up, I think that especially being from Ft. Myers, you don't really see a lot of black men doing like the academic thing or just men in general. So, I think I probably have a slight bias when it's male versus female, when it comes to the academy because, I'm used to the girl being the one that is going to be into it and the boy, not that they won't do it; I have friends that
have done it, but I think that going back to my foundation where I didn't really see a lot of that. I saw it in my teachers, but in my peers, I didn't see a lot of that, so I think that kind of shapes what I might think when it's a male student.

While analyzing case vignette #4, Darion also shared his feelings about relating to Ladarius based on his age and race. Darion believed he would be able to have an honest conversation with Ladarius because they were roughly the same age. Darion also believed it was “rare” to meet another black student who was within the same age range going into academia. Darion believed the connection would be slightly different with Ladarius as opposed to other students who were not in those social categories.

Participants' Perceptions of Their Own Implicit Bias. All participants believed they were personally biased, but they did not appear to like this reality. When asked if they thought they were biased, I noted in my journal increased verbal hesitation, some stuttering, and sudden declines in the volume of some of their responses. I got the impression that participants were aware of bias and believed they were biased. Three of the participants were pursuing their doctoral degrees and one participant mentioned that her own research was related to bias and implicit assumptions.

Participants wanted to be great advisors, so they also struggled with associating themselves with the negative connotation of being biased. Dovidio, Gaertner, and Pearson (2016) argued that the psychology of how bias occurs dated back to a pre-civil rights America. When slavery was abolished and became illegal, this did not automatically convert racially biased individuals from being racially biased. The difference was that now they could not be openly racist because it was against the law. They still had internal, racially biased feelings. Furthermore, these same individuals wanted to be perceived as good people in the eyes of
society. Although they were biased, they did not want anyone to know or be perceived that way by society. The participants in this case study shared similar feelings of disassociation with implicit bias towards students.

Some participants mentioned they had taken action to fight against implicitly biased thoughts tainting their initial impressions of students. It is important to recognize Darion’s feelings related to this. Darion shared that he is at a comfortable point in his academic advising career to where he no longer needed to review advising notes on students prior to their academic appointments. He further explained that it was his choice not to review notes because he did not want the advising notes to taint his perception of the students he advised. Maria had personal experience in the major she advises because she completed that program for her bachelor’s degree. During her interviews, she admitted that often bias comes out in her advising appointments because she believes she knows what it is going to take to be successful in that major due to her personal experiences in the major. She later acknowledged “this is where I catch myself, recognizing how much of my own experience that I’m putting on students and kind of that bias I have toward some of our courses.” Maria now tries to avoid sharing a personal opinion of coursework with students; rather, she shares feedback received from prior students who completed the course.

Participants believed that biased interactions might influence student success, and all provided responses that suggested their acknowledgement that their own past experiences may contribute certain biases associated with those experiences. Most recalled some example of erroneous judgment of students in the past, but they did not want to be associated with implicit bias in a negative way. Some participants explained if the bias “helps” a student, it should not necessarily be viewed as a negative bias. One participant shared that she believed bias “comes
with the territory,” referring to her work as an academic advisor. Overall, participants wanted to minimize negative implicit bias that occurs within their academic advising appointments.

**Institutional Environment.** A question in interview one asked participants if they felt supported in their roles as academic advisors. Four out of five participants said “yes” while one said “not really.” Two out of the four who said yes, appeared very hesitant and later explained that they felt supported in some aspects of their jobs, but not others. One participant (Maria) explained that she felt supported in her role “locally,” meaning in her office and college, but not supported at a university level. Maria shared:

So, I'm gonna say yes and no. Um, the yes part is my team at the local level. So, um, with the institution I work at, it's a university. And in the university, there's like 12 or 13 different colleges. I feel so supported by my direct supervisor, my director of the office, our associate Dean. They are all so supportive. I feel very validated and appreciated for the work that I do and advising. At the university level, this is where I say no a little bit because our ratios are intense. They previously were 1800 to one. And then in 2020 they decided we need more than that, so they hired like 20 new advisors for the university. Our college because it's a smaller one, we didn't get any new lines, but overall the university ratio did go down then to 1100 to one. But even now with around, you know, 1100 or 1000 to 1 the turnover, not just in advisors but in staff at the university as a whole is so high. Because a lot of staff don't feel respected for their work they do, especially advising that have such like an intense caseload. It's … it's a very burnout heavy profession, and so the support really helps for you to not feel burnt out.

Another participant (Sara) said, “Hmm … I want to give you an honest answer,” before responding to the question of feeling supported in her role. Then she explained that she felt
supported with her direct co-workers and colleagues, but recently went through a merger between two different colleges and believed her current college was still trying to “figure” things out in terms of employees’ roles within academic advising. Sara shared:

I do, I do feel supported with the people that I work with and with my, my colleagues and my employers, and my institution. Yes, I do. On one hand, on the other hand. I feel … and I'm not sure if this is … I can only speak for my experience, and I can only speak for what my department and my college is going through, but we recently merged with another college and advising is still kind of trying to figure out … It's still trying to figure it out in our college. We've got department advisors. We've got central advising offices like our … our university follows a decentralized model and we have academic advisors, but we also have coordinators. We also have … there's a lot of people with advising roles, and then there are also full time staff advisers, but there are also people that are not full-time advisors that have advising roles, and so I think with the merge of our colleges and departments, even though we're all in the same university because it's a decentralized model, things were different between the two colleges that came together, and so it's still … it's still trying to work itself out and so, I feel supported, but I'm not really sure everyone knows what that looks like yet.

Keisha expressed that she did not feel supported in her role as an academic advisor. She explained that her previous institution treated advising like a “career and not like just a job.” The onboarding of advisors was like a cohort model. Advisors were placed in cohorts and trained “rigorously before being placed into a college.” Her previous institution had a centralized advising model, and she believed it favored a supportive system where students received a family-like experience orientation to the university. Keisha believed she received “play” support
at her current institution. She explained receiving various electronic training modules to help prepare her for advising students, but the modules did not have concrete information. She did not think her current institution prepared her in how to effectively build relationships with students.

Lack of support in an academic advising role could lend itself to implicit bias. Consider an academic advisor who makes a decision based on institutional policy. The student in this scenario is not happy with the advisor’s decision and pursues upper-level management to appeal the decision. If upper-level management does not support the advisor’s decision and reverses it to benefit the student, overtime, continued actions like this could create an academic advisor learned automatic thought process while working with students in that capacity (Payne & Gawronski, 2010). If advisors know they will not be supported in certain policy-related decisions with students, they will likely default to the answer they know will not be challenged by upper-level management. Boysen (2010) argued this would eventually cause those thoughts to become invisible to the advisor, ultimately creating an implicit attitude, defaulting to the upper-level management’s judgment.

Sara provided an example of her feeling she “made the wrong decision … because the advice she gave the student contradicted one of the university campaign messages that students were receiving.” She questioned institutional metrics that would push students to take 30 credit hours in a semester, even if they were on academic probation. It was clear to her that this did not benefit a student she was advising, but she felt the pressure of going against the university policy. One might think that when analyzing student situations, academic advisors would be able to freely exercise judgment they believe would be in the best interest of their students. Lack of support from upper-level leadership for the professional judgment of academic advisors would result in defaulting to a policy or requirement that can ultimately take away from student success.
In addition to lack of support felt by participants, participants shared a disconnect between their value for a variety of advising styles that can be used during advising appointments and the style actually used. Sara shared that she would really like to use the developmental advising style with her students, but she did not fully understand exactly how to incorporate it into a 30-minute advising appointment. Keisha shared that her previous institution incorporated a developmental advising style, but her current institution did not so she adapted to the culture of her current employer, which predominantly used a prescriptive advising style. Maria shared that her preferred method was an appreciative advising style; however, due to the type of students she advised, she defaulted to a prescriptive style. Prescriptive approaches can provide overwhelmed students with clear, direct information to aid in completion of tasks. However, as Williams (2007) noted the prescriptive approach may not contribute to personal connectivity and building relationships with students.

The role of academic advisors in re-directing students to other majors was also considered an opportunity for implicit bias. Bahr (2008) suggested academic advisors “cool out” students based on their judgment that those students would not be successful if they remained in their current majors. When participants in this study were asked about re-directing students, all five shared that they typically do not re-direct students outside of the major. Most participants advise for open-access majors that welcome all students. Bethany shared that she has re-directed a student before, but that was because the student wanted to pursue another major, so she assisted him with that process. It was not because Bethany used her judgment to determine that the student was not an appropriate fit for the current major.
Implications for Practice

The results of this exploratory case study suggested implications for implicit bias training for academic advisors. Maria believed that implicit bias is an aspect that is embedded within her job as an academic advisor. The perceptions and experiences shared by all participants in this study did not uncover any harm resulting from participants’ interactions with students. However, all participants believed that academic advisors need to be cognizant of any biases they may have, so they can limit the influence of these biases during interactions with students.

The most widely known professional development tool used to assess implicit bias is the implicit association test (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006). This test is used to measure implicit attitudes toward African Americans relative to European Americans. This is considered a racial implicit association test (race IAT). In a race IAT, participants must differentiate European American faces from African American faces against pleasant and un-pleasant meaning words.

Greenwald and Krieger (2006) explained race IAT as:

The most widely used IAT measure assesses implicit attitudes toward African Americans (AA) relative to European Americans. In this "Race IAT," respondents first practice distinguishing AA from EA faces by responding to faces from one of these two categories with the press of a computer key on the left side of the keyboard and to those of the other category with a key on the right side of the keyboard. Respondents next practice distinguishing pleasant-meaning from un-pleasant-meaning words in a similar manner. The next two tasks, given in a randomly determined order, use all four categories (AA faces, EA faces, pleasant-meaning words, and unpleasant-meaning words). In one of these two tasks, the IAT calls for one response (say, pressing a left-side key) when the respondent sees AA faces or pleasant words, whereas EA faces and unpleasant words call
for the other response (right-side key). In the remaining task, EA faces share a response with pleasant words and AA faces with unpleasant words.

Any implicit attitudes measured from this test are based on the speed at which a participant can respond to the four tasks. The test allows a researcher to make an inference about a participant’s attitude. Greenwald and Krieger (2006) suggested it is significantly easier to give the same response to tasks from two categories, as long as they are mentally associated with each other.

Professional development training like the race IAT would assist advisors in recognizing their own biases related to race. In addition to the IAT, implicit bias training workshops could be beneficial for academic advisors. These workshops could include fictitious student case vignettes that have social stereotypes embedded within them. Academic advisors could be tasked with addressing the case vignettes and the workshop facilitator could identify implicit biases related to stereotypes, prejudices, microaggressions, age, grade point average, etc. within their responses. The goal of the workshop is to help academic advisors become aware of implicit bias and help them recognize their own biases. Since implicitly biased thoughts occur within the subconscious, one can assume that academic advisors may not be aware of having implicitly biased thoughts while interacting with students. Once advisors are aware of any biases they have, they could make attempts to monitor those thought processes while interacting with students. This could minimize the likelihood of students receiving biased messages from academic advisors during advising appointments.

Stone and Moskowitz (2011) implied that increased training in implicit bias will enhance multicultural competence. This supports Boysen’s (2010) view on incorporating implicit bias into counselor education and enhancing multicultural competence. Both research studies
provided acknowledgement on the lack of awareness of implicit bias. Both also informed of the need for more research on this important topic.

Literature on professional development suggested a considerable gap between an individual’s understanding of knowledge and how to efficiently utilize it (Martin et al., 2018). For example, academic advisors understanding of institutional policy, and being able to problem solve and effectively use tools to assist them in understanding how to use what they know. Martin et al. (2018) book on lawyering from the inside out provided strategies to increase lawyers’ professional development identity. One of these strategies is mindfulness exercises. Martin et al. (2018) described mindfulness as “learning to live in the present moment and to just do one thing at a time” (p. 1). Some mindfulness exercises include practicing being actively reflective and some include being completely still. For example, slow deep breathing activities, sitting quietly in a quiet place, avoiding multi-tasking, putting a cell phone on “do not disturb,” taking daily walks, and writing down thoughts or feelings. The exercises are intended to strengthen intellectual ability, improve interpersonal skills, and help relieve stress.

Martin et al. (2018) mindfulness professional development strategies have implications for academic advisors as it relates to implicit bias. Young-Jones et al. (2013) reminded us that academic advisors assist students with a multitude of tasks including identifying resources, developing critical thinking, decision making, developing problem solving skills, and setting goals. With the attention to detail needed to help students achieve success, one could argue that the academic advisor position may come with stressful moments. Engaging in mindfulness exercises periodically may assist academic advisors to reduce stress levels, improve focus and attention during advising appointments, and improve cognitive functioning. If academic advisors are less stressed, more focused, and have increased cognitive functioning while advising
students, this may improve their ability to recognize bias within their thought processes.

Professional development which includes coaching academic advisors on mindfulness activities may decrease the likelihood of students receiving implicitly biased messages during advising appointments.

Academic advisors may use the NACADA core competencies model for self-reflection and evaluation (NACADA Academic Advising Core Competencies Model, 2017). Leigh’s (2016) research on reflective practice for professional development in higher education implied that self-reflection and reflective practices require higher level thought processes. However, not all academic advisors’ function at the same cognitive levels. One could argue, in the academic advisor role, higher level thought processes are essential and can be developed. Leigh (2016) explained that self-reflection and personal development play a salient role in developing a successful education program. The author further explained that self-reflection is needed to prompt a change in an individual’s behavior. This has implications for academic advisors in higher education. Academic advisors should take time to reflect on previous advising experiences with students. They should analyze prior decisions and reflect on why they made those decisions. Leigh and Bailey (2013) implied that self-reflection allows individuals to categorize the descriptions of their experiences. This makes it easier for the experiences to be brought to the individual’s conscious awareness. Professional development training to prompt academic advisors to engage in self-reflection can help them use those insights to recognize where bias may have influenced previous experiences with their students.

Professional development opportunities designed specifically to assist academic advisors in building relational skills is implied from this study. All research participants recognized the importance of building relationships with their students; however, they do not all refer to
“relationship” in the same manner. As there are differences in academic advisors’ higher level thought processes, there are also differences along the continuum of emotion and empathy. Building relational skills is a component of the NACADA core competencies model framework. Academic advising training that adheres to the relational component of this framework is designed to provide skills that empower academic advisors to understand educational theory and deliver effective communication to students (NACADA Academic Advising Core Competencies Model, 2017). Relational training for academic advisors should include opportunities for them to establish a personal philosophy for advising, deliver successful student advising sessions, establish rapport with students, facilitate problem solving, and assist students in setting goals (NACADA Academic Advising Core Competencies Model, 2017). To attain excellence in the academic advising profession, academic advisors must understand the importance of building meaningful relationships with students they advise.

Implications for Future Research

The primary data source for this study was in-depth, conversational interviews. In-depth interviews are intended to explore deeply. An in-depth, conversational interview should involve discussion that is “relaxed, open and honest (Mason, 1998)” (as cited by Morris, 2015, p. 3).

This study was geared toward identifying academic advisors’ perceptions of implicit bias in their interactions with students. A future study might explore students’ perceptions of implicit bias in interactions with their academic advisors. During the initial literature review, I was not able to find research directly related to how students feel about their academic advisors’ potential implicit bias. Exploring students’ perceptions may further strengthen implicit bias research. Participants in this study felt that biased interactions from academic advisors could affect student success and retention. Uncovering students’ thoughts and perceptions about experiences they
may have had in receiving biased messages from their academic advisors could further contribute to our understanding of the advisor-advisee relationship.

Academic advisors rely on a number of institutional tools in the advising process. DegreeWorks is a web-based audit, using an electronic checklist of all student graduation requirements. Conclusions made from students’ reviews of their DegreeWorks audit could vary from academic advisors’ evaluations of their academic progress towards their degree. For example, academic advisors and students could arrive at different conclusions based on their reviews of the DegreeWorks audit. Exploring academic advisors’ and students’ perceptions of the reasons for different conclusions and potential experiences with implicit bias in the review process could, perhaps, help minimize perceived implicit biases.

Bahr (2008) reminded us that some academic advisors “cool out” students out of majors where the advisor believes if the student continues pursuing the major, he/she would not be successful. More research is needed in this area to increase our understanding of how implicit bias may have influence in re-direction of students to other majors.

Participants’ perceptions of their institutional environments in relation to their work as academic advisors needs further exploration. Some interview responses illuminated working conditions that did not support the work of professional advising (e.g., advising load, numerous personnel who advise students who are not full-time, trained professionals, superficial training). Some responses also suggested that institutional culture, policies, and practices may contribute to potential for implicit bias in academic decisions.

**Researcher Reflections**

Ortlipp (2008) encouraged researchers to journal about themselves during the research process and reflect on their preconceived thoughts and experiences. Ortlipp’s (2008) research
suggested that researcher reflective journals aid researchers in keeping written records of thoughts, reactions, and feelings, laying foundation for data analysis and interpretation and serving as a tool for revisiting interview transcripts.

My reflective journal played a salient role in this exploratory case study. The journal allowed me to reflect on my role as a researcher and also as a human being. My journal entries included initial impressions, participant statements that resonated with me, and non-verbal body language cues. I also periodically reflected on the theoretical framework of implicit attitudes and implicit stereotypes in relation to each participant’s experience. This helped me to focus on their experiences and their interpretations of those experiences, keeping me aware of the possibility for researcher bias.

I also made an effort to consciously examine how I was processing and interpreting the academic advisors’ lived experiences. I was aware that how I perceived participants’ experiences was influenced by my own past experiences, beliefs, biases, and values. During interviews, I frequently reflected on my past experiences while listening to the participants’ stories. Many of their experiences involving student success, challenges with students, and respect for the advising profession resonated with me. Sharing similar feelings with the participants helped me relate to their responses. Although this was advantageous, it was also a distraction at certain times. Since I was an academic advisor while conducting the study, I periodically had brief recollections of similar scenarios while participants were sharing their experiences with students and staff. This brief reflection often acted as a barrier which prevented me from solely concentrating on a few of the participants responses. I did not realize that I was doing that until after the interviews concluded, and I rewatched the recorded videos. While watching the recorded videos, I was predominantly looking directly at the research participants and focusing
on their experiences and observing their behaviors during the interviews. However, at certain points during interviews, I noticed my face turning away from looking directly at the participants when they provided a response that deeply resonated with me. I noticed I began to appear as if I was in deep thought for a brief moment.

My journal also served as a tool to document how I had grown personally and professionally. As a result of this study, I have a new appreciation for the concept of implicit bias. Prior to conducting this research, I believed I had an adequate understanding of preconception and subconscious cognitive activity due to my interests in the topic, but after having completed this research, I have learned aspects of implicit bias that I did not know. For example, when Keisha responded in interview two saying that she would consider herself “pro-Black,” my mind initially went to that as being something positive for Black students. This is largely due to my own personal experiences as a Black student who graduated from a higher education institution. I did not initially conclude that, although Keisha perceives being “pro Black” as a positive aspect of her advising, one could consider that a negative aspect of her advising. If academic advisors favor certain students due to social demographic or other characteristics, it may result in students receiving variances in their relationships with academic advisors. Although this act is done with perceived good intentions, if all academic advisors share this sentiment, then students would not receive the special catering Keisha mentions unless they fall into their academic advisors’ desired social category. As a result of this study, I can analyze statements like the one Keisha mentioned more thoroughly. Keisha was a Black female participant in this study. As a Black male, listening to her say that she favors black students because of their perceived history sounded positive; however, if I heard a similar sentiment being
shared from a white male or female academic advisor about white students, my initial thought about it would not have been similar to my thoughts about Keisha’s statement.

This research study has implications for my work as a current academic advisor. As a result of the research on implicit bias, I am now substantially more conscious of my thoughts about students prior to meeting with them and when I analyze student-related issues regarding policy. In the past, I noticed that prior biased thoughts regarding students’ academic performances were considered as I analyzed policy surrounding issues they faced. Implicit bias research has allowed me to recognize and monitor some of those thoughts to avoid them influencing my thoughts and subsequent interactions with students.

There were a couple points during interviews where I noticed mild discomfort after participants were asked to elaborate on previous answers provided. The primary data source for this study was in-depth interviews, and in-depth interviews are intended to explore a topic deeply; however, I believed that continuing to explore certain aspects of implicit bias with some participants after they already provided answers and elaborations on those answers would potentially make them uncomfortable with the interview in an unnecessary manner. I did not want to risk the participants feeling uncomfortable to the point where they would not want to continue the interview. Prior to conducting the interview with participants, I did explain to them that we would be discussing potentially uncomfortable topics as they relate to implicit bias. However, if I were to do this study again, I would emphasize that point significantly more than I did in this study. I would also consider providing the interview questions to participants to review ahead of time. This may alleviate participants’ feelings of being “on the spot” with certain questions and allow them time to consider their answers outside of the actual interview.
If I were to do this study again, I would increase the range of desired participants. Creswell (2013) reminded us that four to five participants is ideal while conducting a case study; however, I was hoping to receive participation that covered more social demographic. The participants were predominantly female, and I did not receive participation from a Hispanic or White male. Their participation could have yielded fruitful perspectives for this research. After conducting this research, I now believe having two males and two females in each demographic would have been ideal. This way, I could determine differences and similarities between males and females of the same demographic (e.g., two Black males sharing similar perspectives on implicit bias to corroborate each other).

Conclusion

This study sought to contribute to our knowledge of implicit bias in academic advising settings. While there is considerable literature on implicit bias as a concept, and in multiple fields, there is little research on implicit bias in academic advising. The results from this exploratory case study demonstrate that from the perceptions and experiences of study participants, implicit bias can and does occur in academic advising. This study also contributes to our understanding of the complexity of implicit bias in this setting and the importance of academic advisors’ understanding of and awareness of their own implicit biases. This reality plays a salient role in higher education institutions as biased interactions from academic advisors can influence educational attainment (Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2015).

The results of this study also suggest a need for broader, better, more job-embedded, and ongoing professional development, coaching, and mentoring of academic advisors. The importance of increasing implicit bias self-awareness in academic advisors is clear, but implicit biases that can negatively affect student success go beyond race, ethnicity, and gender. Higher
education institutions and academic advising supervisors who are committed to academic advising professional development must also look to institutional environments, culture, policies, and practices that may contribute to implicit bias in academic decisions.
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Appendix A: Participant Invitation Email

To: all research participants
From: Bobby A. Brown, Doctoral Candidate
Subject: Sincere Request for Research Study Participation

Dear Academic Advisor,

Hello! How is your day going today? Hope you are doing well.

My name is Bobby Brown, and I am a doctoral candidate who is conducting a research study and could use your help. I was offered your email by (((Insert Associate Vice Provost of Student Success and Academic Advising here))) who thought you may be willing to interview with me for my dissertation. For my dissertation, I am doing a qualitative case study on academic advising experiences with their students. The purpose of this study is to explore implicit bias by having an open and honest discussion with academic advisors at a large, public, research institution. In my recent review of literature on academic advising in higher education, I have found that understanding academic advisors’ experiences have not been thoroughly explored related to implicit biases. I am very interested in hearing your thoughts and/or past experiences related to implicit biases while advising your students. Although, some may consider this topic mildly uncomfortable; through this research, I would like to provide an opportunity for academic advisors to freely share their experiences on a potentially uncomfortable topic to promote awareness.

For this research study, I will be interviewing between five to eight full-time academic advisors. For the first interview, you will be guided through open-ended questions to explore your perceptions and understanding of implicit bias. For the second interview, you will be provided with a vignette(s) and guided through open-ended questions to analyze the vignette and reflect on your experiences as an academic advisor. Interviews will last up to an hour, and I plan to schedule it at your earliest convenience. I will be conducting both interviews virtually using the Microsoft teams application. I do plan on audio/video recording this interview with your permission. All participants will be compensated for their time during this research study. Compensation will be a $20 visa gift card. Compensation will be mailed to research participants upon completion of the second interview after member checking responses are completed.

During this research study, all participants’ information will be kept completely confidential, and I will use a pseudonym (an alias) in place of your full name. If you are interested in learning more about this study, please send me an email at your earliest convenience. Once I receive your email, I will reach out to you to set up a date and time that works best to conduct the interview. When the interview is confirmed, I will send a participant questionnaire. If you choose to participate, I will be honored to have you as a part of this research.

With regards,

Bobby A. Brown
Appendix B: Participant Intake Questionnaire

1. What is your ethnicity?
   a. Caucasian
   b. African American
   c. Hispanic
   d. American Indian
   e. Asian/Pacific Islander
   f. Other

2. How old are you?
   a. 18 – 25
   b. 26 – 34
   c. 35 – 44
   d. 45 – 55
   e. 56+

3. What is your gender?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Prefer not to respond

4. How long have you been an academic advisor?
   a. Less than a year
   b. 1 – 3 years
   c. 3 – 7 years
   d. 7 – 10 years
   e. 10 – 15 years
   f. 15+ years

5. What program/major do you advise for ________________________?

6. Is the program you advise for similar to what you studied while in college/postsecondary school?

7. What do you know about implicit bias?

8. Have you had any student or personal experiences related to implicit bias?
   a. If yes, please provide a brief description of these experiences.
Appendix C: Research Participant Confirmation Email

Dear Academic Advisor,

I appreciate your willingness to participate in this research study. I am excited to interview you on **month, day, year, time**. During the interview I will discuss the informed consent letter which outlines your willingness to participate in the research study and your permission to have or not have the interview audio/video recorded. I will also discuss the rights you have as a research participant during this research study. Prior to the interview, I will send you a verbal consent form, so you have it beforehand. I will discuss this with you prior to conducting the interview.

To protect your identity, I will use pseudonyms in place of your full name during this research study. The purpose of this research study is to explore some of the experiences academic advisors have with the students they advise related to implicit bias. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me. I look forward to the interview.

With regards,

Bobby Brown
Appendix D: Interview Introduction

Good morning/afternoon. Thank you for coming and taking the time out of your day to assist me with my research project. My name is Bobby! I’m a doctoral student at the University of South Florida doing research on academic advising. I would like to use this interview to ask you several questions related to your academic advising experience so far. Please feel completely free to respond to your comfort level. There are no right, wrong, desirable or undesirable answers to the questions. I would like you to feel comfortable with saying what you really think and expressing how you truly feel.

Microsoft Teams Recorder Instructions

If it is okay with you, I would like to record our conversation. The purpose of this is so that I can listen to all the details of your experiences, while still being able to carry on a full, attentive conversation with you. I assure you that all your comments will remain confidential. I will be compiling a report which contains all academic advisors’ responses without any reference to individual participants.
Appendix E: Interview Protocol Question Guide

FIRST INTERVIEW

History/Background
1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
   a. Interview Prompts
      i. How participant was raised?
         1. Lower SES status or affluent background?
      ii. Educational experiences
         1. Bachelor’s, Master’s, Doctorate, etc.
         2. Study abroad trips, field experiences, conferences, etc.
      iii. Work experiences prior to being an academic advisor
      iv. Why you became an academic advisor
      v. Favorite part of being an academic advisor

Expectations of academic advising
2. What led to your choice of this university?
   a. Interview Prompts
      i. How did you find this academic institution (recommendation, previous alumni, prestige, etc.)
      ii. Talk about your program of study while in college. Has that influenced your decision to pursue advising in this college/department?
      iii. Do you think that your degree awarding institution properly prepared you for advising students in your department?
      iv. Do you feel supported in your role as an academic advisor?
      v. Are there aspects about your position that you truly care about?
      vi. Are there aspects about your position that do not appeal to you?

Academic advising philosophy
3. What is your philosophy for academically advising students?
   a. Interview prompts
      i. What advising style do you incorporate into your appointments?
         1. Prescriptive, Developmental, Intrusive, Student-centered, etc.
      ii. Describe your typical interactions with students?
         1. Are you typically a certain advising style all or a majority of the time?
         2. Do you use certain styles with certain students?
         3. Would you agree or disagree that your current mood or health influences your interactions and/or your advising style with students?

Student Demographic/Characteristics
4. What is the demographic of the students in your department, program or college?
   a. Interview prompts
      i. Gender
1. Percentage of males? Females?
   ii. Race
      1. Majority of a certain race
   iii. Age
      iv. Student class (freshman, sophomore, etc.)
   v. Average/minimum grade point average
b. If advisor doesn’t know answers to these questions, ask them about how many students they meet who represent each of these categories!

Academic advising appointments
5. How are your appointments structured?
   a. Interview prompts
      i. On average, how many students do you see daily?
      ii. How many students do you have total? Estimation?
      iii. Does your department have walk-in hours?
         1. Do you see a lot of students during walk-in hours or via appointments?
      iv. Do you only see students in your designated area?
      v. How long is a typical student appointment?
      vi. Do other advisors see students in your designated area?
         1. If so, do you prefer that only you meet with your students or is it sufficient for other advisors to meet with your students?
      vii. Is there time allotted for student questions?
         1. If not, do students typically follow up with you for inquiries related to their previous appointment with you?

Student Expectations
6. What are your expectations of your students who make appointments with you?
   a. Interview prompts
      i. How would you describe your rapport with your students?
      ii. Do you share this rapport with all students you advise?
      iii. Do you expect students to be prepared prior to your appointments?
      iv. What do you consider professionalism and how to you maintain it with your students?
      v. Do you face any challenges in working with college students? If so, can you describe some of those challenges?
      vi. How do you handle the challenges?
      vii. How would you distinguish a high performing student from a student who may be struggling a little?
      viii. Do you have any significant academic advising experiences that stand out to you?
      ix. Do you usually reflect on your student appointments either directly after or sometime later in the day?
      x. Can you think of a time where you thought you made the wrong decision in assisting a student who had an issue?
xi. Has a student ever provided direct feedback to you related to an advising appointment?

Implicit Bias

7. Unconscious thoughts that may influence judgement/interaction
   a. Interview Prompts
      i. How would you define implicit bias?
      ii. As a current academic advisor, do you think that you are bias?
         1. If yes, what makes you think that?
         2. If yes, can you think of a time where bias may have presented itself during your interaction with a student?
         3. If yes, are you aware of any current biases you have?
         4. If no, can you elaborate a little bit on why you feel that way?
         5. If no, do you think that you have ever had an interaction with a student where bias was factored into the conversation or advice you provided to that student?
      iii. Do you think an individual’s past experiences can influence future decision-making and overall judgement?
      iv. Have you ever re-directed a student interested in a major you advise for to another major for consideration?
         1. If yes, can you elaborate on that?
         2. If no, can you think of a circumstance where you would re-direct a student to another major outside of your college?
      v. Can you think of a time where you may have erroneously judged a student?
         1. If yes, can you talk to me a little bit about it?
         2. If no, skip to next question
      vi. Can you think of a time where you felt a student judged you?
         1. If yes, how did that make you feel?
      vii. Do you think biased interactions from academic advisors can influence student success?

Conclusion

8. Do you have any final thoughts regarding implicit biases related to academic advising?

This concludes our first interview. I will be thoroughly reviewing your responses and after analyzing them, I will send you a copy of the transcript with any potential clarification questions to ensure that I am completely understanding the sentiment you are sharing!
SECOND INTERVIEW

Student Vignettes
9. Inquire about choices academic advisor makes regarding the student vignettes
   a. Interview prompts
      i. You mentioned ……… in your student vignette response, can you elaborate on it a little more?
      ii. What contributed to the decisions you made regarding each vignette?
      iii. Did gender/race factor into your decision?
      iv. Did you consider the student’s grade point average?
      v. How does that make you feel?
      vi. Have you encountered this before?
      vii. How do you think the student perceives this?
      viii. Would you re-direct this student out of the major?

Conclusion
10. Do you have any final thoughts regarding your experiences as an academic advisor you would like to express?
    a. Interview Prompts
       i. Can you think of any interactions you have had with students where you would change aspects of your conversation with them?
       ii. Any regrets as an academic advisor?
       iii. Any advice for academic advisors in the future?
       iv. What is the next step for your career?

This concludes our second/final interview. Thank you so much for participating in this research study. I appreciate your time, effort, and responses to these interview questions!
Appendix F: Student Case Vignettes

Vignette 1: Student who did well with little effort in high school but finds it significantly more difficult in college

Name: Joe Ty Cheung
Ethnicity: Chinese
Gender: Male
Age: 19
GPA: 2.4

• Joe Ty Cheung is a biomedical science student who comes to see you for advising. His demeanor suggests something is on his mind that is making him upset or sad. You can tell that something is troubling him. When you ask how things are going, he tells you that he is having a really hard time in his general chemistry class and that he’s currently not passing and doesn’t know why. He shares that he is frustrated and feeling discouraged about his major. He always did well in his science classes in high school and without a lot of effort. He asks you about dropping the class. He is also concerned about what his parents may think about his efforts surrounding this course. You recognize that he needs this course to stay on track for his major. What factors would you consider when advising Joe and what course of action would you take to address his concerns?

Vignette 2: Student who excels academically, but parents think is in wrong field

Name: Sally O’Mally
Ethnicity: Caucasian
Gender: Female
Age: 18
GPA: 4.0

• Sally O’Mally is majoring in elementary education. She loves working with children and has done well in all her courses. Teaching has always been her dream. Both of her parents are medical doctors and have assisted her in classes since she started in elementary school. They have hired tutoring for her throughout her academic career to make sure she was thoroughly prepared for going to college. Sally typically passes homework assignments and exams with little to moderate effort. She comes in for advising because, although she is happy with her major and the courses she is taking, her parents are pressuring her to change career fields because they believe there is no money in education. They also believe that Sally is very smart and wants her to put her intellect to a more suited career field. They claim that they want her to be able to support and provide for her future family. What factors would you consider when advising Sally and what course of action would you take to address his concerns?
Vignette 3: Student who experiences slow progress despite strong effort

Name: Maria Gonzalez
Ethnicity: Hispanic
Gender: Female
Age: 21
GPA: 2.8

- Maria Gonzalez is a student you have been advising for almost two years. She put off taking the math class she needs for her general education requirements because she doesn’t like math. She has already been to see you earlier in the semester because she was not doing well in her algebra class and was worried, she wouldn’t pass. You previously discussed helpful resources she could use to improve her comprehension of the material and success on assignments. Today, she tells you that she has been studying more, working with a tutor, and trying to stay positive about the class. However, at the midterm, her grade has only gone up from a D to a C and she’s frustrated. She says that even with all this effort, she still can’t do well and feels like giving up. What factors would you consider when advising Maria and what course of action would you take to address her concerns?

Vignette 4: Student who is facing a new challenge

Name: Ladarius Walker
Ethnicity: African American
Gender: Male
Age: 36
GPA: 2.1

- Ladarius Walker will be starting at your school in the fall term to pursue a new career path. He previously worked in the restaurant business right out of high school to support his family. He comes to see you to talk to you about what to expect since he’s been out of school for so long. He is interested in pursuing medical school, but is nervous because he hasn’t had to study, take tests, or write papers in over 10 years. He also knows that he will be much older than many of the other students and worries that he won’t fit in. What factors would you consider when advising Ladarius and what course of action would you take to address his concerns?
Appendix G: Member Checking Communication for Participants

Month, Day, Year

Hello (research participant),

I wanted to take this time to express my gratitude for your participation in my research study. In this email, I have included the transcript for our conversation during the follow up interview. At this time, I humbly ask that you check this transcript for accuracy to ensure that your responses have been recorded correctly. If you notice that something is inaccurate or needs further elaboration, please do not hesitate to reach out to me and submit the feedback. You are also able to clarify your responses or provide any other suggestion that may be applicable to this research study.

If you would like to reach out to me with any updates you find, please submit this feedback as soon as possible; however, I would prefer to receive it within the next two weeks (10 business days). I intend to send you an email reminder in a few days to remind you about this. I will also send one final email reminder three days away from the two-week deadline. If I do not hear back from you within this timeframe then I will assume that the transcript and my initial findings are correct and accurately depicted.

I would like to thank you again for volunteering to be a part of this research. If you have any questions you would like to discuss, please feel free to contact me at any point during the research study.

With Regards

Bobby Brown
Appendix H: Verbal Informed Consent

Script for Obtaining Verbal Informed Consent
Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study
Title: Academic Advisors’ Perceptions of Implicit Bias in Interactions with Students: An Exploratory Case Study
Study# STUDY004099

Overview: You are being asked to take part in a research study. The information in this document should help you to decide if you would like to participate. The sections in this overview provide the basic information about the study. More detailed information is provided in the remainder of the document.

Study Staff: This study is being led by Bobby Brown who is a student at the University of South Florida. This person is called the Principal Investigator. He is being guided in this research by Dr. Thomas Miller. Other approved research staff may act on behalf of the Principal Investigator.

Study Details: This study is being conducted at The University of South Florida. The purpose of the study is to explore academic advisors’ perceptions of implicit bias in interactions with students and explore how academic advisors’ perceive of and feel about implicit bias manifesting in interactions with students. The duration of this study will be approximately one month long consisting of two virtual interviews up to an hour in length. Participants will be asked to share their experiences related to implicit bias.

Participants: You are being asked to take part in this study because you are a full-time academic advisor at the research site and may have prior knowledge and/or experiences related to implicit bias. I would like to have a genuine discussion with you regarding these experiences.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to participate and may stop your participation at any time. There will be no penalties or loss of benefits or opportunities if you do not participate or decide to stop once you start. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your job status, employment record, employee evaluations, or advancement opportunities.

Benefits, Compensation, and Risk: We do not know if you will receive any benefit from your participation. There is no cost to participate. You will be compensated $20 for your participation. This research is considered minimal risk. Minimal risk means that study risks are the same as the risks you face in daily life.

Confidentiality: Even if we publish the findings from this study, we will keep your study information private and confidential. Anyone with the authority to look at your records must keep them confidential. Pseudonyms will be used in place of your real name and all data retrieved from you will be stored away in a password protected software.

You will be compensated $20 if you complete both scheduled study visits. If you withdraw for any reason from the study before completion of both scheduled visits, you will not be compensated.

If completing the study online, it is possible, although unlikely, that unauthorized individuals could gain access to your responses. Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of information sent via the internet. However, your participation in this study involves risks similar to a person’s everyday use of the internet.

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, call Bobby Brown at 813-404-4561. If you have questions about your rights, complaints, or issues as a person taking part in this study, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact the IRB by email at RSCH-IRB@usf.edu.

Would you like to participate in this study?
Appendix I: CITI Program Certificate of Completion

CITI PROGRAM

Completion Date 29-Oct-2021
Expiration Date 28-Oct-2024
Record ID 45818204

This is to certify that:

Bobby Brown

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Human Research
(Curriculum Group)
Social / Behavioral Investigators and Key Personnel
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

University of South Florida

Verify at: www.citiprogram.org/verify/?weca3c5ec-e65c-452d-b13f-df6a26a7e1fb-45818204
EXEMPT DETERMINATION

April 19, 2022

Bobby Brown
4202 E. Fowler Ave
Tampa, FL 33620

Dear Bobby Brown,

On 4/18/2022, the IRB reviewed and approved the following protocol:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application Type:</th>
<th>Initial Study</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IRB ID:</td>
<td>STUDY004099</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review Type:</td>
<td>Exempt 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title:</td>
<td>Academic Advisors’ Perceptions of Implicit Bias in Interactions with Students: An Exploratory Case Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protocol:</td>
<td>IRB Protocol</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The IRB determined that this protocol meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review.

In conducting this protocol, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Please note, as per USF policy, once the exempt determination is made, the application is closed in BullsIRB. This does not limit your ability to conduct the research. Any proposed or anticipated change to the study design that was previously declared exempt from IRB oversight must be submitted to the IRB as a new study prior to initiation of the change. However, administrative changes, including changes in research personnel, do not warrant a modification or new application.

Ongoing IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities impact the exempt determination, please submit a new request to the IRB for a determination.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Walker
IRB Research Compliance Administrator

Institutional Review Boards / Research Integrity & Compliance
FWA No. 00001669
University of South Florida / 3702 Spectrum Blvd., Suite 165 / Tampa, FL 33612 / 813-974-5056

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bobby Brown completed a B. S. in Athletic Training and a M. Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in College Student Affairs at the University of South Florida. He has served as an academic advisor in the USF College of Education for seven years. In addition to the general responsibilities of his role, he also collaborates with faculty and other departments on campus to ensure that students complete their degrees in a timely manner. In 2018, he received an outstanding undergraduate academic advisor award from the University of South Florida.

Mr. Brown also has experience as a recruiter in USF undergraduate admissions, assisting in the admissions process for approximately 36,000 applicants each year. Mr. Brown’s research interests include all aspects of bias, stereotypes, prejudice, and preconception affecting how individuals view knowledge and make meaning of that knowledge in the world.