Exploring Appreciative Advising as an Equity Approach for African American Students: A Grounded Theory Study of Academic Advisors at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)

Valerie Harper

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EXPLORING APPRECIATIVE ADVISING AS AN EQUITY APPROACH FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF ACADEMIC ADVISORS AT PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS (PWIs)

A Dissertation

Duquesne University School of Education

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Education

By

Valerie J. Harper

December 2019
EXPLORING APPRECIATIVE ADVISING AS AN EQUITY APPROACH FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF ACADEMIC ADVISORS AT PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS (PWIs)

By

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ABSTRACT

EXPLORING APPRECIATIVE ADVISING AS AN EQUITY APPROACH FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF ACADEMIC ADVISORS AT PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS (PWIs)

By

Valerie J. Harper

December 2019

Dissertation supervised by Professor Gretchen Givens Generett

African American matriculation into postsecondary education continues to rise, but degree conferral remains low (Hoston, Graves, & Fleming-Randle, 2010). Arguably, Harper and Hurtado’s (2007) research, as far back as 1992, stated black students and other students of color have dealt with alienation, isolation, and stereotyping at PWIs; this continues to persist today (Lee, 2018), which may interrupt the academic success of African American students. The cycle of socialization, critical race theory, and racial microaggressions were the foundational theories used to explore a gap in the emergent appreciative advising framework to practice, as I attempted to understand the effect upon relationship building with the intersection of race in an academic advising context of postsecondary education.

In this argument, the appreciative advising framework is identified as a possible theoretical framework in which to insert equity and social justice, to enliven traditional practices
within the academic advising sphere of influence in order to address the needs of students of color beyond rhetoric or surface acceptance of race and differences campus wide. To address students’ reality, I interviewed eleven appreciative advisors in their institutions to hear their perspectives and voices on how the use of the appreciative advising framework enriched their professional space and interactions with students, specifically, with African American students. Finally, the appreciative advising framework seems to be adaptable to many student demographics or other areas in universities and colleges where the delivery of services is important for the retention and degree conferral of all students.

*Keywords:* critical race theory, appreciative advising, cycle of socialization, microaggressions, stereotypes, relationships, care, assimilation, predominantly White institutions, academic advising, equity, social justice
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents who left us way too soon. As my heart broke into pieces, I could feel myself drowning in excruciating pain, something like I have never felt before. But they left an imprint on the hearts of my sisters, brother, and me: the value of hard work and family. They are my Guardian Angels and I thank them for their love and support throughout my education.

To my loving children, Nikkol, Khalid, and Hasan, and my grandson, Khalill, who supported and loved me throughout the many challenges and family interruptions as we grew up together. As an example, I could also expect cell phone calls or text messages from my daughter any time of the day telling me to stay focus - “Are you working on your paper?” Or, “you can do this, you cannot give up, God is with you!” How blessed am I! To my sisters, brother, brothers-in-law, daughter-in-law, aunt, nieces, nephews, cousins and extended family - thank you!

This dedication also goes out to my husband, Darryl Harper who has supported me through all my goals and aspirations giving me the strength and support to continue. We survived through uncertainty, exhaustion, and illnesses, with family, friends, prayers, and God.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Academic Advising in Higher Education Context

“Academic Advisors mediate the dissonance between what students expect from the educational environment and what they experience in that environment” (Habley, 1981).

Students who matriculate into college and are unfamiliar with the “shared knowledge of the college experience and what it takes to succeed in college” (Tinto, 1987, p. 57) come with their own preconceived expectations. Habley (1981) suggested that students who matriculate into universities and colleges with preconceived perceptions and expectations of the learning environment may become disillusioned if these expectations fall short of their perceptions. This creates a need for academic advising as a critical component in higher education for all-inclusive initiatives to move forward. Students’ initial impressions and expectations of higher education are based upon their lived experiences, previous education, effective or non-effective relationships, and other adults in education.

Similarly, when arriving on campus, students’ initial expectations of higher education depend on their interactions and their capacities to build relationships with their academic advisors, who guide them through institutional guidelines, requirements, and learning processes. The National Survey of Student Engagement (2011) gives an overview of information and programs provided to students as far as participation in their learning and academic advising. The survey includes diversity and global awareness; nevertheless, it does not include race or ethnicity in its questions, nor information about students of color’s sense of belonging and academic self-efficacy. However, Klepfer and Hull (2012) asserted, “Academic advising is an essential element in the success and persistence of postsecondary students” (p. 10 and 11).

(Appendix A and B) Indeed, academic advisors play a critical role in the transition process of all
students from high school to college. Given this critical role, it is imperative that academic advisors have a deep understanding about how cultural identity impacts relationships to institutions of higher education and to advisors in charge of supporting students as they transition to college life.

One might argue that an academic advisor’s understanding of institutional cultures and student relationships metaphorically resembles a bicycle wheel. The advisor is the “hub” of the wheel, the institution is the rim, and students act as the spokes, creating a never-ending circle of connectedness, commitment, relationship building, and student engagement, academically and socially. The wheel breaks when students’ perceived expectations are not met by the institution; however, advisors have the opportunity to counsel students on the appropriate way to “fix” the connection through authentic and respectful conversations, care, trust, and a student-centered approach to advising.

When students arrive on campus, precisely what interrupts their excitement and joy of learning on their pathway to intellectual growth? Understanding this important question is crucial to successful student retention and graduation. How can advisors switch from fixing African Americans’ connection to predominantly White institutions (PWIs) to actually creating that change in small, concrete steps?

Education is a unique institution within our society that determines an individual’s goals, dreams, and career. In the United States, higher education is one training path that plays a unique role towards success for socialized human beings. Yet, successful matriculation through higher education depends a great deal on a student’s understanding of the dominant culture, values, and customs associated with higher education. This is especially true for African American students. The cultural values and customs of institutions of higher education continue
to mirror the cultural values and customs of past higher educational institutions when the student body was primarily white, upper-class, Christian, and male (Kendall, 2012, p. 43).

For example, Bourke (2010) reminds us that PWIs are “steeped in traditions” (p. 128). Traditions such as homecoming are entrenched and celebrated in every aspect of the educational spaces with an expectation that everyone will support the event (Bourke, 2010, p. 130, 131, & 132). These systemic cultural values and practices continue to be encouraged through academic advising practices, whether consciously or unconsciously. Such norms beg the question of whether universities possess a self-reflective lens, an ability to turn the lens inward and truly understand student-body diversity, and a desire to transform itself competitively while supporting the true purpose of education, namely, the education of all citizens.

Given the purpose and historical role of advisors, it is not an imposition on academic advisors to be self-reflective, caring, understanding, and appreciative of student differences in order to acquire the trust of students. Nonetheless, “[o]ver the last 15 years, educational researchers and theorists have decried the lack of caring in our schools” (Grumet, 1988; Noddings, 1984; Valenzuela, 1999 as cited in Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002). Beauboeuf-Lafontant compares the importance of caring for another human being like your own child. For example, Gay (2002) reinforced the importance and urgency of a caring and culturally responsive environment, explaining,

Because culture strongly influences the attitudes, values, and behaviors that students and teachers bring to the instructional process, it has to likewise be a major determinant of how the problems of underachievement are solved. This mandate for change is both simple because it demands for ethnically different students that which is already being done for many middle-class, European American students – that is, the right to grapple
with learning challenges from the point of strength and relevance found in their own cultural frames of reference. It is profound because, to date, U.S. education has not been very culturally responsive to ethnically diverse students. Instead, these students have been expected to divorce themselves from their cultures and learn according to European American cultural norms. This places them in double jeopardy – having to master the academic tasks while functioning under cultural conditions unnatural (and often unfamiliar) to them (p. 114).

Caring and cultural understanding bridges the gap between academic advisors and students, and helps them to form connections based on strength and cultural framing, which are especially important when students grapple with challenges and obstacles in the learning environment. Academic advising practices must create a partnership that develops “respect, honor, integrity, resource sharing, and a deep belief in the possibility of transcendence” as a “moral imperative and social responsibility” (Gay, 2000 as cited in Gay, 2001, p. 109).

In order to build an authentic relationship with African American students, academic advisors should willingly strive to be self-aware, and to reflect on any biases, habits, or characteristics which could be perceived by their advisees as a hindrance to trust and building relationships. Being self-aware and self-reflective gives one the unique ability to be aware of implicit biases or acceptance of stereotypes. Banks and Ford (2008) asserted, “[u]nconscious bias likely reinforces a misguided occupation with individual acts of discrimination” (p. 1120) such as stereotyping. Staats (2016) concurred that these “barriers have been shown to hinder access to opportunities” especially in the education of African American students.

According to Covey (2008), “Trust impacts us 24/7, 365 days a year. It can alter the trajectory and outcome of every future moment in our lives – both personally and professionally”
Covey (2008) also emphasized individuals should “not automatically assume that a failure of competence is a failure of character” (p. 312). African American students must be able to feel comfortable in their advisor’s presence and professional space; otherwise, the relationship dissolves into miscommunication, distrust, and loss for both the student and the university. Covey’s (2008) example of gaining trust from others resembles the self-reflection phase for the appreciative advisor. He states, “broken trust is an opportunity to get your own act together, to improve your character and competence and to behave in ways that inspire trust” (p. 315).

A mindset focused on an on-boarding concept to gain trust and build relationships misinterprets the importance of students’ purpose on campus. According to Chao (2012); Feldman (1989); and Van Maanen (1976), on-boarding includes “efforts by the organization to facilitate socialization of new members into an organization’s environment” (as cited in Klein, Polin & Sutton, 2015, p. 264). Coff and Kryscynski (2011) maintain the same mindset. They affirm that on-boarding benefits the organization and contributes to the success and competitive advantage of the organization (as cited in Klein, Polin, & Sutton, 2015, p. 263), not the benefit of the student.

Historical research clearly exposes the affliction of assimilation and connects it to education, with some concerns. Levisohn (2013) stressed, “education and assimilation seem intimately connected” (abstract, p. 1). Apple (2002) supports Levisohn “when he contends that the hegemonic intent of modern day education is to reproduce the status quo so that the disenfranchised are always relegated to subservient positions” (as cited in Johnson-Bailey, 2006, p. 113). Banks (1997) defines assimilation, according to its “sociological definition,” as “an ethnic or racial group’s effort to relinquish its characteristics in favor of the characteristics and norm of the dominant group” (as cited in Johnson-Bailey, 2006, p. 105). Assimilation was
viewed as a means to social mobility to a better socioeconomic status – a pipeline to possibilities (as cited in Johnson-Bailey, 2006, p. 106). Consequently, African American students attempting to trust in and build relationships within predominantly White institutions struggle with assimilation, identity, and three significant barriers: stereotyping, microaggressions, and campus climates, which interfere in the very assimilation process on which colleges and universities rely. Having said that, students find their critical learning environment and the pipeline to possibilities interrupted as they seek others to trust and build relationships in their new environment. According to Mahatma Gandhi’s grandson, Arun Gandhi’s words of wisdom poignantly emphasizes four principles of relationships to build community. They are “respect, understanding, acceptance, and appreciation” (Haynes, 1999).

For that reason, it is understandable that trust and authentic relationships take time to develop and nurture especially across culture and race. Intentionality and purpose become necessities for academic advisors to assist African American students in building an emotional connection to their new environment. As a result, retention may perhaps increase and tuition revenue losses decrease. Most importantly, African American students’ withdrawal pattern should change. Currently, predominantly White institutions continue to accept more and more diverse students (Snyder & Dillow, 2015), yet African American students “continue to report low level of satisfaction at PWIs” (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Lee, 2016; Mitchell, Wood, & Witherspoon, 2010; Utsey, Ponterotto, Reynolds, & Cancelli, 2000 as cited in Lee, 2018, p. 77).

As African American students matriculate into university learning environments, academic advising practices should be viewed as the first “stop” to tightening the “rim, hub and spokes” of the wheel together. The purpose is to strengthen the connection between the advisor and students in order to build a bridge and enhance emotional attachment to the university
learning community. Hence, a meaningful advising “voice” has the capability to build collaborative relationships around trust and respect with students, thereby elevating African American students’ academic success despite barriers such as microaggressions, stereotypes, and campus climates. Furthermore, it is well worth noting that research shows African American students’ attrition from PWIs may be related to the above-mentioned barriers, which, in turn, interfere in students’ ability to maintain academic self-efficacy and sense of belonging within such restrictive social and academic spaces. As Harper and Hurtado (2007) “observed, [b]lack students and other students of color have dealt with alienation, isolation, and stereotyping at PWIs for decades” (as cited in Lee, 2018, p. 77). More specifically, Harper and Hurtado (2007) found that since their study commenced in 1992, “black students reported significant degrees of dissatisfaction on PWIs’ campuses” (as cited in Lee, 2018, p. 77).

It will take advisors who are empathetic, proactive, and responsive (Masterson, 2007, p. 1) to the needs of all students to prevail over dissatisfaction reported by black students in PWIs. When advisors accept their status as a change agent, the inner spirit awakens to actively transform the collegiate environment to acceptance and concern for all students, especially those who have been historically underserved in education, such as African Americans. At this point, advising becomes authentic and effective with purpose and intention toward empowering students in academic self-efficacy and developing a sense of belonging. My research attempts to show that an environment lacking in care and understanding of diversity falls short in assisting all students with the promise of an education and ultimately fails their stakeholders, communities, and society. Because of the increase in diversity and global interrelationships, it is necessary for universities and colleges to review traditional practices, policies, and procedures,
in ways that permit students’ voices of concern to be heard and listened to empathetically, especially in their advisors’ professional space.

House and Hayes (2002), for example, clearly believe academic advisors hold the key to modifying traditional practices involving students’ success, persistence, and retention. They affirm that students’ “dreams and aspirations” and advisors’ presence in education should be recognized as a window to students’ future goals and careers (p. 1). Despite House and Hayes’ recognition of academic advising’s importance and impact upon the students’ learning process, reframing academic advising will be an uphill battle because the hierarchy of higher education currently undervalues and underestimates advising practices (Koch, 2007, p. 1).

The fact that higher education undervalues and underestimates advising practices slows higher responses to and acknowledgement of the quality of advising within the administrative structure. Grites (1979) supported House and Hayes’ assessment in one of his works. Quoting from Jonathan D. Fife, Director of ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education, Grites concluded that universities’ overall focus on “[t]he academic quality or reputation of an institution is often measured by its parts: The national ranking of its faculty, the type of facilities, and the basic intelligence of its students” (p. 6), which disallows institutions the occasion to visualize academic advising as the “face” of universities and its impact on students success and retention. Again, Grites insists (1979), as he emphasized in the past, “academic advising will play a more prominent role in the future of higher education” (p. 54).

**History of Academic Advising in Higher Education**

Thurmond and Miller (2006) updated the history of the National Academic Advising Association. They pointed out that “in 1977, the National Academic Advising Association
(NACADA) was established at the first National Conference on Academic Advising. In 1979, NACADA became a chartered professional organization. Based upon the history of NACADA, the association has a membership of 10,000 and represents all 50 states, as well as Puerto Rico, Canada, and several other countries”. Grites (1979) stated “the creation of the National Academic Advising Association was developed “to address the unique advising concerns and programs because the status quo always seemed adequate” (p. 5). The concerns stimulated change in three areas, “attitudes toward advising, definitions, and models of the advising process” (Grites, 1979, p. 5). The Global Community for Academic Advising within NACADA is instrumental in recognizing the importance of advising and its connection to students’ retention and graduation. See Appendices A, B, and C to further understand the importance of academic advising in academia.

The purpose and importance of academic advising has been established in many scholarly research articles. But traditional advising practices cannot be applied to everyone in the same manner without acknowledging students’ differences in cultures, values, and lived experiences. Academic advisors who excel in their professional roles in higher education are recognized as professionals who understand, reinvent, and pre-visualize advising practices to meet student needs. Students’ needs have become more significant in the 21st century, and advisors must focus on the whole student, including their lived experiences, struggles, weaknesses, strengths, and the impact of barriers such as institutional cultures, campus environments, and policies and practices upon a diverse student population.

How do PWIs mitigate negative barriers that may affect the presence of African American students who matriculate into a culture and identity different from their own? This study examines barriers that may affect African American students’ sense of belonging and
academic self-efficacy in PWI environments and how an emergent appreciative advising framework may assist academic advisors in helping to mitigate barriers for students as they pursue academic success and degree completion. Moreover, the study examines whether the academic advisor-student relationship can facilitate academic and social success for African American students despite barriers that could possibly derail educational pursuit.

**Academic Advising Historical Era**

Academic advising has a distinctive role in higher education. Regrettably, without uniformity and consistency across the advising role, the efficacy of advising is questionable. Larson, Johnson, Aiken-Wisniewski, and Barkemeyer (2018) claimed their research shows the following,

[T]hose involved in academic advising do not share a common understanding, purpose, or activity; that is, faculty, members organizational stakeholders, and others define advising differently. The lack of cohesive definition means that the skills, education, training, and values necessary to advise students may also remain indeterminate (p. 81).

Research assessment of academic advising by seminal and current scholarly writers reveal that existing traditional academic advising practices, as a resource in delivery of student services, are not enough on their own if universities are to recruit and compete successfully against other institutions. Polson and Cashin (1981), for instance, recognized very early that transformation was occurring in higher education. They state, “higher education is being subjected to a new wave of student consumerisms and forcing a change to diversify and create a complex structure of student services” (p. 34).

Given that African American students are customers and consumers in PWIs, do PWIs have a responsibility to ensure these students, who are invited into the environment, have
equitable access to learning? Hunter and White (2004) suggested that “academic advising needs to be viewed by faculty members, students, administrators, and staff as an activity that is central, rather than peripheral, to the educational enterprise” (as cited in Schreiner and Anderson, 2005, p. 20).

Over thirty-seven years ago, Grites (1979) critically analyzed academic advising, as did other scholarly researchers in the 1990s, such as O’Banion, Crookston, Titley, Chickering, and Trombley, who concurred in the analysis, and in the importance of academic advising in higher education. It is important to remember that Grites’s scholarship enlightens us as to how society, politics, cultures, and economics forced changes upon postsecondary education throughout the 1800s to 1900s. Furthermore, the academic advising role had to adapt and adjust to societal changes that impacted universities. The change forced the advising role to be converted from faculty to professional academic advisors. Students’ needs changed and required advisors to understand the incoming student population as well as understanding university curriculum, policies, and procedures.

In the beginning, academic advising was conducted by faculty who provided students with information and direction about course selection and graduation requirements (Grites, 1979, p. 5), with the least amount of interference. Colleges did not have a “formal structure” (Grites, 1979, p. 5) of advising because classes were small, limited, and relied on an advising model labeled “prescriptive advising,” which was very authoritative. It was assumed that John Hopkins University and Harvard University established a formal faculty advising structure because they believed those faculty members were better qualified to advise students with anything related to the learning process (Grites, 1979, p. 6).
As student enrollments increased, faculty were required to participate in secondary responsibilities such as “designing programs, teaching to students needs and interests, and permitting faculty evaluations to be completed” by students (Pino, 1975; Borland, 1973 as cited in Grites, 1979), which set the tone for another change. Societal pressures and changes in higher education led faculty to concentrate on teaching instead of advising (Grites, 1979, p. 6). Hence, a shift occurred, from “institution-centered information sharing to student-centered learning outcomes” (Hutson and He, 2011, p. 2), and the concern for students’ learning and relationships became a priority.

By the 1970s, many economic and labor conditions modified, and affected “the attrition of college students, budgetary crises, tenure quotas, and fiscal resources” (Grites, 1979, p. 7), in addition to threatening higher education’s existence in society. Once again, universities had to reinvent strategies, goals, and adjust to changes within society. Other factors influencing change to advising practices was the influx of women, international students, and other students of color into the educational fold (Grites, 1979, p.8). Grites, Gordon and Habley insist that despite the confusion of advising, the result is the same, “advising on college campuses is recognized as a viable and necessary component that results in the success of college students” (as cited in Larson, Johnson, Aiken-Wisniewski, & Barkemeyer, 2018, p. 53).

Considering the history of advising and current knowledge of academic advisors as the “hub” and primary resource connecting students and institutions, advising has made some strides in higher education; nevertheless, it encounters significant problems when advising diverse student populations while operating within the same traditional infrastructure, practices, and curriculum representing society’s majority culture. Indeed, it is the same, effectively, as saying
faculty, administrators, and students mirror society, which continues to perpetuate a cycle of challenges and barriers to minority students, the underserved, and marginalized.

As advising transitioned throughout history, it eventually surfaced as a central component in students’ success, needs, and fears. As Schreiner and Anderson noted, “[o]ut of concern for meeting students’ needs and being sensitive to their lack of adequate preparation for college, postsecondary educators focus on the areas of deficit and build programs and services around them” (2005, p. 20). Deficit remediation was viewed as the means to one end – degree completion.

However, the deficit approach fails to address empowerment and engagement in the higher education learning process. Ladson-Billings (1998) suggested, “deficit is a language of failure that assumes African American students are deficient” (p. 19). Indeed, this approach devalues their intelligence or students’ ability to succeed. Institutions need to fill gaps between “the students’ skills and the students’ ability to meet the demands of the college experience” (Schreiner & Anderson, 2005, p. 22). The following are advising practices or models cemented in the advising foundations of higher educational institutions.

**Prescriptive Academic Advising**

Prescriptive advising is a universal advising practice utilized by many universities. It involves an authoritarian approach with a focus more on students’ limitations and less on self-reliance. McCabe (2003) considered prescriptive advising as a “clerical function” (as cited in Fowler & Boylan, 2010, p. 3). The practice requires advisors to share information and give advice to students while strictly adhering to institutional policies and procedures leading to graduation.
The prescriptive advisor does not intentionally desire to build a relationship during the advising sessions. Students are assumed to be less mature, in need of direction, less prepared, and unable to make decisions on their own (Grites, 1979, p. 7; Crookston, 1972, p. 80). The practice resembles a doctor/patient relationship based upon status, expediency, and low trust (Crookston, 1972 as cited in Brown and Rivas, 1994, p. 108).

Unfortunately, the program and delivery service were built around the deficit philosophy (Schreiner and Anderson, 2005, p. 20) and failed to support the whole students, or create high expectations between the students and advisor. Specifically, prescriptive advising does not “promote the development of independent problem-solving strategies needed to improve poor academic performance and therefore can be less appropriate for underprepared students” (Schee, 2007, as cited in Fowler & Boylan, 2010, p.3). The practice does not consider students’ lived experiences, strengths, and perceived barriers that may also hinder academic and social success. In short, prescriptive advising practices “lack student focus and provide limited scope of advising content” (Appleby, 2001 as cited in Hutson and He, 2011, p. 3).

**Developmental Academic Advising**

Schee (2007) situates development academic advising as a “process-oriented relationship with the main focus as students’ goals” (as stated in Fowler & Boylan, 2010, p. 3). The advisor and advisee meet to complete predetermined “developmental tasks” leading to an action plan of goals, based on self-reliance (Crookston, 1994; O’Banion, 1994; King, 2005 as cited in Williams, 2007, p. 3). Developmental advising practices are believed to help students become aware of how they are changing throughout their education. Students are expected to mature, become self-directed, and focus on their potential (Winston and Sandor, 1984, p. 8; Crookston, 1972, p. 78, 80).
On the other hand, Lowenstein (2005) questioned Crookston’s description of developmental advising as teaching. Lowenstein suggested that thinking of developmental advising as teaching is too broad a perspective and not persuasive enough to make a difference in students’ collegiate experiences (as cited in Williams, 2007, p. 4). Although it is important for students to understand the connection and relationship with their institution, how does one build a meaningful relationship with a curriculum that does not understand the history of various cultures? The need for understanding can also be shown, for example, when advising Muslim students; the students may have similar feelings, though their context is very different (i.e. religion and not race). It is equally important to address the campus community impact upon students’ ability to be self-reliant, especially African American students. How can students become self-reliant if they have perceptions of not belonging? How can universities retain students on campus without delving into their lives and previous educational experiences as well as acknowledging perceived barriers to academic and social success? What types of “developmental tasks” do the students design if they perceive if they are undervalued or unwelcomed?

**Intrusive Academic Advising**

Many academic advisors utilize intrusive advising for remedial and intervention purposes when students are having difficulty with the transition from high school to college focusing on deficits. Williams (2007) characterized intrusive advising as a “direct response to identified academic crisis,” which gives the students a specific program of action to follow in order to remain in the university setting. Additionally, the intrusive advising practice includes some elements of “prescriptive and developmental advising practices” (p. 4).
Does the intrusive advising practice diminish the advisor/advisee relationship because of deficit thinking, thereby limiting and discouraging an emotional connection to a university? The intrusive advising practice is an intervention method and reactive practice used when advisors receive students’ information from professors regarding below-average grades, difficulty adjusting, or difficulty in meeting the challenges of higher education. Advisors utilize certain codes of behaviors to require students to report to the advising office during scheduled dates and times for progress updates. Or, the focus may be on the student’s identification of need. These tactics are used to ensure that students are adjusting to the rigor of higher education and motivated to learn. The next section examines a more recent advising practice or model developed to address students’ abilities in higher education.

**Strengths-Based Academic Advising**

It is well settled that “[a]cademic advisors and career counselors are well-positioned to guide students through these transitions by helping them to envision future academic and career goals and leverage their strengths to overcome challenges” (Schreiner, 2004, 2013 as cited in Soria & Stubblefield, 2015, p. 630). Strengths-based advising is considered a paradigm shift (Shreiner & Anderson, 2005, p. 20) in academic advising with a lens focused on talent and student engagement, embracing social work and positive psychology theories. Strengths-based advising discovers “students’ inherent talents through assessment testing as the basis for creating an educational action plan based on the assumption that students have talents they bring to the academic environment” (Schreiner and Anderson, 2005, p. 21), talents that can be transferred into strengths.

The Meyers Briggs and Learning Style Tools are two examples of assessment tools used during academic advising sessions. Both strength-assessment testing tools permit advisors to
begin a conversation with students matching their skills and abilities to a major and eventually a
career. The strength-based model includes three important elements: considering “(1) students’
motivation instead of needs; (2) shift[ing] the problems to possibilities” “(3) … question[ing]
students about their talents and situations that enabled them to be successful in nonacademic
environments” (Schreiner & Anderson, 2005, p. 22).

For this purpose, Clifton and Anderson (2002) adamantly believe it is necessary for
students to create an action plan and understand the meaning of transferring their talents or skills
from one environment to another (as stated in Schreiner & Anderson, 2005, p. 24, 25). They also
believe that this step is often overlooked during advising sessions. However, how do you
motivate students to apply their strengths, knowledge, skills, and abilities in the classroom or
campus environment if they feel marginalized, disempowered, unwelcomed, or disengaged?
Historically, research reveals such barriers can operate to demoralize students despite their
intellectual abilities and strengths.

As early as 1984, Winston and Sandor foreshadowed the impact of academic advising on
students:

In recent years the role, processes, and definition of academic advising have come under
close scrutiny in higher education. With college enrollment in decline and college
population changing, recruitment, and retention have become key issues that affect
success of institutions. The importance of academic advising in fostering total students’
growth is recognized (p. 5).

Winston and Sandor immediately assessed the importance of academic advising after Grites’s
revelation that advising was an academic need created to answer changes in society. They soon
realized universities and colleges required professional advising practices, in addition to faculty
advising, because faculty were assigned additional responsibilities. Because faculty were unable to focus on students only, the realization of students’ success and the fear of attrition became an important component in education.

Retention Literature is Vast.

According to scholarly literature, retention is a serious problem in higher education, especially for African American students. A 2019 signature report created by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, and supported by the Lumina Foundation, concluded “that [a]mong students who started in four-year public institutions, black students had the lowest six-year completion rate of 45.9% compared to Hispanic 55.0%, White 67.2%, and Asians 71.7% (p. 21).” They also affirmed, “[i]nstitutional characteristics can play a large role in racial completion disparities. Disparities can include factors such as selectivity, campus climate, and availability of financial aid can serve as either completion barriers or pathways” (p. 4). Grier-Reed, Madyun, and Buckley’s (2008) conclusions are even more emphatic: “Black students’ retention in institutions of higher education is an important 21st Century issue” (p. 476). However, “despite growing literature, the perception remains that predominantly White institutions have not been successful in fully integrating African American and other minority students into the mainstream of the educational system” (Nettles & Perna, 1997 as stated by Holmes, Ebbers, Robinson & Mugenda, 2000, p. 42).

In fact, Cuseo and Farnum (2011), supported by Gardiner (1994); Noel (1985); Tinto (1988-1993); and Willingham (1985) surmised that students who are in good standing (“estimates range between 75% to 85 %”) withdraw and leave college voluntarily (as cited in Cuseo & Farnum, 2011, p. 3). They furthered explained that minority students withdraw for lackluster “academic performance,” which can often be attributed to nonacademic causes (p. 3).
Clearly, institutions should move beyond “add on programs” and recognize that “attrition lies not only in the students and the situation they face but also in the very character of the setting, now assumed to be natural to higher education” (Tinto, 1999, p. 5).

Evidently, Tinto infers, traditional educational adjustments are limited and only address surface issues. He also insists traditional academics will no longer help improve students’ learning if the whole student and other educational interruptions are overlooked. In fact, Cuseo insists scholars and educational leaders ought to remember “retention is an assessment outcome and open to accurate measurements” (Cuseo, 2011, p. 1) if conducted in higher education.

Simply put, for over 30 years, seminal research suggests academic advising is a significant resource, and necessary for students’ retention. The Noel-Levitz’s (2003) National Student Satisfaction Report concurred, emphasizing that responses from 796 higher education institutions reached the same result regarding the importance of academic advising to students’ engagement in their educational experience (as cited in Coll & Zalaquett, 2007, p. 274).

This dissertation demonstrates how reframing academic advising practices can lead to reducing withdrawal patterns of African American students from PWIs. Specifically, this work seeks to understand the role of positive, cross-cultural relationships between academic advisors and students of color. Can students maintain the joy of learning within a challenging environment interrupted by non-academic factors and non-cognitive barriers with the help of academic advisors? The reframing of academic advising offers an attempt to help students develop a lens that reaches beyond barriers, while providing equity for African American students to grasp the educational circle of connectedness. This work also reviews concepts that may create obstacles to academic and social success for African American students on PWIs’
campuses and explains how cultivating meaningful relationships with academic advisors empowers students to navigate through PWIs’ traditional norms, cultures, and values.

Admittedly, not all African American students struggle in the PWI environment, and remain until graduation. Indeed, research supports the claim that some African American students are able to assimilate into PWIs’ environment and graduate. Unfortunately, those who do not remain on campus until degree conferral may withdraw because of their inability to filter out subliminal barriers on PWIs campuses. Such barriers of microaggressions, stereotypes, and negative campus climates on PWIs’ campuses can continually remind African American students they are learning within the dominant majority culture. Are they forced to judge their own worth through the eyes of the dominant culture every day, both in and outside class?

Will the withdrawals eventually have an erosive effect upon communities and society? Universities and colleges that are genuine and self-reflective about their attempts to educate all students regardless of culture will work towards transforming the fabric of the university. It has been said that action speaks louder than words. For students to have a sense of belonging, universities and colleges must begin to include all cultures in their curricula, and demand participation in all celebratory events similar to dominant traditions. At this time, African American culture lingers on the border of the learning process and receives marginalized treatment, which is not lost on students because they are attuned to disapproval. This should cause concerns in admissions and retention departments of PWIs nationwide.

Again, both before and after matriculation, academic advisors are the first to meet with students. Advisors must understand they are the gatekeepers of students’ current and future lives. According to Beale (1970), “[g]atekeepers in U.S. higher education had its origins in 1642, when Harvard College established the first known requirements for college admission” (as
cited in Tremblay, 2013). Currently, academic advisors are considered the gatekeepers to students’ success and retention. They are gatekeepers precisely because they monitor and evaluate students’ ability to maintain academic progress, suggest necessary resources, and follow students to degree completion. In comparison to counselor education, a lack of training may exist on how to prepare academic advisors for the purpose of being an impactful gatekeeper for students (Rapp, Moody, & Stewart, 2018, p. 190). The scholars affirm the importance of training beginning with a foundational content involving ethics, cultural considerations, and legal and due process considerations (p. 195). In support, Lantta (2001) offered a description of academic advising as “gatekeepers to students’ dreams, aspirations, and goals” (p. 1), reason enough to identify them as important change agents. Lantta also took it a step further, and affirmed academic advisors must be knowledgeable on social justice (p. 1)

Additionally, an academic advisor’s inability to delivery student services beneficial to students’ intellectual growth allows a student to “slip through the cracks” and may lead to academic failure. Falling short of adequate support, students fall into a perpetual cycle of incomplete dreams and goals. On the other hand, advisors who utilize an appreciative approach may offer academic advisors the training necessary to witness the humanity of others, understand students’ lived experiences, and appreciate their personal characteristics as a human being first, and a student, second.

Moreover, as education becomes more diverse and global, universities and colleges should reframe academic advising practices in order to determine how academic advising in totality fits into the future mission of universities. Since the purpose of education is to educate and prepare citizens to participate in a democratic society, academia should foster and facilitate equity, social justice, and respect for all students and differences, in ways that allow them to
become successful as productive human beings. Hytten (2009) refers to John Dewey in her article “Deweyan Democracy in a Globalized World” and traces Dewey’s explanation of democratic beliefs:

[W]e might argue that globalization is a problematic situation that calls for our best critical thinking. His work helps us to see the possibilities inherent within globalization, yet also positions us to critically examine the positive and negative consequences of how globalization is playing out within and across different contexts. When looking at the possibilities of globalization Dewey recognized that increased interconnection with people throughout the world, for example, through the sharing of ideas and through cooperative undertakings, leads to enrichment, novelty, and growth. It is only through dialogue, exploration, experimentation, and interaction with others that we get an expanded sense of possibilities. For Dewey, diversity of perspectives is essential for growth, his ultimate normative goal. He wrote that “diversity of stimulation means novelty, and novelty means challenge to thought,” the prerequisite is growth (p. 398).

This suggests that a true evaluation of democracy transcends narrowly-defined traditional practices. The impact of globalization has filtered into higher education at high speed. Furthermore, it requires commitment, care, and compassion to make authentic and transformative changes in higher education. Applying this line of analysis to advising, appreciative advising invites the advisors to accept the mental challenges to their own values, customs, norms, to recognize any biases as well as to learn the process of interconnectedness that focuses on relationships through meaningful conversation and diverse perspectives. The advisor’s toolkit increases with understanding, and “diversity stimulation” challenges traditional practices – a necessary step to support students who historically suffer disparities in education.
Academic advisors can take this opportunity to demystify stereotypes, negative first impressions, deficit thinking, and bias — all barriers to respect and acceptance. Because universities are microcosms of society, everyone possesses core values and characteristics learned from their lived experiences, which they bring to their employment space. This work, then, begs the question: how can PWIs participate in due diligence to genuinely train administrators on the existence of barriers to academic and social success that may inhibit the learning process of African American students within the dominant culture and traditional practices in higher educations’ infrastructure? Furthermore, it questions just how authentic educational institutions can be in their approaches to reframing academic advising practices in order to change the trajectory of African American students’ pipeline from withdrawal to retention and graduation.

The current research project expands on advising practices and its important connection to retention of African American students through authentic understanding, effective listening, and meaningful support. It is an intentional framework specifically designed to engage, empower, and connect the students to campus communities as well as to encourage academic advisors to reflect upon their own values, norms, biases, and interactions with a diverse student populations. Appreciative advising can also apply to additional services within universities and colleges such as curriculum development, first-year orientation, international offices, and institutional research. Appreciative advising training and professional development is a requirement to a meaningful educational transformation with an infusion of appreciative inquiry, positive psychology, and social justice.

This study attempts to illuminate the importance of the academic advising role and its impact upon students in higher education from matriculation to graduation. It also emphasizes
the importance of a continual learning process when working with diverse students’
demographics. The study attempts to answer the following important questions:

1. How does the academic advisors’ knowledge and understanding of the appreciative
   advising framework relate to their knowledge and understanding of social and
   cultural differences that may influence the cultivation of authentic relationships with
   African American students at a PWI?

2. In what ways, or to what extent, do academic advisors perceive the appreciative
   advising framework as a useful tool for supporting the academic, social, and cultural
   experiences of African American students at PWIs?

**Researcher Reflection**

I grew up in McKeesport, a steel-mill city south of Pittsburgh. McKeesport was a city
segregated by socioeconomic status and race. I lived in a community where adults looked out
for one another’s children and family surrounded you in every direction. Of course, there were
disagreements and arguments. Nevertheless, we had fun, located as we were near theatres,
skating rinks, pool halls, restaurants, baseball fields, playgrounds, and dance halls. Despite
living in a family-friendly community, the racial imbalance was obvious, most especially in the
McKeesport School District which was predominantly White. Barriers were challenging,
hurtful, destructive and obvious. Personally, I am familiar with rejection, microaggressions, and
stereotyping of human beings. Still, one learns to succeed despite those hurdles with authentic
and caring assistance.

Serendipitously, I found myself with a career in the academic environment and my
educational journey began. As an African American woman who strives to positively impact and
care for postsecondary students, my identity also includes being a wife, mother, sister, life-long
learner, academic advisor, career counselor, law school registrar, and adjunct instructor. Since my identity immediately affects my students’ interactions and leadership ability, I learned to cultivate and present a welcoming and inviting professional space for all students. It is about adjusting and attempting to create equity in my area of academic expertise in academia. My many years of academic experience have given me a rich understanding of the complexity and navigation of predominantly White institutions.

My personal and professional experiences provide me with a unique knowledge and understanding of African American students’ trepidation when they matriculate and arrive on PWIs campus environment. As African American students are nervous and in need of guidance to navigate ‘PWIs environment and resources, I support them through the culture shock and challenges; I am someone who looks like them and listens intently to their narratives when uncertainty blocks their vision to academic success. They are looking for an immediate relationship, and to build trust and rapport with someone like them until they feel comfortable to trust others on campus.

From my standpoint, African American students’ first encounter or impression of the university begins with their assigned academic advisor and the advisor’s ability to connect and support them. This initial contact has a profound impact on their pursuit of education for the next four years. For example, my office became a haven for support, trust, and guidance for students — especially African American students. All academic advisors must similarly increase their content knowledge, skills, and abilities to interact with all student demographics on educational landscapes for the 21st Century. After all, they, as well as the students, are lifelong learners attempting to transform the campus community into a more inviting and welcoming environment. Therefore, as an African American woman, I unknowingly became a strong and
determined student advocate in postsecondary education. My research also supports institutional changes to deep-rooted traditions that inhibit the critical thinking environment of universities and colleges as well as the hurdles students of color encounter.

Chapter 1 endeavors to familiarize the reader with the importance of the advising role in higher education and its impact upon all students throughout their educational journey. An academic advisor’s space can signify an important sphere of influence within the academic walls of higher education. From the literature, one can infer a change in education traditions is necessary for the sustainability of universities and colleges in the 21st century and beyond.

In chapter 2, the literature review captures background information on education beginnings and the existence of status quo. It also introduces various theoretical frameworks to explore the reality where traditions continue to influence the knowledge of race and society, and eventually its effect on campus learning environments. The logic model was created by the researcher to illustrate the direction of the research and desired outcome.
To provide academic advisors with an understanding of how appreciative advising may assist with the academic success of African American undergraduates who matriculate into predominantly White institutions.

Unacceptable outcome
Not all enrolled African American undergraduates in predominantly White institutions remain until a degree is conferred upon them.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

“The worst form of inequality is to try to make unequal things equal.” - Aristotle

“Attracting, enrolling, and retaining a diverse body of students is a growing concern at U.S. universities – particularly predominantly White institutions” (PWIs; Harper & Patton, 2007; Lett & Wright, 2003 as cited in Henfield, Woo, & Washington, 2013, p. 122). This chapter reviews scholarly research in its attempt to build upon existing institutional practices in predominantly White institutions. The current study examines non-cognitive variables that may affect African American students’ academic self-efficacy and sense of belonging thus, in turn, reducing retention of African American students in PWIs. The chapter begins by examining the historical transformation of education and the inclusion of African Americans into integrated classrooms without the support of the African American community, along with the educational issues that arose in an environment that did not understand their culture, norms, and values. An appreciative advising model of understanding may be the answer to equalizing academic achievement, social adjustment, and retention of African American students in PWIs. Finally, Chapter II reviews three theories that likely dismantle or, at least, reduce the barriers to degree conferral by African American students. Even in the aftermath of the groundbreaking Brown vs. the Board of Education, the question as to whether learning opportunities equalized for all students remains unanswered.

Brown vs. the Board of Education

The Supreme Court’s 1954 landmark decision in Brown vs. the Board of Education declared the separate-but-equal legislative application illegal as it applied to White and Black schools. Students were removed from their neighborhoods and parents became less involved with their child’s education due to their inability to travel outside their area (Talbert-Johnson,
2004, p. 23). Regrettably, the decision did not address equitable learning opportunities for students of color (Talbert-Johnson, 2004, p. 23). Diverse students were traumatized after transferring to different school districts because the teachers, who were vastly White with different life experiences, lacked the understanding of systemic barriers faced by the students (Talbert-Johnson, 2004, p. 23) in their new environment.

Another critical turning point in history occurred in the 1960s, as the civil rights movement began an upfront battle forcing society to face racism, discrimination, and inequitable education (Allen, 1992, p. 26; Johnson, 2013, p. 38; Talbert-Johnson, 2004, p. 22; and Hurtado, 1992, p. 540). Hence, education became a valuable resource, viewed as a pathway to right the wrongs against African Americans (Johnson, 2013, p. 38). As a result, the 1960s witnessed a striking increase in the number of African American students attending PWIs (Allen, 1992, p. 26).

Although it is true that the fundamental purpose of the educational system in the United States is to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to function as productive social beings (Hytten, 2006, p. 221), research has continuously maintained that education falls short of educating all citizens. In fact, as early as the Supreme Court’s decision in *Brown vs. The Board of Education*, seminal research described barriers that plague and continue to plague African Americans attending predominantly White institutions, despite the Supreme Court declaring racial segregation unconstitutional and recognizing education as important for all children (Talbert-Johnson, 2004, p. 22).

Studies also suggest cultural unawareness and/or indifference negatively affect the experiences of African American students at PWIs (Hoston, Graves, & Fleming-Randle, 2010). Consequently, African American students may continue to fall into the collateral damage
category within dominant majority educational environments. Museus (2008) emphasized the way in which the African American trajectory will be disadvantaged because “persisting racial inequities in educational attainment will lead to future decline in the average annual individual income and affect the nation’s tax base and economic well-being” (p.569).

Furthermore, traditions are potent and those who perpetuate traditions are adverse to change. Jones, Castellanos, and Coles’s (2002) research included African American, Asian-Pacific American, Chicano/Latino, and Native American students. The students answered questions about their university experience with campus climate, students’ experiences, students’ involvement, cross-cultural center, and department units. The consensus was that the environment of PWIs “reinforces White pride and closes students’ minds instead of opening it to diversity” (p. 28).

In a scholarly world where many argue that the naming of the subject is a creation of subjugation, it seems obvious that the more likely usage of the white wording, the predominantly White institution (PWI), elicits knowledge that confirms not only racial and ethnic differences, but also power relations. (Hutcheson, 2008, p. 43)

Moreover, African American students who continue to matriculate into PWIs experience culture shock upon their arrival to campus, as well as frustration by the privileges granted to the few in the dominant majority culture. Indeed, the White students, staff, and faculty are unaware of their natural ability to fit into the campus environment, not realizing the difficulties faced by students of color, particularly African American students, both socially and academically. As African American students’ matriculate into PWIs, they are astutely aware that various cultures are present in the campus environment - except their own - which is a direct contradiction to the meaning of education and the opportunity to think critically and grow as social beings.
Are institutions of learning facilitating cultural understanding, balance, and relations between the dominant norms, cultures, and values and students of color, especially African Americans who feel less valued? As long as African American students perceive that they are outsiders within the walls of PWIs, their academic and social realization is limited, while feelings of isolation and marginalization become entrenched.

Evidence is abundant regarding the effects of dominant campus cultures of PWIs and the challenges students of color face (Gonzalez, 2003; Lewis, Chesler, & Forman, 2000; Museus, 2007 as cited in Museus, 2008, p. 570). For example, Lewis et al. interviewed 75 African American, Asian American, Latina/o, and Native American students at a PWI and concluded that those students were marginalized and faced conflicting stress, both to represent their race and to assimilate into the majority culture of their campus (as cited in Museus, 2008, p. 570). As early as 1999, researchers such as Schwitzer, Griffin, Ancis, and Thomas (1999) identified difficulties faced by African American students during their “academic and social adjustment” within PWIs.

Their qualitative study included 126 fourth-year African American students who revealed feeling “isolated” and “alienated” during their academic pursuit (p. 189, 191). Priest and McPhee (2000) supported these findings, stating that despite higher education’s attempts and initiatives to recruit minority students, PWIs continue to struggle to retain minority students (as cited in Coll and Zalaquett, 2007, p. 276) as they continue to withdrawal from PWIs before degree conferral.

Three theoretical frameworks motivating this study are critical race theory, cycle of socialization, and racial microaggressions. This study uses those frameworks to explain how Whites and African Americans were socialized and how socialization disseminated fluidly in to education and on to PWIs campuses and learning environment. The study also reviews an
emergent advising theory, appreciative advising, which cultivates an authentic, intentional, and collaboratively relationship between advisor and advisee to empower and engage students in their learning processes.

**Critical Race Theory (CRT) in Education**

McGee and Stovall (2015) stressed, “CRT in education makes it possible to analyze practices through a race-conscious lens, which helps to frame critical questions addressing the traumas that directly affect communities of color. CRT also supports reflection and action to promote psychological well-being, organize collective action, and develop a liberating education” (p. 494). As a product of both the Civil Rights Movement and Critical Legal Studies, critical race theory emerged as a theoretical framework believed to better address race and racism in America (Hill, 2008, p.1). Hill (2008) acknowledges that the framework is the result of such scholars as “Derrick Bell in the 1960s and Alan Freeman and Richard Delgado in the 1970s and 1980s” (2009, p. 1). Delgado and Bernal (2002) emphasize the idea that numerous scholars agree that “histories, cultures, and languages of students of color have been devalued, misinterpreted, or omitted from formal education settings” (as cited in Stovall, 2005, p. 95).

Delgado and Stefancic (2017) and Bourke (2016) remind us that colleges and universities are considered social structures within society (p. 7, 8; p. 14). As a result, the scholars assert the need for critical race theory in education to discuss the intersections of race as a socially constructed concept, traditional social roles embedded in the social structures, and the effect on students of color (Weiston-Serdan, 2017, p. 10, 11 & 12). Weiston-Serdan (2017) list several core beliefs of CRT: “(1) [r]acism is an everyday part of life; (2) [m]any civil rights or social justice victories are likely a result of something called interest convergence; (3) [r]ace is a social construct, created out of social thought and relations; (4) [d]iscrimination is not linear in nature,
and different aspects of an individual’s identity can intersect to create more than one axis of discrimination. This concept is called intersectionality; and (5) the postmodern idea of challenging metanarratives is essential. Individuals who exist as marginalized beings have a unique perspective that can be expressed only by them. The process of storytelling is called counternarrative or counter storytelling” (p. 12).

Through a critical race theory lens, I attempt to understand whether the appreciative advising framework increases academic advisors’ awareness and consciousness of their own socialization and realities, cross-cultural relationships, and the realities of students of color, particularly African American students on predominantly White institutions’ campuses. My work and its application will likely assist academic advisors’ abilities to affirm and empower African American students by examining and dismantling various barriers to their academic success through understanding and learning.

The Cycle of Socialization Theory

In order to understand the necessity of updating traditional advising models in academia for diverse students’ populations, one must look beyond academia. Omi and Winant (1995), for instance, state, “race is a matter of both social structures and cultural representations” (as cited in Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995, p. 50). Bobbie Harro’s (2000) The Cycle of Socialization (Figure 2.) provides a visual explanation of how the phenomenon of oppression begins with human social stratification and identity development. This visual provides insight into African American students’ difficulty transitioning into the dominant culture of PWIs. Harro asserts:

We are socialized by powerful sources in our worlds to play the roles prescribed by an inequitable social system. Human roles are ascribed in society as already scripted before we are born because of our social identities — social identities being race, gender, age,
ethnicity, social economic status, religion, etc. Continuing, socialization is pervasive (coming from all sides and sources), consistent (patterned and predictable), circular (self-supporting), self-perpetuating (intradependent) and often invisible (unconscious and unnamed)” (p. 45) way of being.

The cycle of socialization provides a framework to explain the conditions of those who feel different in society. It is a historical struggle in relationships and power in society. Yet, as Harro emphasized:

We are inundated with unquestioned and stereotypical messages that shape how we think and what we believe about ourselves and others. What makes this historical form of brainwashing more insidious is the fact that it is woven into every structural thread of fabric within our African American culture. The media, our language patterns, songs, cultural practices, holidays, and society contribute to these assumptions and reinforce bias messages and stereotypes that we receive (p. 49).

Harro does not leave us in limbo. She proclaims opportunities exist to consciously change the cycle through education, and through challenging the status quo to eliminate societal and historical stagnation. A few examples of individuals or organizations who challenged and refused to submit to the cycle of socialization were Martin Luther King, Jr., the Kennedys, Rosa Parks, and the activists of Black Lives Matter movement. Their desire to challenge society’s acceptance of past norms was felt across the nation and was strong enough to change the mindset of many individuals. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) support Harro’s statement by characterizing “critical race theory in education as a radical critique of the status quo” (p. 62). They also emphasized that one cannot apply one “paradigm” to all without marginalizing cultures which do not fit the paradigm (p. 62), which in allows the status quo to reign. It is
impossible to apply one paradigm describing all human beings because of our many identities, cultures, beliefs, and values. We were created equal but not the same.

Advising practices normalized in higher education follow traditions thoughtlessly without regard as to their effect upon others. Advising practices should incorporate a critical level of understanding of oppression and education history in this social structure. As noted earlier, history illuminates *Brown vs. Board of Education* and the human aspiration to deconstruct the inequitable system in education. An understanding of the cycle of socialization enables one to imagine its impact upon the structures in society and realize something that is real, but invisible to the naked eye.

As academic advisors begin to consciously challenge and question the norms, customs, and values of PWIs, they will likely acknowledge and appreciate their roles, consciously or unconsciously, in supporting bias, stereotypes, microaggressions and campus climates that are detrimental to the learning process of African American students.

As Leonardo and Manning (2017) underscored, “[r]ace is socially constructed, and not ‘real’ as a scientific classification system. It has real material and an affective impact on people: the way they think, speak, and act in the world (p. 6). Education and our social world were influenced historically through socialization and colonialism (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 8).

Harro designed a visual picture in Figure 2 for everyone to view so we can understand how ingrained our misperceptions and assumptions are, which are developed in the socialization of human beings.

In America today, even with the best of intentions, equity-focused colleges and universities struggle with race challenges because of historical beginnings, as shown previously. In mainstream America, race as an intentional social construct is difficult to disentangle from
systems, structures, and organizations built on the racial oppression and colonization of non-white human beings (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000, p. 61).

Indeed, Harro asserted, “we are each born into a specific set of social identities and differences, related to gender, ethnicity, skin color, first language, age, ability status, religion, sexual orientation, and economic class and these social identities predispose us to unequal roles in the dynamic system of oppression” (Harro as cited by Adams, Blumenfield, Castaneda, Hackman, Peters, & Zuniga, 2000, p. 45). Harro also explains the process is “pervasive, consistent, circular, self-perpetuating, and often invisible” (Harro as cited by Adams et al., 2000, p. 45).

This reality has broad implications for higher education. Specifically, as the racial landscape of education transforms to include a more racially diverse and global student population, predominately White institutions must take meaningful and purposeful steps to reassess their administrative practices and policies to include, authentically, the needs of African American students within the fabric of the learning environment; otherwise, the withdrawal patterns of African American students may persist. For academic advising purposes, we are not yet there. So, how do we get to an authentic relationship with students?

African American students’ challenges and difficulties with assimilation into PWIs’ learning environments are multifarious because additional incidents occur within the intersections of spaces on campus such as classrooms, and other academic and social environments, adding extra stress upon academic self-efficacy and sense of belonging and other challenges faced by the students. Research shows African American students may discontinue their journey to degree conferral due to factors such as financial and family matters (Grier-Reed,
Madyun, & Buckley, 2008, p. 476). Conversely, I assert African American students may face other barriers to success in higher education apart from financial and family issues.

Harro takes a stand and declares we could disrupt the cycle of socialization by participating in change. Specifically, she quotes “a new awareness or consciousness awakens our discomfort and becomes more powerful than our fear of insecurity and we are compelled to take action” (as cited in Adams et al., 2000, p. 51, 52). Change agents have the unique ability to awaken “hope, optimism, a sense of efficacy” and to “empower and support one another and they are humanized through action” (Harro as cited in Adams et al., 2000, p. 52). The domino effect could result in academic self-efficacy and sense of belonging among African American students. Perhaps the unintended harm is manifested in the continual withdrawal of African American students from PWIs and its eventual effect upon society and global relationships.

**Racial Microaggressions Theory**

In the late 1960s, Chester Pierce introduced the idea of racial microaggressions in psychiatry, while Derald Sue and Daniel Solórzano conceptualized the idea in counseling and education. Derald Wing Sue (2016) defines *microaggressions* as “everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional” (as cited in Lukes & Bangs, 2014, p. 1). Likewise, Solorzano, Ceja, and Yossa (2000) define *microaggressions* as “subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously” (p. 60). Read together, microaggressions are subtle but have an enormous effect on African American students who are adjusting to their new academic, social, and learning environments.

The intersections of microaggressions, stereotypes, and campus climate barriers are prevalent and continue to subordinate African American students in their pursuit of degree
conferral. The understanding of microaggressions has become a topic of discovery by scholarly researchers interested in the impact of race today in our societies’ social structures. However, we are no longer looking at overt racism in the 21st Century. Absent historical factors, African Americans attendance in higher education increased; nonetheless, in the academic and social dimensions of PWIs’ learning environment, three interconnected barriers reinforce inequity: stereotypes, microaggressions, and negative campus climates. These barriers interrupt the emotional relationships and learning processes of the students because they hinder students’ ability to engage in and to acquire academic self-efficacy, on top of a sense of belonging.

Because of added stress from these three interconnected barriers, African American students may internalize these effects, which stunts their learning and growth in PWIs environments. Universities are microcosms of society, laden with strife and conflicts that overflow into its institutions. Therefore, the cycle of socialization continues, whether consciously or unconsciously, to perpetuate historical learned roles and identities in society (Harro, 2000, p. 48). The difference in some instances today in the cycle of socialization is concealed in reinforcements of subliminal messages that are accepted as facts by individuals who misconstrue what is defined as stereotypes, microaggressions, and campus climates. Diversity, civility, and inclusion in universities must mean more than “buzzwords” to impress prospective students and family members.

As a social problem, academic professionals should be willing to acknowledge the existence of microaggressions as they filter throughout higher education affecting interactions between students whose cultures are different from the norm. Despite microaggression research being new, and even though some Americans today are unwilling to recognize their existence, Constantine (2007) further emphasizes how studies have found microaggressions to be frequent
occurrences in African Americans’ experiences (as cited in Boysen, 2012, p. 123) and are very real to them.

Researchers have determined that the following statements are examples of microaggressions: “When I look at you, I don’t see color;” “I’m not a racist, I have several Black friends;” “You are really intelligent;” and “Everyone can succeed in this society, if they work hard enough” (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquín, 2007, p. 271-286). Sue and Capodilupo et al (2007) sort microaggressions into three subcategories: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations (as cited in Boysen, 2012, p. 123).

According to these definitions, “[m]icroassaults are similar to traditional forms of prejudice and consist of discrimination or direct verbal or nonverbal attacks; microinsults are subtle remarks that are insensitive, disrespectful, or demeaning to a person based on their group status; and microinvalidations negate, undermine or deny the experiences of minorities” (as cited in Boysen, 2012, p. 123).

Researchers also suggest that microaggressions affect students’ perceptions of campus climate negatively, which ultimately increases students’ stress (Solorazano et al, 2000, p. 60) in the learning environment. Figure 3 provides a further explanation of racial microaggressions, which include subtle statements or behaviors, made both consciously and unconsciously.
According to research by Garcia and Crandall (2016), the chart above is very timely, as more students complain about subtle remarks by students, faculty, and staff in PWIs. In Table 1, they supply examples of their own regarding various forms of microaggressions, - a concept realized in fields such as psychiatry, counseling, and education.

Table 1

*Forms of Microaggressions With Words*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Microinsult</th>
<th>A Black male college student at a highly selective university is asked what sport he plays, with the underlying assumption that he did not gain admission based on his academic credentials, but rather on his athletic ability.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Microinvalidation</td>
<td>An Asian American professor is asked where she is from, and when she replies, “Kansas”, her students respond with, “No seriously,” “what country are you from”? suggesting that she was not born in the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microassault</td>
<td>A Latina administrator is described as “spicy”, which culturally and sexually objectifies her while diminishing her effectiveness as a leader.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Muslim student sits in a class where a professor makes Islamophobic comments during his lecture.


The chart by Sue et al. (2007) illustrates and also connects to “The Cycle of Socialization” under a different name and subliminal concept – microaggressions.

Clearly, we are born into families who reinforce values, customs, and biases in our everyday lives of which we are either conscious or unconscious, and which may lead to identity
stereotypes and discrimination. However, the African American group encounters microaggressions more often because of stereotypes associated with the identity as described in the cycle of socialization.

**Stereotyping**

Weinstein and Mellen (1997) describe “stereotype as a simplistic image or distorted truth about a person or group based on a prejudgment of habits, traits, abilities, or expectations” (as cited in Moule, 2009, p. 321, 322). Moule also agrees with the cycle of socialization, stating that “ethnic and racial stereotypes are learned as part of normal socialization and are consistent among society, many populations, and across time” (p. 322). Steele (2011) suggested that stereotyping is a “condition of life tied to one’s identity, identity contingencies or circumstances one has to deal with in order to get what they want or need in a situation” (p. 4, 5).

For example, an African American student hesitates to participate in class because he or she does not want to seem academically inferior; he or she thinks that a wrong answer will affirm the stereotype that African Americans are less intelligent, or only athletic. Stereotypes viewed as personal characteristics of a group such as African American students are demeaning and destructive. Steele (2011) enlightened others on the detrimental impact of stereotyping as a “threat in the air” causing students to worry that their answer or reaction to a situation may confirm negative stereotypes such as lack of intelligence (p. 46). Moore, Madison-Colmore, and Smith (2003) elaborate, noting, “a by-product of the threat in the air to students is “the prove-them-wrong syndrome where they feel the need to disconfirm negative stereotypes about minoritized students “(as cited in Harper, 2013, p. 195).

In support, Schmader and Johns (2003) affirmed that the threat of stereotypes “hinders students’ ability to exert cognitive effort and subsequently reduces their performance on
academic tests” (as cited in Boysen, 2012, p. 123). Moreover, the studies above demonstrate the importance of the need for PWIs to recognize continual barriers, covert and overt, faced by African American students as they continue to matriculate into the learning environment of higher education.

Deutsch, Doberstein, and White (2008) reiterated that, “[t]he danger in identifying students as diverse or a minority without taking into consideration other factors of their life experiences is that it can lead to stereotyping, which eventually limits students’ choices and potential” (p. 1). The word diversity “clusters individuals together based upon similarities instead of acknowledging individual’s main concerns and needs” (p.1) for pursuing an academic degree. Diversity, civility, and inclusion in universities must be more than “buzzwords” to impress prospective alumni, legacy alumni, students and family members.

Similar to Jane Elliott’s blue-eye experiment, Steele (2011) identified a study sponsored by the Mellon Foundation’s president, Bill Bowen, which includes authors such as Cole, Barber and Bok (p. 155, 156). The foundation followed three cohorts of students in 28 of the nation’s selective colleges and universities – the classes of 1951, 1976, and 1987 - until they were forty. The studies concluded that stereotype threats definitively affected Black students’ academic and social success (p. 158) in college despite their resilience and ability overcome many disadvantages when seeking parity in society. DeAngelis (2009) concurred, insisting that “[w]hat college and university personnel fail to monitor are the consistent complaints by minority students of mini-assaults and microaggressions (hostile social climate) on college campuses each year in the United States” (as cited by Garcia, 2012, p. 197).
**Campus Culture**

Kuh and Whitt (1988) identified the four significant purposes of campus culture: “(1) communicates institutional identity; (2) serves as a means through which individuals commit to the institution; (3) facilitates stability of the social system within the institution; and (4) mediates how individuals make sense of events and situations within and related to the institution” (as cited in Bourke, 2016, p. 17). Most recently, Kuh and Whitt, after reviewing existing literature, explain campus culture as,

Persistent patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that shape the behavior of individuals and groups in a college or university and provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off the campus (as cited in Museus, 2008, p. 568-586).

Solorzano, Ceja, and Yossa (2000) also highlight campus climate environment as an important component to investigate for university professionals in addition to college access, persistence, graduation, and transfer by African American students (p. 62). Museus’s (2008) research acknowledges the inability of racial/ethnic minorities to find connection in institutions’ cultures and subcultures of PWIs’ campuses (p. 568, 569). Furthermore, research states the subculture and culture of institutions are amorphous, or fluid (Kuh, 2001/2002; Museus, 2007 as cited in Museus, 2008, p. 570).

Recently, Smith and Wolf-Wendel (2005) acknowledged diversity increases for over twenty years in higher education; yet, a cool campus climate continues to cause students to feel alienated on campus (as cited in Deutsch, Doberstein, & White, 2008, p. 1). Unfortunately, stereotypes from the past persist and interface with microaggressions that fluidly affect the campus culture climate for African American students (Boyson, 2012, p. 122, 123).
Thus, campus climate is determined to be less inviting and less satisfying for African American students when compared to White students (Ancis, Selacek, & Mohr, 2000; Reid & Radhakishnan, 2003, as cited in Boysen, 2012, p. 122). The normal pressures of academics, a new culture, and learning environment are stressful for African American students on their own; however, the additional stress factors such as microaggressions, stereotypes, and campus culture climates challenge the internal resolve of students.

In contrast to Steele’s research, Solorzano, Ceja, and Yossa (2000), asserted that Steele’s study only reflects the “immediate situational” (p. 62) threat of being viewed and treated stereotypically for that moment in time. They emphatically expressed the idea that microaggressions are not only situational threats in higher education, but also more impactful in the fabric of society. As scholars, they attach critical race theory to subtle biases to explain the connection between stereotypes, microaggressions, and campus culture climates. Anecdotal evidence shows their impact upon academic self-efficacy and the sense of belonging for African American students (p. 62) as they pursue academic and social success in higher education. Solorzano et al. further stated stereotypes and microaggressions are constructs created by systemic racism and must be identified as such in order to address these debilitating societal barriers (Solorzano et. al. 2000, p. 60-63). Other research reinforces the finding that microaggressions have “deleterious effects on students” Boysen, 2012, p. 123).

In addition, research with African American students and graduates confirm, “that facing microaggressions predicts symptoms of psychological stress and dysfunction” (Mercer et al. 2011; Torres, Driscoll, & Burrow 2010 as cited in Boysen, 2012, p. 123). Furthermore, Steele (2010) emphasized that laboratory research suggests “exposure to incidents of subtle prejudice hampers African American students’ ability to cognitively process information” (p. 103-107).
Ultimately, at stake are continual harmful patterns of African American students’ dissatisfaction in higher education resulting in unintended consequences for universities as well as the students — increase in withdrawals from uninviting campuses along with sensing a lack of understanding, empathy, diversity, and equity.

Finally, it is possible that African American students are withdrawing from PWIs for reasons other than academics. However, educational institutions might benefit by reviewing underlying factors that may hinder African Americans’ emotional connection to PWIs. It is critical to better understand how African American students acquire a sense of belonging in PWIs’ culture of dominant values and traditions surrounding them, and the additional stress of subliminal forms of racism such as microaggressions and stereotypes.

Perhaps society’s discernment regarding African American culture may cause the misguided actions of microaggressions and stereotypes resulting in campus culture climates on PWIs campuses. Singley and Sedlacek (2004) suggested “that it may be necessary for PWIs to ‘hook’ minority students in some way by assessing negative attitudes early” (as cited in Rodgers and Summers, 2008, p. 176). On the other hand, creating an authentic and intentional environment of awareness and acceptance of a global landscape may encourage aspirations for new beginnings.

In order to broaden campus knowledge regarding diversity and inclusion, diversity in PWIs cannot be an issue subsidiary to policies and procedures in traditional practices. Rather, it must be an essential part of the “fabric” of universities’ future direction in all activities, professional practices and positions, as well as the learning environment. This same factor applies to academic advising practices. They cannot exist on the periphery of universities’ vision for future goals since they have numerous touch points with students throughout students’
educational pursuit. How can advisors be agents of change or transformation while working within systems and structures that have become invisible to Whites and Blacks in society today? Disingenuous systemic traditions and norms permit barriers to operate fluidly.

**Implicit Bias**

“Bias is rooted in stereotypes and prejudices” (Moule, 2009). Judge Marks (2015) posits that biases “are automatic attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, or decisions in an unconscious manner which are attributed to – the essence of socialization” (p. 4). This frame of reference falls under the cycle of socialization and the resulting barriers African American students encounter in PWIs. Staats (2016) discussed implicit bias as it “operates in education: the unconscious tendency to seek information that confirms one preexisting beliefs, even when evidence exists to the contrary” (p. 31).

For example, a 2014 study was conducted with lawyers who were asked to analyze some papers for errors. They were told which papers were written by African American and Caucasian individuals. The readers found more fault and errors with the African Americans’ papers than with the Caucasians’ papers. Researchers concluded that more errors were counted against African Americans because the readers expected them to make more errors (Staats, 2016, p. 31). Implicit bias can also affect advisors’ expectations during interactions between African American students and their Caucasian advisors. However, Banks and Ford (2008) emphasized that while unconscious bias is understandably important to acknowledge, “the goal of racial justice efforts should be the alleviation of substantive inequalities, not the eradication of unconscious bias” (p. 1059). In relation to higher education, academic advisors’ challenges include recognizing their unconscious bias, and understanding their need to participate as change agents in the transformation of higher education.
Intersectionality

During the feminist movement, Crenshaw (1991) coined the phrase “intersectionality” whereby black women recognized their marginality, culturally, legally, and physically. However, she asserts that, “race, class, and gender only highlight the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed” (p. 1241-1245). Like her successor, Collins (1986) affirmed “cultural patterns of oppression are not only interlocked but are bound together and influenced by the intersectional system of society such as race, gender, class, and ethnicity” placing women on the margins (p. 526), “outsiders within” (p.514).

A plethora of research illustrates a continual struggle with the intersection of societal race, gender, and class as well as the traditional infrastructures of predominantly White institutions (PWIs). African American students who matriculate into PWIs enter a learning environment quite different from their own. Their lived experiences are like the “outside within” mentality. The students are part of the university but feel as though they are separate. With the current demographic shift within PWIs’ majority culture, student-centered approaches that authentically match the mission and goals of universities drive the mandatory involvement of “attending to multiple identities and experiences of subordination” (Davis, 2008, p. 68), especially for African American students.

Critical race theorists agree that you cannot separate race, gender, and class from the lived experiences of African American students. Frey (2018), an American demographer and Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, informed us of the importance of diversity understanding, preparation, and awareness; as we become a more global nation this should not be ignored. He states:
The United States is projected to become a majority-minority nation for the first time in 2045. Minorities, now 37 percent of the United States population, are projected to comprise 49.4 percent of the population in 2045. (Minorities consist of all but the single-race, non-Hispanic white population). The total population minority would more than double, between 2018 and 2060, gains will continue in the combined racial minority populations, growing by 74 percent (Frey, 2018).

Advising and Social Justice

Barry (2005) explained, “social justice is understood to be a question of equal opportunities” (p. 7). He states that “equal should not be understood rigidly as “identical.” It simply means access to resources and educational attainments should be equivalent” (p. 47). Similarly, Lee (2005) included the word empowerment in social justice and defines “it as a developmental process in which people who are powerless or marginalized in some fashion become aware of how power affects their lives as well as creating self-identity” (p. 186).

African American students deserve equity to complete their academics without interference from socially-created barriers. According to Lantta (2008), “[a]dvisors should be cognizant of their own personal biases. Included in the self-reflective process, advisors can take first steps towards infusing social justice, advocacy, and equity by creating a ‘safe’ space where students feel comfortable disclosing confidential information” (p. 1) providing a platform for students voices to be heard.

Moreover, Freire (1992) and Landreman et al. (2007), encouraged academic advisors “to support various modes of social action such as advocacy and empowerment” (as cited in Rouse, 2011, p. 104). Therefore, equity and social justice become important elements of power in
advising practices specifically for students who are marginalized or feel isolated. More importantly, academic advising practices and actions based on empathy can create a meaningful and emotional connection between students and their universities.

Taken together, these articles suggest a few consensus points and raises a few questions as well. First, the majority-minority is a definite truth for the future. Second, underlying, invisible, or subtle barriers are significant to relationship building between advisor-advisee, especially relationships with Caucasian advisors and African American students based upon historical facts. Third, does the intersection of race and gender between advisor-advisee complicate layers of tension in the relationship-building process for both? Finally, are the academic advisors willing to step outside the box to sharpen their knowledge of cross-cultural relationships and advising through the application of the appreciative advising framework for marginalized students as they pursue academic success in postsecondary education?

Once trust is established, advisors may transform their professional space into a judgment-free zone and eventually work toward equity and social justice within PWIs’ traditional system of unequal practices. Accordingly, academic advisors who approach their positions with authenticity, intentionality, and purpose will ensure students acquire the proper tools to succeed in academic and social environments. Therefore, they will have an internal impact upon a system not yet clear of racial microaggression, stereotype, and negative campus climates.

**Appreciative Advising Theoretical Framework**

While historical evidence asserts academic advising is of utmost importance for retention and student success, it also demonstrates advising limitations due to traditional norms, values,
and customs within higher education as well as the limitations placed on the profession by educational institutions. Hunter and White (2004) suggest that “academic advising needs to be viewed by faculty members, students, administrators, and staff as an activity that is central, rather than peripheral, to the educational enterprise” (as cited in Schreiner & Anderson, 2005, p. 20).

Bloom, Hutson, and He (2008) posited, “definitive practice and appropriate theory of academic advising has been bewildering to many and possibly even detrimental to professionals and the field” (p. 13). Scholars draw attention to facts that past and present research show that higher education does not have a theory which gives academic advisors “specific, practical tools for implementation” (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008, p. 13) in order to maintain advising consistency across the board. As shown in Table 1, the appreciative advising framework to practice includes key features and a tool box which provides certified (Appendix A) academic advisors the necessary tools to use during advising sessions with students: Academic advising is the only service that guarantees interaction with students. It is precisely this guaranteed interaction that makes the advisor the perfect resource in the development of relationship and positive experience with students (King, 1993 as cited in Coll & Zalaquett, 2007, p. 275).

This framework eliminates rote advising and raises advising to a higher level in educational institutions by positioning well-known theories as the underpinnings for the emergent framework. This begs the question: can appreciative advising be a model in PWIs that intentionally strengthens cross-cultural relationships with African American students while pursuing degree completion? More specifically, how do certified appreciative advisors promote equity in inequitable environments as they partner with students of color and African American student populations using this theoretical framework as shown in Figure 4?
Figure 4. Appreciative advising theoretical framework including the underpinnings of its sound theories. From “The Appreciative Advising Revolution” by J. Bloom, B. Hutson, and Y. He, 2008, Copyright by Jennifer Bloom, Bryant Hutson, and Ye He.

Appreciative advising presents certified academic advisors (Appendix D) with specific tools to positively and effectively empower and engage students in their academic pursuit. In general, “The Appreciative Advising Revolution” lists eight basic assumptions of understanding for academic advisors:

- Every college student has the potential for academic success.
- Each college student possesses unique strengths.
- Through explorations of their backgrounds, past experiences, present status and relationships, and future goals and dreams, students can identify sources of their own strengths.
- In their quest to be academically successful, students must identify and build upon their strengths.
• Not all college students have identified their strengths or the strategies necessary to utilize and develop these strengths.

• Advisors play an important role in every college students’ journey to optimize his/her educational experiences and enhance his/her self-knowledge.

• The interactions between advisors and students will impact the advisors’ and the students’ thoughts, viewpoints, and behaviors.

• Advisors must be aware of how their own perspectives, attitudes, and language impact the advisor-students relationship (p. 19).

It encompasses concepts such as support, care, trust, self-awareness and a positive mindset, and provides a challenging pathway to the change and transformation of advising practices and student outcome realizations.

**Appreciative Inquiry**

Bloom, Hutson, and Ye (2008) incorporated appreciative inquiry into the academic advising profession. The scholars realized appreciative inquiry could afford academic advisors the opportunity “to share an authentic human connection across differences rather than the fear because of the differences” (Harro, 2000, p. 52). Therefore, appreciative advising (AA) evolved from the appreciative inquiry practice (AI), coined by Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987, p. 7).

Furthermore, Cooperrider and Whitney (2001) determined that, as companies or organizations internal relationships deteriorated, the approach was to see problem solving “as a mode of change” (1). They stressed the emphasis was a focus on only declaring success after determining or identifying a problem(s) or fixing the weaknesses. Thus, “giving priority to the problem” (as cited in Giles & Alderson, 2008, p. 466). Cooperrider and Whitney (2001)
scrutinized this change approach as traditional “human deficit” acceptance while reducing self-fulfillment and denying the “full voice” of others. In opposition, appreciative inquiry offers a positive and strength-inspired lens approach. AI does not separate the individual from his or her life experiences (p. 9). Cooperrider and Whitney (2000) assert “[a]s the individuals told stories of their own and the organizations success, they began to identify and make meaning of the organization’s strengths heightening positive potential” (as cited in Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008, p. 15).

Similarly, Giles and Alderson (2008) stressed, “[e]ducation discourse has often struggled to genuinely move beyond deficit-based language” (p. 465). The deficit model, as defined by Fordham and Ogbu (1986) declares that literature, historically, focusing on academic achievement of African American students highlight students’ deficits (as cited in Butler, 2003, p. 2) on a continual basis. Assumptions are the result of deficit thinking. AI intimates, on the other hand, that university and college administrations, faculty, and staff can begin to institute changes by recognizing deficit-based language embedded in education by focusing on students’ strengths through the use of appreciative inquiry and appreciative advising.

For example, an advisor may ask the question, “Why do so few Black male students enroll in college?” On the other hand, the advisor can revise the question and instead ask, “How were college aspirations cultivated among Black male students who are currently enrolled” (Harper, 2010, p. 68)? In accordance, appreciative advising insists advisors use open-ended positive questions to delve deeper into students’ background, lived experiences, and understanding of higher education.
Appreciative Mindset

Several theorists highlight mindset as critical to a positive impact on students. For example, Bloom, Hutson, and He (2008) characterized such mindsets as a prerequisite to understanding the application of appreciative advising (p. 27). Likewise, Kabat-Zinn (1994), founder of the modern-day mindfulness practice, suggests mindfulness is “paying attention in a particular way on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally, to the unfolding of experience moment to moment” (as cited in Ahmed, Trager, Rodwell, Foinding, & Lopez, 2017, p. 26).

The practice combines three key features that can also apply to academic advisors in their professional space reminding them to be alert, listen attentively, and be in the moment with purpose in a judgment-free zone with the student in front of them (p. 26). Dweck’s (2006) research began with an interest in change and its effect upon intellect and the learning process if a mindset is acquired. She explains the existence of two types of mindsets existing in human beings: the fixed mindset and the growth mindset.

First, the “fixed mindset limits achievement. It fills people’s minds with interfering thoughts, it makes effort disagreeable, and it leads to inferior learning strategies” (p. 67). Expectations are low. Clearly, Dweck feels fixed mindsets create judges instead of allies (p. 13, 112, 173). The judgment-free zone disappears, and the advisor has lost the trust of the students.

Second, in comparison, Dweck defines the growth mindset as positive, creates an environment of trust and welcoming the opportunity to learn from one another in the space they share (p. 7, 10, 12). Likewise, academic advisors’ everyday practices impact students daily. A growth mindset enhances advising competencies in building lasting relationships in a positive environment of empowerment, defying deficit thinking in a judgement-free zone.
The growth mindset also permits the advisor to embrace the opportunity to understand any underlying issues that may hamper the academic and social experiences of African American students. Thus, the reframed academic mindset opens a path to a collaboration of learning and understanding of equity involving students who are attempting to complete an educational goal encouraged by society, as required for future success.

**Theories That Underpin Appreciative Advising** (Figure 4)

**Positive Psychology**

Peterson (2013) described “positive psychology as the scientific study of what goes right in life” (p. 9). Historically, psychology has focused on negative behavior because “negative emotions often required immediate responses” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 13). However, psychologists have recently began to focus on positive emotions they consider “survival” mechanisms and “fundamental to existence” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Peterson, 2013, 2009). Positive psychology looks at the “collective well-being” of human beings so they thrive in society. For instance, the psychologist focuses on four areas of interest: “(1) positive experiences like happiness, zest, and flow; (2) more enduring psychological traits like talents, interests, and strengths of character; (3) positive relationships between friends, family members, and colleagues; and (4) positive institutions like families, schools, and youth development programs” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Peterson, 2013, 2009). According to research, “[s]trength-based initiatives help students to identify their natural talents, engage students in productive activities to develop their personal talents into strengths, and empower students to mobilize their strengths in everyday situations” (Gilman, Huebner, & Furlong, 2009; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Soria, Roberts, & Reinhard, 2015; Soria & Stubblefield, 2014 as cited in Stubblefield & Soria, 2015, p. 626).
In the same way, Giles and Alderson (2008) believe that society is “bereft of educational contexts where the experience for students is holistic and transformative” (p. 465). Subsequently, Giles and Alderson, as well as other researchers such as Cady and Caster (2000); Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987); English, Fenwick, and Parsons (2008); Hammond (1998); and Hammond and Royal (1998), recognize education is remiss in not educating the “whole” student. Moreover, they support appreciative inquiry as a research approach that does not give priority to problems or deficits, but rather energizes and recognizes evidence of achievements (p. 466).

AI will bring students forward into reality through questions, relationship building, trust, and shared values. To prove that appreciative inquiry is a viable approach for educational institutions to consider, Giles and Alderson (2008) conducted a research project that involved “appreciatively appraising” (p. 470) social interaction between students and teachers. The research included informal interviews, focus groups, observational journals, and written documentation. Eleven students volunteered from particular years and could withdraw any time (p. 471).

As a result, the researchers were inundated with findings and recurring themes such as enjoyment from a socially, acceptable learning environment and feeling of inclusion and positive views, which were seen as indicators for future students’ success. The findings demonstrate that students want the interdependent and interconnected aspects of a learning environment, underscoring the importance of appreciative advising to student success in higher education (p. 472). Hicks and Shere (2003) illustrated that society cannot separate cognition from individuals’ “experiences that shape their lives” (as cited in Coll & Zalaquett, 2007, p. 275). Taken together, this literature highlights the importance of Bloom, Hutson, and He’s (2008) emerging forward-thinking appreciative advising approach and its answer to the call that appreciative advising,
incorporated into daily academic advising advocacy, can help students rise above oppressive barriers and the status quo within educational institution of PWIs.

**Choice Theory and Reality Therapy**

Zeeman (2006) described Glasser and Purkeys’s scholarly research an important focus on supporting and creating lasting relationships (p. 49). Glasser is a humanist who was the founder of choice theory and reality therapy which emphasizes positive self-concept (Zeeman, 2006, p. 46). It is noted that Glasser focused on “teaching students to understand the choices that they themselves make” (Zeeman, 2006, p. 46) is reality. As early as 1990, Purkey and Schmidt wrote about important concepts such as respect, trust, optimism, and intentionality in relationship building while establishing dignity in the process (Zeeman, 2006, p. 49). Glasser and Purkey believed that “the development of an individual’s self-esteem, self-image, self-worth, self-concept can be used interchangeably to define a person’s or student’s thoughts, opinions, attitudes, and perceptions about his or her own capabilities and successes” (Zeeman, 2006, p. 47). Zeeman (2006) concluded that “relationships are like gardens, they require cultivation and nourishment if they are to survive and flourish” (p. 50). The appreciative advisor uses these theories to help students recognize their strengths instead of emphasizing deficits. It is created around collaborative relationship encouraging students to focus on their strengths and overcoming barriers they cannot change in order to be successful. Glasser and Purkey believed “that school success depends upon the degree to which a student’s self-concept is positive” (Zeeman, 2006, p. 48).

**Social Constructivist Theory**

Critical race theory and social constructivist perspectives are used to address the academic advising context in higher education in relation to students of color. Research shows
“many human-created constructs or social determinants of health, such as class, gender, colonization, and race, undergird school populations’ worldviews” (Nyika & Murray-Orr, 2017, p. 436). Based on social constructivism, human interactions and conversations permit us to learn and understand how one perceives the world in connection to their norms, values, experiences and beliefs (Nyika & Murray-Orr, 2017, p. 436).

A core purpose of academic advisors with African American students is to build relationships in an environment of collaboration, learning, and understanding the students’ lived experiences. Thus, it gives advisors an opportunity to listen to students’ stories to associate meaning with the stories (Brott, 2004, p. 189). Brott (2004) referred to this as “The Storied Approach,” a process for “uncovering the client’s narrative and building a future narrative based on the students preferred way of being” (p. 190). It also permits the advisor the opportunity to reflect on students’ lived experiences and the impact of higher education on their lives. Vygotsky theorizes that “knowledge acquisition goes beyond the cognitive domain, placing it into the social sphere” (as cited in Nyika & Murray-Orr, 2017, p. 436). Does this approach assist advisor and students with minimizing or eliminating barriers?

**Zone Proximity Development (ZPD)**

Lev Vygotsky, a psychologist and social constructivist, developed the zone of proximal development (ZPD) concept on the learning growth of children (Shabani, Khatib, & Ebadi, 2010, p. 237). Shabani, Khatib, & Ebadi (2010) emphasizes that Vygotsky believed “individuals learn best when working together with others during joint collaboration, and through such collaborative endeavors with more skilled persons that learners learn and internalize new concepts, psychological tools, and skills” (p. 238).
Vygotsky (1978) further clarifies that “ZPD represents an ideal spot in development where activity takes place in the space between what one can do individually and what one can achieve in collaboration with others particularly with the help of what Vygotsky described as a more capable peer or teacher” (as cited in Leonardo and Manning, 2017, p. 2). Leonardo and Manning (2017) also assess that Vygotsky “believed that individual development is socially mediated” (p. 2).

Because advisors have extensive touch points with students, they are viewed as having the power to form symbiotic relationships and collaborate with students while engaging and empowering them through their levels of development in postsecondary education. The participants pointed out that they meet their students where they are in that space at any particular time during their education. Based on the zone of proximal development, the appreciative advisor would intentionally and purposefully listen attentively to students’ stories to determine their needs.

Authentic appreciative advisors attempt to learn about students’ cognition function, values, and beliefs of their culture through students’ narratives. Another possibility is both are learning via social interaction – alone versus value of working with knowledgeable individuals. The students’ needs would decide which level of ZPD the advisor would apply to students’ learning process which may involve navigating the campus, becoming aware of resources, and seeking assistance when necessary.

Therefore, they strive to empathize and assist students to acquire healthier and improved skills and strategies to be academically and socially successful. Although Leonardo and Manning (2017) agree with Vygotsky’s ZPD theory, they analyzed the theory from a critical and racial understanding by “building upon Vygotsky’s insistence on the inseparability of the
individual from the socio-historical context” (p. 2). Leonardo and Manning (2017) review
Vygotsky’s theory with the inclusion of “Whiteness Studies” (p. 2)

They emphasize that “not including race theory and overlooking the dominant force of
whiteness within the social context of schooling limits the intellectual reach of Vygotsky’s
sociocultural theory” (p. 3). They emphatically insist “[d]evelopmentally, students of color exist
in a world where they are forced to mature faster than the average white peer because the
former’s life depends on it. And, because of racism, students of color face a harsher social life
full of microaggressions and racial regulations that put them at risk” (p. 12).

Bonilla-Silva (2003) states “whites, including adults, navigate the waters of race by going
around, avoiding, or evading race” (as cited in Leonardo and Manning, 2017, p. 12), students of
color are unable to evade the obvious. The two scholars recommend “anti-racist ZPD for white
teachers that entails unlearning the common sense gained through many years of social
conditioning through the ideology of whiteness, which did not tell them how race actually
worked but rather how it worked for them” (Leonardo and Manning, 2017, p. 13).

**Tools of Consistency and Cohesive Support Services**

Appreciative advising could be the key to creating a deeper awareness and consciousness
of tradition, the status quo, or socialization during advising sessions with African American
students. For example, Freire (1998) suggested, “hopeful existence and social change depend
upon the invention of new tools” (Leonardo & Manning, 2017, p. 8). Moreover, the six phases
(Table 2) of the emergent phenomenon appreciative advising, with its tools of inclusiveness for
direction, may assist academics advisors with barriers students face on PWIs’ campuses.
Ignoring students’, especially, African American students”, lived experiences and identity, which
are delicate and private parts of their lives and relate to their entire being denies the “possibility
of hope” (Freire, 1996). Bloom, Hutson, & He (2008) emphatically state, “higher education professionals play a pivotal role in efforts to retain students” (p. 5). The authors designed an appreciative advising model consisting of six phases on which professional academic advisors could structure their advising sessions, and use to build student relationships within their professional space as well as students’ connection to the higher educational learning environment. The six phases are designed to provide specific structure during advising sessions; the phases are not linear.

Figure 5. The six phases included in the appreciative advising framework. From “Appreciative Advising: What is Appreciative Advising”

Bloom, Hutson, and He (2008) described the appreciative advising model in detail in their own words (pp. 35 to 105) and asserted that the phases provide structure, consistency, and shared language during academic advising sessions.
**Disarm**

The first phase of the advising model is the disarm phase. It involves first impressions and the immediate feelings and nervousness one has when meeting another for the first time. Flora (2004) argued that it takes three minutes to formulate a decision about other individuals (as stated in Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008). It is about the first interaction between the advisor and advisee as to whether it is positive or negative. In addition, the initial interaction determines if the advisor can create trust with the advisee in order to build a relationship.

Moreover, the initial interaction involves many more factors about which scholars say we should be concerned, including verbal and nonverbal behaviors — a smile, eye contact, handshake, body language, face to face stand, and the office as well as the décor (Flora, 2004 as stated in Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008). Because students are intimidated by the power of the office and its connection to the university, the office décor should be comfortable and welcoming to the students with an opportunity to learn about their advisor as they make the transition from high school to college.

As a side to the disarm phase, scholars believe the first tool box must include an advisor’s self-reflection increased by self-knowledge. Self-reflection consists of knowing one’s strengths, advising preferences, values, beliefs, interests, as well as a clear conception of the role as an advisor, when guiding students towards success and graduation (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008). For example, they list some questions such as “What brought me into the advising field?” and “What aspects of advising do I enjoy the most?”

Bloom, Hutson, and He (2008) agreed that a “narrative-based approach” is very important in the disarm phase because it permits the advisor and advisee to create a collaboration and atmosphere of learning. These scholars emphasize the importance of the advisor’s narratives
being authentic (true experiences), strength-based (highlighting assets), and sincere (developing a learning condition) (p. 35).

**Discover**

The second phase incorporates the importance of asking open-ended questions to elicit stories, whereby they can help students recognize and discuss their strengths, passions, and skills while they listen actively. The academic advisor is attempting to seek more information about the students’ lives in order to assist them during their educational pursuit toward success and graduation. To elaborate, Heath and Heath (2007) agreed, “stories illustrate causal relationships that people hadn’t recognized before and highlight unexpected, resourceful ways in which people have solved problems” (as cited in Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008). Clearly, these scholars believe stories create understanding and encourage a listener to delve deeper than surface appearances, helping the students to reflect upon their lived experiences. Bloom, Hutson, and He (2008) mentioned American author, Laura Simms, who is a storyteller (as cited in Watkins & Mohr, 2001, p. 77; as cited in Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008). She states:

> Storytelling is a cultural. As an art form, story-telling is not a solo performance of one person telling a story and someone else hearing their words. It is a very subtle transformative event that always takes place in the present and is reciprocal. Image is not something one speaks and the other hears. It is a very complex set of responses based on the listener’s previous experience, openness, own well of imagery and association, and the speaker’s own unspoken biases and capacities which comes from presence, intention, voice, understanding and openness to communication which is reciprocal (p. 44).

To initiate the conversation, and while realizing everyone’s story is unique to them, the academic advisors may use a few example questions as created by Habley and Bloom, 2007 (as cited in Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008, p. 44) in the discovery phase: Who are your two biggest role
models? Why are they role models to you and what about them do you hope to emulate? Tell me about a time when you were faced with a challenge that you were not sure you could overcome, but in the end, you were able to do so. How did you overcome the challenge? What lessons did this experience teach you?

Along with the discovery phase, scholars employ more assistance from the toolbox. They begin with the "Appreciative Advising Inventory" (AAI), which is based on the premises of the 40 Developmental Assets developed by the Search Institute (2006) and the literature on "academic hope" (Chang, 1998; Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001; Snyder, Feldman, Shorey, & Rand, 2002; Snyder, Harris et al., 1991; Snyder, Shorey et al., 2002 as cited in Bloom, Hutson & He, 2008, p. 45).

On the other hand, academic advisors must pay attention and take notes using their listening skills during this intense phase as they closely observe students’ verbal and nonverbal cues in order to assist the students with an action plan. Bloom, Hutson, and He (2008) agreed and validated the model: “The purposeful search and discovery of students’ assets propel advisors forward, beyond the simple interchange of empathy between themselves and their advisees as they recast stories, to additive empathy, where advisors add new perspectives and facilitate a strength-based, prospective students view of their own stories” (p. 49). Furthermore, to encourage trust, the academic advisor should offer a copy of the notes to the students. The authors include Marcus Buckingham’s “Trombone Player Wanted,” among other media forms, which expand the knowledge of academic advisors on the utilization of strengths in the workplace (p. 43).

**Dream**

The third phase is designed around hope, aspirations, goals, motivation, and dreams. After the academic advisor has established rapport and a trusting relationship with the students,
the advisor attempts to create an image of success in the students’ mind. An example question could be: When you were approximately 9 years old and someone asked you, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” What was your answer? What is your answer to that question now?” (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008, p. 56, 57). The next step is connecting the discovery phase to the dream phase. The toolbox within this phase includes “guided imagining” whereby the advisor prepares scripts or pretend interviews and requests the students answer the questions. For example, “picture yourself eating breakfast before you go to work. Are you eating by yourself or with someone?” Another aspect to the dream phase is the four-corner index card activity. This activity invites students to record and illustrate their dreams on the cards following four statements. For instance, “Write down three to five adjectives that your family, peers, friends, or others will use to describe you in 10 years” (p. 55).

**Design**

The design phase has the students create an educational plan that includes “concrete, incremental, and achievable goals,” (p. 65). The advisor acts a facilitator, an advocate, a navigator, and a referral agent while encouraging the students with decision making and action plans. There are three steps which are important to the advisor’s guidance. The students must “(1) brainstorm on education options; (2) discuss the pros and cons of each option; and (3) encourage the students to research their options” (p. 65) to determine the results of each option.

Hopefully, in this stage, the advisor observes the students’ self-esteem and self-confidence increase with positive reinforcements. The design tool box includes Wiggins and McTighe’s (2001) backward designing. It allows students to determine their end goals and the necessary route towards attaining that goal. The final step in the design phase is for the advisor to explain the victim-creator language.
Skip Downing (2005) described the difference between the victim ad creator mentalities: “Creators are people who take full responsibility for their behaviors and beliefs and have an internal locus of control. Creators believe they compose their own lives and have choices. Victims, however, do not take full responsibility for their behaviors and beliefs; they see themselves as casualties of life. Victims have an external locus of control” (as cited in Bloom, Hutson & He, 2008). Advisors persuade students to think about a time where they were a victim and overcame the challenge to become a creator. The student records the steps they took to overcome the victim mentality (p.65).

**Deliver**

The students activate their action plans in the deliver phase. The academic advisor is considered a co-creator on the plan and does not leave the students to “float” alone in this phase. The advisor guarantees the students is aware of obstacles or roadblocks which may hinder their end goal. It is also essential for advisors to remind students about their availability at any time for follow-up meetings. The purpose of the phase is for the advisor to energize, motivate, and emphasize positive thinking with the students in connection with academic hope and possibilities on their life journey. Carter-Scott (2006) stresses the importance of visualizing your strengths and possibilities with the following quote, “[o]rdinary people believe only in the possible. Extraordinary people visualize not what is possible or probable, but rather what is impossible. And by visualizing the impossible, they begin to see it as possible” (as cited in Bloom, Hutson & He, 2008, p.87).

**Don’t Settle**

The appreciative advising model “demands that advisors work hard to understand human behavior and to use both theory and the stories of students to prevent young promising adults from settling for a good life as they aspire toward a great life” (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008, p.
Indeed, support better communicates the importance of establishing a trusting relationship that will be effective in where incidents subsequently challenge students.

Appreciative advising may be the answer to creating an awareness and consciousness of traditional inequities or socialization that may be resurging on or reflected by higher education campuses. Bloom, Hutson, and He (2008) claimed that, “higher education professionals play a pivotal role in efforts to retain students” (p. 5). With the influence of appreciative inquiry, Bloom, Hutson, and He (2008) launched appreciative education as a mindset with intention and purpose. Table 2 shows the six phases of the appreciative advising framework and the tool box for academic advisors to follow as they interact with students.

Table 2

<p>| Features of the Six Phases of the Appreciative Advising Framework |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Features</th>
<th>Tool Box</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disarm</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Warm welcome</td>
<td>Generate one’s own narratives in advising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Safe and comfortable environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Appropriate self-disclosure</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Appropriate nonverbal behavior</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Discover</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Effective open-ended questioning</td>
<td>Appreciative Advising Inventory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Attending behavior and active listening</td>
<td>Appreciative Advising questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Strength-based story reconstruction</td>
<td>Note-taking strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buckingham’s (2007b) Trombone Player Wanted</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dreams</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Creating powerful images</td>
<td>Guided imaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Prospective framework for dreaming</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Making purposeful connections between the Dream and Discover phases</td>
<td>Four-corner index cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Design</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Teach students how to make decisions</td>
<td>Backward designing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Provide positive feedback</td>
<td>Graphic organizers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Be aware of the curse of knowledge</td>
<td>Personal presidential cabinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Making effective referrals</td>
<td>Glossary list for academic advising</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victim/creator language</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deliver</strong></td>
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</table>

Moreover, Bloom, Hutson, and He customized Cooperrider and Srivasta’s (1987) appreciative inquiry organizational work (p. 7) for the college environment. Appreciative education is an individual and organizational framework for creating a culture of high standards that embrace ongoing learning, change, and improvement (“Appreciative Advising: What is Appreciative Advising”). It overrides negativity and decreases gaps between administration and students because the student is number one. It also builds bridges to better relationships by focusing on the strengths and potential of individuals and organizations to accomplish particular goals (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008, p. 5, 6; p. 97).

Appreciative advising, an appropriate intervention and mindset for reframing academic advising, creates trust and builds bridges between advisor and advisee in order for the students to be successful, acquire a sense of belonging, and increase academic self-efficacy despite the three detrimental barriers discussed above. The appreciative advising framework proposes that professionals have an opportunity to provide students with judge-free spaces whereby the advisor and the advisee are both functioning in a learning environment.

Appreciative advising also provides academic advisors the opportunity to reflect on possible biases based upon their own life experiences, values, beliefs, opinions, and assumptions about diverse student populations, which may hinder their advisor-advisee interaction and
relationship. It permits one to question the intersection of race, gender, and culture between the advisor-advisee within the “judgment-free” and professional space. Simultaneously, appreciative advising attempts to eliminate any feelings of student defeat while encouraging student empowerment and positive reinforcement during their learning process.

Appreciative advising practices encourage academic advisors to open their innovative “lens” with purpose and intention to invite African American students in an equitable office space, giving them the power to have a positive impact upon students and vice versa. Without a doubt, appreciative advising incorporates subtle messages of critical race theory and culturally responsive environment frameworks. It supports the fact that we must recognize the reality of dominant educational environments and ensure on-going examinations of changes to policies and institutional practices that continue to hinder diverse student populations.

If we do not continue to strive towards acceptance of all cultures, access to education will remain unreachable for some. How can advisors use this knowledge to advocate and cultivate relationship building to help students navigate academic and campus culture? Does appreciative advising retain African American students in PWIs and change the pattern of withdrawal?

The reframed advising practice recognizes student differences as an opportunity for the students and advisor to learn and respect differences as well as understanding institutional status quo practices that may cause harm to students of color. Building relationships by demonstration adds character, changes behavior, and begins a social and emotional progression that meets the expectations of all stakeholders, including academic advisors, students, faculty, parents, universities, administration, and communities. The wheel maintains its connectedness and the development of meaningful support throughout the learning experiences.
Summary

This chapter elucidates and describes the importance of academic advising practices when building bridges within PWIs’ systemic and embedded institutional practices and policies. The upper administrative hierarchy must be open to a new vision: aligning institutional goals and practices to diverse student populations, especially that of African American students. Academic advising practices that cultivate relationships intentionally and purposefully can assist students with their navigation through the “web” of obstacles in higher education in order to meet the needs of a diverse student body through a critical race theory in education lens, supported by social justice.

Advisors with a social justice lens recognize the persistence and resilience of students as well as the challenging life experiences they face. They approach the challenging subject matter with respect and understanding. Traditional advising practices encourage deficit thinking because the practice leads with problem discussions. For example, a deficit question might ask, “Why are Black male students’ grade points averages often the lowest among both sexes and all racial/ethnic groups on many campuses?”

An anti-deficit question, on the other hand, asks, “What resources proved most effective in helping Black male achievers earn GPAs above 3.0 in a variety of majors, including STEM fields?” (Harper, 2010, p. 68). Indeed, a reframing of advising practices does not harm students, but instead creates the opportunity and power for advisors in their professional and personal space to participate in something “bigger” than themselves as change agents in educational transformation. African American students may begin to feel welcome or comfortable in the dominant culture of predominantly White institutions, thereby increasing degree conferrals and retention.
Conclusion

Another factor to consider is the impact upon communities and society if the withdrawal of African American students from higher education continues. For example, Tinto (1987), a seminal researcher, articulated the fact that access to higher education in the United States increased over the past several decades. However, increases in college completion have not followed for African Americans (p. 53) as shown below by the National Center for Education Statistics:

The 6-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time undergraduate students who began their pursuit of a bachelor’s degree at a 4-year degree-granting institution in fall 2010 was highest for Asian students (74 percent), followed by White students (64 percent), students of Two or more races (60 percent), Hispanic students (54 percent), Pacific Islander students (51 percent), Black students (40 percent), and American Indian/Alaska Native students (39 percent).

The 1990 Student Right to Know Act requires degree-granting postsecondary institutions to report the percentage of students who complete their program within 150 percent of the normal time for completion (e.g., within 6 years for students seeking a bachelor’s degree). Students who transfer without completing a degree are counted as no completers in the calculation of these rates regardless of whether they complete a degree at another institution. The 6-year graduation rate (150 percent graduation rate) in 2016 was 60 percent for first-time, full-time undergraduate students who began their pursuit of a bachelor’s degree at a 4-year degree-granting institution in fall 2010. In comparison, 41 percent of first-time, full-time undergraduates seeking a bachelor’s degree received them within 4 years and 56 percent received them within 5 years (2019, p. 138). As in Table 3,
the screenshot adapted from the National Center for Education Statistics continues to support research emphasizing the importance of reviewing African American students’ matriculation into and graduation from higher education.

Table 3

*Graduation Rates by Race and Ethnicity for the 2010 Entering Class*

From the National for Education Statistics Center, Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic groups.

The chart above implies that higher education continues to struggle with racial equity. In fact, degree attainment for African American students in PWIs also continues to be limited and challenging for students and universities. How do universities begin to walk the talk for
sustainability and design in the future? The graph supports the need for reframing academic advising and policies to support education institutions’ missions to meet their goals and initiatives concerning inclusivity. Indeed, as Davies (2001) stated, “the benefits of educational attainment extend far beyond individual economic gains: Higher education has an enormous responsibility for our society’s well-being” (as cited in Museus, 2008, p. 568).

When advisors are aware and prepared to challenge the status quo and agree to assist all students by “(1) raising academic achievement; (2) critically accessing their environment and society by questioning societal issues; and (3) granting all students access to a rich and engaging environment” (McKenzie et al., 2008, p. 111) students’ success and retention increases.

Academic advisors are in a position to increase student participation in the learning process using appreciative advising infused with social justice practices and cultural knowledge. Gullan, Hoffman and Leff also proclaim (as cited in Salazar & Abrams, 2005) “a comprehensive understanding of developmental functioning requires understanding the unique cultural lens through which individuals or groups view the world as well as working within a framework to address problems and promote positive outcomes” (2011, p. 29). Despite some concerns, appreciative advising may actually be the solution for education transformation and a reduction in institutional barriers based on historical socialization.

For academic advisors to be an influential component of the learning process, students’ development phase needs further review in regard to underlying conscious or unconscious barriers that may interfere in student growth. Furthermore, Schwitzer, Griffin, Ancis and Thomas (1999) contended, in PWIs settings, African American students’ participation in their learning process mediates negative interpersonal experiences (p. 190).
CHAPTER 3: Methodology

“Qualitative Researchers in education help the practitioner systematically try to understand different patterns of behavior and physical environments. Reality is constructed by people and how they go about their lives. And, people can shape and change the real world negotiating within limitations of the school hierarchy” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006).

The designers of grounded theory, Barney Glasser and Anselm Strauss (1960s), affirmed grounded theory as a methodology which understands human processes through human inquiry and analyzes rich data gathered from visual and textual materials such as interviews, field notes, memos, and coding stages (as cited in Charmaz, 2006, p. 10; Saldana, 2016, p. 3). The qualitative design allowed the flexibility I needed to delve into the thinking behind each participant’s use of appreciative advising and using data in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers” (Bodgan, & Biklen, 2007, p. 5). Figure 6 offers an overview of the data collection process, beginning with memo taking during the interviews.
The purpose of this research was to understand how the participants’ actions and behaviors, with the use of the emergent appreciative advising framework to practice, and its six tools could enhance relationships between advisors and advisees, regardless of race. For that reason, qualitative methods were used to interview each participant so I could capture the data in real time. It was important for me to interview and witness how the certified participants truly valued and believed in the emergent model. It was also important to understand if the participants thought Caucasian academic advisors could build relationships with African American students and assist with reducing attrition rates of African American students from PWIs.

The focus was to examine the appreciative advising framework to practice as an advising model for academic advisors who seek to build authentic relationships with students, especially African American students in PWIs. Additionally, I wondered how academic advisors’ perspectives, along with their values and beliefs, would apply meaning to the appreciative advising framework to practice enhancing their understanding of equity, and social and cultural differences.

Historically, this methodology is best given the complicated and complex educational experience of African American students. As noted, studies indicate African American students who feel empowered and engaged in meaningful supportive relationships are better able to overcome non-cognitive barriers to their academic success in PWIs. For instance, Strayhorn (2008) emphasized that educational outcomes, namely satisfaction, are linked to supportive relationships (p. 39). The objectives of this qualitative research were to “better understand
human behavior and experiences in addition to what are the processes by which people construct meaning and to describe what those meanings are” (p. 43).

Taylor (2017) also emphasized the importance for humans to make “meaning of their daily lives” (p. 17) in this world. Equivalent to the cycle of socialization, Mezirow (2000) argued, “meaning perspectives are often acquired uncritically in childhood through acculturation and socialization, most often during significant learning experiences with parents, teachers, and other mentors and they reflect the dominant culture of which we have been socialized into” (as cited in Taylor, 2017, p. 17). Like Ladson-Billings’s critical conscious, Mezirow (1995) asserted, [c]ritical scrutiny or, more specifically, critical reflection is seen as the conscious and explicit reassessment of the consequence and origin of our meaning structures. It is a process by which we attempt to justify our beliefs, either by rationally examining assumptions, often in response to intuitively becoming aware that something is wrong with the result of our thought or challenging its validity through discourse with others of differing viewpoints and arriving at the best-informed judgment. (as cited in Taylor, 2017, p.19)

Thus, using this qualitative grounded theory and a constructivist approach (Charmaz, 2008, p. 130), I was able to better understand what motivates the certified appreciative academic advisor to “transform interactions” (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008, p. 3) with students as they ascribe meaning to each student experience.

**Research Questions**

Kaffengerger (2012) described practitioner research as “research conducted by school counselors to inform the practice of school counseling” (p. 59). Rowell (2005) determined that practitioner research is similar to action research, which is designated as connecting practice to
research (as stated in Kaffenberger, 2012, p. 60). Given the aim of this scholar-practitioner research, the following two questions guided the inquiry process:

1. How does the academic advisor’s knowledge and understanding of the appreciative advising framework relate to their knowledge and understanding of social and cultural differences that may influence the cultivation of authentic relationships with African American students at a PWI?

2. In what ways, or to what extent, do academic advisors perceive the appreciative advising framework as a useful tool for supporting the academic, social, and cultural experiences of African American students at PWIs?

Lindhorst (2008) intimated that academic advisors do not operate in “silos” (as cited in Larson, Johnson, Aiken-Wisniewski, & Barkemeyer, 2018, p. 84) and are recognized as one entity necessary in student’s success. Previously, I described academic advisors as the axel of connection to institutions. Charmaz (2006) reminds us that advisors are also human beings who are active agents of change and can participate in advising transformation (p.7). Hence, as change agents they cannot operate in a silo. Acting as a silo office or in isolation hinders student growth and success in academia. Therefore, advisors must maintain and nurture relationships with colleagues in other areas of the university, becoming an integrated endeavor for students from matriculation to graduation. Consequently, appreciative advising could be viewed by academic advisors as a means to transforming advising sessions in professional spaces to be more inclusive of students’ lived experiences and understanding their journey from college to career to life with the help of storytelling.

Certified appreciative advisors’ approach to advising sessions with students is to first acknowledge the importance and necessity of building authentic relationships, being intentional
and purposeful throughout the session. Focusing intently on students’ academic success and their desired outcomes may assist in opening doors of equity for African American students who struggle with barriers in a PWI.

Through the context of existing literature, as discussed earlier, this study reviews student services in traditional advising practices used over 30 years, which may fall short in their application for African American students, and the changing student landscape and demographics in PWIs. Interviews provide an opportunity to learn about how the framework is being used to serve shifting student demographics.

**Research Methods**

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) described methods as “a term that refers to the specific techniques you use, such as surveys, interviews, observation and the more technology aspects of the research” (p. 35). Bodgan and Biklen (2007) also endorsed Charmaz’s statement wholeheartedly, including the fact that an interview is a “purposeful conversation” (p. 103) permitting participants to describe their experiences in their own words, here situated in an advising context within the realm of higher education.

Defined in grounded theory, an *interview* is a “directed conversation (Lofland & Lofland, 1984, 1995 as cited in Charmaz, 2006, p. 25). When the interview is in-depth, it brings forth the participants’ explanation of their experiences (Charmaz, 2006, p. 25). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) affirmed, “interviews are used to gather descriptive data in the subjects’ own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world” (p. 103). Such data provides a framework for developing a theory (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2).

Predominantly White institutions are defined as “institutions of learning in which Whites account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment” (Brown & Dancy, 2010, p. 1). For that reason, the specific subset of academic advisors who agreed to participate in the study were
employed in PWIs, with many years of knowledge and expertise in the academic advising role of higher education. The specific subset of advisors were selected because they implemented the appreciative advising theoretical framework in their advising practices and interactions with students. To answer the two research questions, I used a qualitative method (interview analysis) grounded theory to understand and explore the academic advisors’ perceptions of appreciative advising and its influence upon advisors’ interactions with students.

The overall methodology was designed to provide a detailed picture of the participants, who had years of experience and possessed a thorough knowledge of the advising profession, and were certified appreciative advisors. I gathered data from semi-structured interviews to support the research questions. The interviews permitted the participants to express their narratives fully, describing how they apply the emerging phenomenon in their “subjective world” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 29) and professional role within academic institutions.

The interview process gave the participants an avenue to express their intentional passion, commitment, and enthusiasm for the appreciative advising framework and its ability to impact the students and themselves. The qualitative grounded theory research inquiry became a distinct means to learning and interpreting the participants’ ethos, such as their values, advising philosophy, experiences, and beliefs (Charmaz, 2006, p. 14). Thus, I was interested in the actions or steps the participants took, using the framework, to bridge their knowledge of cultural differences and building relationships with all students, and particularly with African American students.

In addition, I wanted to know if the research generated from the data could show how the appreciative advising framework may assist students in overcoming non-cognitive barriers in the academic and social environment of PWIs. My idea was to capture the participants’ perspectives
and words concerning the appreciative advising usage in their everyday practices of their professional space. This leads me to believe that academic advisors are in a position of power to make a difference in addressing student needs, if they themselves are prepared for vast challenges and changes to students’ demographics.

**Sample**

Realizing I was a stranger inquiring about their professional space practices, my main goal was to have them feel comfortable and understand my sincerity as a researcher, so they could freely express their perception of why including appreciative advising in their professional space was necessary for higher education’s changing landscape.

The participants in the study were grouped based upon race – Caucasian and African American professional academic advisors working within predominantly White institutions. The groups were recommended to me, and were comprised of six Caucasians and five African Americans with years of experience ranging from three to fifteen, or more, years of service in the academic environment. Seven participants were males and four were females. Additionally, each participant has at least a master’s or doctoral degree. Although age was not one of the advisor questions for the interviews, the participants’ years of advising experience and our passionate discussions led me to believe they were authentically involved in the emergent model for the benefit of the students, the universities, and themselves. They were open to being life-long learners, which happened to include social justice, diversity, and inclusion.

Most of the participants worked in four-year, predominantly White institutions; one advisor was employed in a two-year, predominantly White institution. The percentages of African American student populations in these institutions range from 8% to 20%, with one outlier — the two-year institution, where the African American student population is 80%. The two-year institution is still considered a predominantly White institution as the student
population in the two-year institution had only recently seen an increase in the African American student population by 50%. Astonishingly, faculty members in the two-year institution remain Caucasian. Table 4 offers a visual picture of the participants’ demographics and background experiences and is followed by their profiles (though maintaining confidentiality).

Table 4

Participants’ Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>7 Males</th>
<th>4 Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>7 Males</td>
<td>4 Females</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ethnicity</td>
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<td>5 African Americans/Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7 Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Years in</td>
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<td>15 or more years (5)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional Type</td>
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<td>2-year (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American Student</td>
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<td>80% (2 year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>5 States</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Advising Department</td>
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<td>Unknown Department</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant Profiles

The participants’ profiles are brief descriptive summaries with assigned pseudonyms to protect confidentiality. The participants are certified appreciative advisors who are practicing the appreciative advising framework to practice model or researching the appreciative model with a
future possibility of instituting the model within their own institution. The interviews were conducted via their professional space on a selected day and time within their universities.

**Ted**

Ted was an academic advisor for six to ten years in higher education. Out of 16,792 enrolled students, 19.5% were African American. Ted’s department fell under the umbrella of Academic Affairs; face-to-face academic advising is required for all students, and faculty does not participate in advising students. Technology was utilized to maintain connections to students, and to gather data to analyze satisfaction with the effectiveness of advising.

**Sheila**

Sheila was an academic advisor for eleven to fifteen years in higher education. Sheila was unable to provide the percentage of students who were of African American descent. Her department fell under the umbrella of Students Affairs; face-to-face academic advising is not mandatory for all students, and faculty shares responsibility for advising students. Technology was utilized to maintain connections to students, and to gather data to analyze satisfaction with the effectiveness of advising.

**Ellen**

Ellen was an academic advisor for more than fifteen years. Out of 30,000 enrolled students, 20% were African American students. Ellen’s department fell under the umbrella of Academic Affairs and faculty shares responsibility for advising students. Currently, this participant does not advise students; surveys do not come from her department. Technology was utilized to maintain connections to students. Data analysis is performed in another department.

**Tom**

Tom was an academic advisor for more than fifteen years but does not currently advise students. Nevertheless, he is well-versed and known in the academic arena especially for retention and advising. Additionally, he is certified to practice in the appreciative advising framework. Tom continues to use various technology to conduct research and consult.

**Earl**

Earl was an academic advisor for more than fifteen years. Out of 28,000 to 30,000 enrolled students, 8 to 11% were African American students. Earl’s department fell under the umbrella of Students Affairs; face-to-face academic advising is not mandatory for all students, and faculty does participate in advising students. Technology was utilized to maintain connections to students, and to gather data to analyze satisfaction with the effectiveness of advising.
Henry

Henry was an academic advisor for more than 15 years. Out of 25,000 enrolled students, 13% were African American students. Henry’s department fell under the umbrella Academic Affairs; face-to-face academic advising is mandatory for all students, and faculty does not participate in advising students. Technology was utilized to maintain connections to students, and to gather data to analyze satisfaction with the effectiveness of advising.

Darryl

Darryl was an academic advisor for three to five years. Out of 39,000 enrolled students, 8% were African American students. Darryl’s department fell under the umbrella of Students Affairs; face-to-face academic advising is mandatory for all students, and faculty shares responsibility for advising students. Technology was utilized to maintain connections to students, and to gather data to analyze satisfaction with the effectiveness of advising.

Rosalind

Rosalind was an academic advisor for eleven to fifteen years. Out of 4200 enrolled students, 52% were African American students. At this time, Rosalind’s institution is nonetheless still considered a PWI. Rosalind’s department fell under the umbrella of Students Affairs Department; face-to-face academic advising is mandatory for first year students. Faculty do not participate in academic advising. Technology was utilized to maintain connection to students, and to gather data to analyze satisfaction with the effectiveness of advising.

Amber

Amber was an academic advisor for six to 10 years. Out of 25,000 enrolled students, 19.4% were African American students. Amber’s department fell under the umbrella of Academic Affairs Department; face-to-face academic advising is not mandatory for all students, though incoming freshmen do virtual advising, and faculty do participate in advising students. Technology was utilized to maintain connections to students, and to gather data to analyze satisfaction with the effectiveness of advising.

Charles

Charles was an academic advisor for more than 15 years. Out of approximately 25,000 enrolled students, 19% were African American students. Charles’ department fell under the umbrella of Academic Affairs Department; face-to-face academic advising is mandatory for all students, and faculty participates in advising students. Technology was utilized to maintain connections to students, and to gather data to analyze satisfaction with the effectiveness of advising.

Kenneth
Kenneth was an academic advisor for six to ten years. Out of 36,000 enrolled students, 16% were African American students. Kenneth’s department fell under the umbrella of Students Affairs Department; face-to-face academic advising is mandatory for all students, and faculty participates in advising students. Technology was utilized to maintain connections to students, and to gather data to analyze satisfaction with the effectiveness of advising.

**Data Collection Process**

Data collection was approved by Duquesne University’s Institutional Research Review Board after my proposal was presented to my dissertation committee. I began my data collection by contacting, via email, Dr. Jennifer Bloom, one of the scholars who wrote “The Appreciative Advising Revolution.” Dr. Bloom provided me with her Appreciative Advising website address and a list of current certified appreciative advisors. I contacted approximately 20 professionals listed on the website as certified appreciative advisors. In addition, these professionals were currently using the framework within their professional spaces on higher educational campuses.

In order to obtain the participants cooperation and consideration, I pre-emailed them a recruitment letter (Appendix E) explaining my study and seeking their interest and cooperation in my research study. The recruitment letter included a summary of the study, its purpose related to academic advising, interview length, and the software used during the interviews via the web. After many conversations and emails, eleven of the twenty higher education professionals agreed to participate in the study. The participants were next asked to sign and date a consent letter (Appendix F) and return it to me by email. They were not paid, were under no obligation to participate in the study, and were free to withdraw at any time. They also received a release of information form (Appendix G) to sign, giving me permission to use another party or company to transcribe the online interviews.

If the professionals took longer than two weeks to respond to my emails, I telephoned or emailed them again. After all signed consent letters were returned to me by email, I emailed a self-reporting demographic questionnaire instrument (Appendix H) to all participants. The
questionnaire requested their professional titles, years of academic advising in higher education, student populations, degree level, and institution types. The professionals were required to have a year or more experience in academic advising in higher education. The purpose of the questionnaire was to acquire data, beginning with the participants’ career trajectory and their experiences that reflected the advisor’s frame of reference in an advising content.

The participants were asked to email or fax the demographic questionnaire to me as soon as possible. The participants also received a set of predetermined, open-ended questions by email to prompt the discussion (Appendix I), prior to the interview. The questionnaire consisted of 26 questions based upon the participants’ professional experiences, every-day advising practices, interactions with students, and the application of the appreciative advising framework-to-practice model, including the importance of an appreciative mindset.

This form of question permits the researcher to have the participants give deeper reflections, and drill down as to reasons why the appreciative advising framework phenomenon was important to them and the changing students demographics, especially related to race and ethnicity. The interviews followed, and were designed as semi-structured for this method of inquiry.

Subsequently, planning the interviews, making appointments, and speaking with the professional participants in real time took approximately four months after our first contact via email. The actual semi-structured interviews were conducted over a total of three months once the planning was completed. Shank and Brown (2013) suggested this format gives the interviewer the opportunity to further explore common themes, patterns, or responses (p. 63). The interviews are said to be designed to stimulate “unanticipated statements and stories” (Bodgan & Biklen, 2007, p. 26). My purpose was to understand how each participant used their
voices and actions to build relationships with students and assist them with navigation through positive or negative spaces. Surprisingly, a few conversations with the participants delved into the history of education and the benefits to the dominant majority.

**Data Analysis Process**

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) defined *analysis* as “working with the data, organizing them, breaking into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns” (p.159). The study used inductive analysis to examine the data, and identify patterns and themes in the participants’ narratives and experiences within their daily advising practices. Saldana (2016) defines *application coding* as a qualitative research process with descriptive language, perfect for participant interviews, transcripts, memo writing, and field notes (p. 83).

For this purpose, the researcher and participants’ conversations and stories during the interviews were digitally recorded in the Go-to-Meeting (see appendix J) online software loaded onto my personal laptop. Go-To-Meeting software enabled me to record the interviews, and allowed me to view, listen to, and speak with the participants in various states in the East and West. During these forty-five minutes to an hour conversations, I was able to capture valuable data around their social roles as academic advisors and the important use of the emergent phenomenon, appreciative advising, when addressing student needs within a more diverse student landscape in higher education. I had to be mindful of time zones and respectful of their work schedules and other responsibilities.

As the researcher, I listened to and reflected on the participants’ narratives as we conversed. The participants’ language reflected their excitement, as well as introspection about this new advising phenomenon. While speaking with the participants, I took field notes and analytic memos that permitted me to ask follow-up questions, allowing the participants to speak
more from the heart. Afterwards, I typed the analytic memos while reflecting upon each interview and the discussions that ensued as more questions arose. The purpose was to capture the participants’ values, beliefs, and action plans from their viewpoint as it pertained to student relationships and academic success.

The Go-To-Meeting audio recordings were transcribed by a transcription company called Rev (Appendix K) via online services, which hires professional transcriptionists to maximize quality. The files were securely stored and transmitted using TLS 1.2 encryption (see appendix L), the highest level of security available to all clients. The transcriptions were quickly returned to the researcher via email with each participant’s name; transcriptions were numbered and stamped with the date and time. The transcriptions consisted of the researcher’s (interviewer) questions and the participants’ responses to the questions and were saved on my personal laptop.

My data analysis proceeded in two phases. The initial phase began after the interviews were transcribed by the online transcription company. They were delivered to me via computer and I saved the transcribed text on my laptop and printed each document to read and review. During the manual pre-coding stage (Layder, 1998 as cited in Saldana, 2016, p.20), I circled and highlighted words and sentences from the notes when necessary to ensure the participants’ experiences stood out and answered the open-ended questions relevant to the research questions.

After printing the twelve interviews (one participant interviewed twice), I proceeded with coding using traditional methods such as paper and pencil, manually reviewing the data line-by-line, and writing in the margins, eventually assigning codes and gerunds to discover themes voiced by the participants. Charmaz (2006) stated, “qualitative coding is used early to separate, sort, and synthesize data” (p. 3). In addition, Saldana (2016) defined coding is the “transitional process between data collection and more extensive data analysis” (p. 5). “Detailed line-by-line
initial coding was used. It is described as a “search for processes that are participants’ actions comparing similarities and differences and remaining open to other possibilities” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 102 as cited in Saldana, 2016, p. 115) when examining the data.

Specific language used by each participant was highlighted, bolded, and underlined to discover the evidence in the data that supported the use of the phenomenon and its impact upon cultures, relationships, knowledge, similarities, and differences in the future of academic advising in higher education. This permitted a form of interaction with the data visually on paper. It helped to create a better understanding of the participants’ practices and discussions about their daily advising roles in an academia context. Moreover, the participants’ perspectives on appreciative advising and its use with the student population were engaging and passionate.

The second phase was completely generated digitally by tools in Atlas.ti8 software, “a powerful workbench for the qualitative analysis of large bodies of textual, graphical, audio, and video data“ (see appendix M), creating a more focused or axial coding format in order to cluster and categorize the data together (Saldana, 2016, p. 240). The audio interviews were uploaded from my laptop onto the digital Atlas.ti8 software to assist me with the analysis. I removed all identifiable factors to maintain the confidentiality of the participants. Afterwards, I labeled the participants as participant one, two, and so on, as my naming conventions for all who volunteered to participate in this study.

The transcripts were called documents once they were placed into the software. The platform permitted me to create three columns per document — one for the actual participant words from the interviews, the second for digital coding and the third for extra coding. The transcripts were labeled document 1, document 2, and so on, further maintaining participant confidentiality.
Axial coding commenced to look for links and connections to possible themes. Axial coding “aims to link categories with subcategories and asks how they are related” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 148 as cited in Saldana, 2016, p. 244). This coding permitted me to recognize potential themes for the study. The coding showed me visually how the data was developing life and new meaning, increasing my understanding of the study.

After gathering the data, an initial list of 655 codes were saved in Atlas.ti8 (Appendix I). The Atlas.ti8 software helped to create code groups. Groupings included any similar wording mentioned during conversations between researcher and advisors when reading the documents. The 655 codes in the focused phase (Charmaz, 2006) were unified, clustered, and reduced to eleven conceptual categories, furthering the research with the additional extension of axial coding. In this study, direct quotes were labeled in vivo. Table 5 provides a screenshot of the coding output process produced in the Atlas.ti8 online platform.
Table 5

Screenshot of Coding Process in the Atlas.ti8 Platform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Groups</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Grounded</th>
<th>Density</th>
<th>Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA undergraduates (74)</td>
<td>“I can’t get you answer, I can guaran...</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>[appreciative advising framework]</td>
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<td>“That’s what I’m here for. To take you...</td>
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<td>[appreciative advising framework]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barriers or obstacles (37)</td>
<td>“...the big piece, you know, especially...</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>[appreciative advising framework]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of advisors (22)</td>
<td>“...fits of it, and I believe it works, an...</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>[appreciative advising framework]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonialism (10)</td>
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<td>[appreciative advising framework]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multiple Identities (2)</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>[appreciative advising framework]</td>
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<tr>
<td>relationship - academic advisor and student (55)</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>[appreciative advising framework]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention (4)</td>
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<td>[appreciative advising framework]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Justice (49)</td>
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</table>
In vivo codes “help capture participants’ implicit meanings in their own words and understanding while the use of gerunds keeps the process active (action) while supporting understanding of the relationships between meaning and action” (Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings & de Eyto, 2018, p. 10). Phrases, patterns, and similar language were placed in a blank column to sort and structure the data and reduce it to meaningful categories, which conceptualized the data with names to represent how the participant used the emerging phenomenon.

Finally, theoretical coding (Charmaz, 2006) was utilized to determine relationships between the data and the final eleven concepts in order to identify the emerging themes. Through the interviews and matching data to codes, three important and dominant themes emerged from the participants’ narratives: building student-centered relationships, prioritizing student needs, and mastering content specific knowledge through interaction with students, as shown in the diagram.

Figure 7 Three themes from the enriching data generated by the researcher.
Each theme is described and discussed in chapter four. The themes affect and interact throughout the analysis. The participants’ experiences, perspectives, beliefs, and values, in reference to appreciative advising, illustrate how much appreciative advising has transformed their advising approach to support and cultivate relationships with students, especially African American students, with retention as a potential ancillary result.

An important critique of qualitative research validity, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), is “credibility in qualitative research is equivalent to internal validity in traditional research” (as cited in Schwitzer, Griffin, Ancis, & Thomas, 1999, p. 192). The scholars stressed that “the potential for high internal validity with qualitative methods is when the analyses proceed directly from the data” (p. 192). This research study was the result of gathering data based on interviews with eleven participants (one participant was interviewed twice).

In research, the words critical friend originated from andragogy because the friend was considered necessary to help adult students learn (Storey & Wang, 2017, p. 108). To ensure trustworthiness in the coding and interpretive process, I worked with a faculty member who served as a such a critical friend throughout the coding process (both manually and digitally using software platforms).
CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

“Addressing young people’s social, emotional, and ethical lives is an immediate, pressing, and urgent need...The definition of a well-educated person is one who possesses an education of the heart and spirit as well as the mind.”

Linda Lantieri

Analysis of Data

When summarizing the perspectives of the eleven participants employed by predominantly White institutions, three major themes emerged from this study. The most consistent and overarching themes were building student-centered relationships, prioritizing student needs, and mastering content-specific knowledge.

Figure 8. The three themes with the social construct word – race.

To meet the needs of our ever-changing society, the data agrees with the scholarly research that the increase in diversity on universities and colleges’ landscapes demands a transformation in academic advising, an institutional practice. The participants eagerly defined the efficacy of appreciative advising in their independent spaces and professional roles within...
predominantly White institutions in creating necessary connections to students in their new learning environment. The goal of this study was to understand how participants implement appreciative advising and how their behaviors and actions may place them in a transformative role as change agents in postsecondary education. The results of this study follow.

**Building Student-Centered Relationships**

“It is important that student’s feel empowered, knowing that I care and understand if I don’t know the answer, I will do everything in my power to get it. I make sure they know how to navigate the university.” -Kenneth

Advisors are both gatekeepers and conduits to students’ success, dreams, and goals because they realize students are unable to navigate the learning environment in a vacuum. Thus, advisors design and structure their offices and relationships with students to encourage the collaborative and mutually beneficial relationship necessary to provide support and guidance throughout the students’ learning process. This symbiotic relationship, between “learning challenges and institutional knowledge,” (Eikeland, 2012, p. 98) symbolizes the balance the advisor and student must achieve for the growth of the professional and the student to reach the level of meaningful commitment, connection, compassion, and care.

The appreciative advising framework provides and trains academic advisors to visualize their new tools and advising platform as more than transactional; it reminds them of the importance of building meaningful relationships toward trust and rapport when welcoming all students into the fold of their institutions. As a result, they believe they can assist in changing the trajectory of African American students’ attrition rate in PWIs. Academic advisors’ self-awareness and attitude are continually challenged throughout the appreciative advising training,
especially around cultural awareness. They also must ensure that they and their students engage in self-reflection.

At the same time, when they interact with and advise African American students, their perceptions, assumptions, values, and beliefs are concepts that may interrupt the flow of learning for themselves and the students. However, since students drive the campus forward, advisors must deliver their services authentically and intentionally to overcome such doubts, historical wrongs, socialization, biases, beliefs, and values. Caucasian advisors who lack knowledge and training in educational history or cultural competencies may struggle with cross-cultural advising. All participants of this study adhere to the significance of respect, intentionality, active listening, positivity, and authenticity when connecting students to the learning community.

**Authentic Relationships**

"Appreciative advising is a framework, but above all, and beyond all limits and things that you are doing, you really must be authentic. Because if you are not authentically who you are, then your students are going to pick up on that." - Earl

Our personal identity shapes any interactions we have in life. For that reason, the appreciative advising framework trains advisors to be self-reflective, authentic, and prepared with good positive questions especially as universities and colleges attempt to be inclusive and diverse. Authenticity calls human beings to a life of being genuine and real with oneself as well as with others. Thompson (2015) distinguishes *authenticity* as the idea of being “true to one’s self” and to understand, care, and accept those in your immediate circle (p. 603). Kendall (2012), however, delved even deeper into the meaning of authenticity. She stressed:

Authentic relationships across privilege are another situation entirely because in those both people are self-aware and willing to keep channels of communication open about power and privilege differences. Mutual respect is obviously essential, as is the determination not to make assumptions about one another and about the relationship.
They must be willing to share their personal worlds (p. 144).

Caucasian appreciative advisors who are building bridges of connection with African American students must accept the responsibility of intentionally maintaining an open, honest, and safe space for the authentic relationship to begin and grow. The advisors also agree to conduct themselves as appreciative human beings who are aware that there are others who are like them, yet also different from them.

Charles, for example, deemed it very important to let students know and feel they are more than a number or a body in the institution. He stressed:

[T]he purposes of appreciative advising is that I don’t want a student to feel like they are just a number here at the institution. I want them to feel like, “I am somebody.”

Someone is showing me the empathy of my situation and they will listen to my cares and concerns and then motivate me to the next level.

Ted agreed:

I think there is the perception that academic advising is just core scheduling. I think we know that it is more than that. You know, you are the one touch point, the one individual that potentially cares about the student’s overall growth and development. And so, it can be regarding their professional career path, and that life coach, and I think we wear a variety of different hats, depending on what the student’s needs are in that given time.

Earl also declared appreciative advising is about more than scheduling courses. He believed students observe advisors’ behaviors and notice if they are being intentional, authentic, and respectful of their identity during their interactions. Earl further explained:

For some students, it is the first time they have given thought about the background and experience of what they have been going through as a positive thing that has prepared
them to get through some difficult challenges once they get into college. So, I think that that desire to make sure that advising is not seen solely as a registration function, but as a relationship function is what really makes appreciative advising special, in my opinion. It is a lot of work to listen. And to, full body pay attention, and ask good questions, and to not only hear what they are saying, but also to sometimes hear what they are not saying. It creates a space where the student brings something to this equation, and the advisor is bringing something to this equation. And ultimately, the relationship between the two is better because we are paying attention to the stuff that they know about themselves, and they are paying attention to what we know about the university and the environment.

Henry poignantly agreed with Earl about being intentional with the approach to meeting students where they are. He observed:

The point is to be where the students are. It is not that we are necessarily in the garages, but as an institution and I think this is a great example for our students of color, especially our African American males. If they don’t feel comfortable coming in for whatever reason, then you got to get to their space. Whether it is hanging out at the recreation center, or the library, or the union, or if they have a multicultural center on campus, doing office hours in those spaces. That can go a long way to start to build that relationship. They are going to remember how you made them feel.

Rosalind echoed Henry:

It is not that easy. You must genuinely want to know what these students want to do and give them the plan. Talk it out with them. Listen to them and try to understand every aspect of their lives. If you do not want to do that, you do not want to be an advisor;
otherwise, you are not going to understand what the student is going through when they walk out of the building or your office.

Ellen comments on the importance of trying “to establish trust and try to build that trust and rapport quickly. Students smell BS from a mile away and they know if you do not care. They know if you are putting on a show, but they also sense when you are genuine, and you genuinely care and are looking out for their best interests.”

Some of the participants suggested relationship building began as early as orientation. Kenneth described his office’s effort to build relationships with students during orientation. He explained:

I think for us we do a lot of work upfront to build that relationship. So, for us we do a lot of things where students can be together instead of individually. They do group work. By the time they are finished, they are one on one with an advisor. Because they have gotten to know their advisor in a group, and they got to know the behavior of the advisor, whatever it is, whatever the personality of that advisor is, the anxiety level is kind of lowered a little bit.

When one is in an unfamiliar environment being uncomfortable is part of the process. Higher education is no different. Consequently, a mandatory requirement for appreciative advising success is providing a safe space across race and privilege, so students can express themselves through engaging conversations when embarking on relationship building in the direction of trust and rapport. Covey (2006) agreed and stressed that trust is “confidence” and “when you trust people, you have confidence in them, their integrity, and their abilities” (p. 5).

In our society today, human interaction is delicate, fragile, and challenging. Additionally, because advising is a human contact career choice, trust and rapport are significant
in advancing the relationship through honest communication and understanding to the level of transparency and safety. Inwardly, authenticity is very challenging and no easy task to accomplish. However, Covey (2006) insisted, “behavior can change as long as the advisors make a conscious effort to face his or her reality (p. 131) especially for Caucasian advisors who may encounter African American students for the first time, which explains the reasons for intentionality and purposeful inclusion in the appreciative advising framework-to-practice.

Academic Advising: Relationships Across Race

“Literally, the whole notion of looking at potential, rather than limitations is one that is significant in establishing that relationship between the majority advisor and the minority student.” - Tom

Hicks and Generett (2011) stressed “relationships involve recognizing the interdependence of our lived experiences” (p. 692) and “understanding that knowledge is not disembodied from human experiences” (p. 692). All participants, Caucasian and African American, agree it is possible for Caucasian advisors to build relationships and connections with African American students. The participants noted some elements of struggle, such as balancing institutional policies and procedures that students perceive as status quo against the perceptions and assumptions of others who are different. Tom, who is well-versed in academia and student retention, is very knowledgeable about educational history and open to the subject of the racial divide with students of color and African American students in PWIs. He illuminated the topic with robust honesty:

As a white guy, as a WASP, it probably would take time in working with and advising African American students, it would take me longer to get into the structure (appreciative advising), the goal setting, and other kinds of things. To advocate and assist, it will take intentionally front-loading things (disarming and discovery phases) and understanding
their narratives and needs. It would probably take a little longer, but I think they are
certainly worth it. I mean, those are the things you need to build trust and interaction.
I think as a white guy, I would have to work harder to make that happen, I would have to
cut through the thinking of students wanting someone who looks like them, but I still
think it offers….once you get into the structure of it, it offers a real chance to serve
African American students and retention efforts.

Tom implied the possibility existed to gain the trust of African American students as long
as the Caucasian advisor was patient, deliberate, and purposeful in their action steps to help the
student create a plan to success and degree conferral. He also pointed out that cultural
differences do influence the cultivation of authentic relationships. Moreover, he affirmed
empathy,

not sympathy, was the beginning of historical and human understanding. Indeed, Tom made a
good point: PWIs must be intentional about diversity and inclusion because African American
students have come through an astounding historical background causing hesitancy and lack of
trust despite applying to PWIs for their learning experiences.

Ted calmly maintained his point of view in a different manner, reinforcing the need for
sensitivity and understanding with students when they are confronted with unexpected conflict
on campus. Ted expressed:

I always tell people to be comfortable with awkward situations. I think whenever you are
talking about diversity, it is bringing an unbiased realm of experience that you don’t
have. And so, it is going to be awkward for you when you have an individual that has a
different experience from you which is their norm and something you have never
experienced. I take it as an educational opportunity between the student and the advisor.
Inserting an intensity in the quest to achieve equity and social justice in cross-racial relationships,

Kendall (2012) emphasized:

One way for social justice to be effective is by being an ally. Being an ally occurs in the context of being a good change agent. A person who wants to be an ally intentionally chooses to be a change agent at both the personal and institutional levels. You must be clear that you are doing this because it is in your interest or for the greater good. Before identifying yourself as an ally, you should spend a lot of time examining how your life is influenced and what being an ally means to you.

The difference between an ally and advocate is very important. Ally means a person who is associated with another or others for some common cause or purpose. While an advocate is a person who pleads for or on behalf of another. Are you an ally to people or issues? (p. 140-145)

Following CRT and the cycle of socialization, Kendall’s claim expresses the importance of stepping outside limitations or boundaries to help others. The question becomes how far the appreciative advising framework to practice wants to stretch to discuss the intersectionality of race and ethnicity when advising. For advisors, the meanings of advocate and ally are incomplete. The participants defined advocacy using the ally definition. Do the behavior, actions, and commitment of appreciative advisors meet the definition of ally to be called change agents for all?

Amber, an African American advisor, described appreciative advising as a beautiful framework that provides Caucasian advisors consistency in advising African American students. She stated:
It brings up that authenticity or the intentional nature of the work. The advisor has to be open about who they are, the way they design their space, and be cognizant of how they interact with the students. Understand that you don’t have some of the experiences that the African American students have and that is okay.

Henry also expressed his point of view on this area of concern in the study. He explained:

Certainly, having a diverse staff also helps. We have done a good job of hiring folks that can speak Creole, can speak Spanish, and, of course the racial and religious differences, gay and lesbian focused. Let me put it this way, it is easier to build that relationship and it can be done quicker if the student perceives that is whom they are working with has got similar experiences and background, but it is not certainly a requirement. It just may take a little longer.

Kenneth, an African American advisor, also wholeheartedly believed that, despite Caucasian advisors’ different experiences, they should be able to connect with African American students in terms of college life when utilizing the appreciative advising model. They must show that students are appreciated. He continued:

If you are a skilled advisor, you can tell your story in a way that may not be like their family life. But you can connect to a college life, your own college experiences. We curve the experiences to include not only academics, it is also about things that you just like in general. It may be movies, music, etc. It begins the conversation and lowers defenses. So, I think any counselor can do that, it is just about their comfort level, and their sensitivity level as well.
Charles concurred, asserting that if universities and colleges have “the right personnel and they are properly trained in advising, it doesn’t matter if you are black or white, yellow or green. As long as they show the students they care.” Darryl’s seemed to challenge Charles’s comment stating, “there is a lack of training in hiring processes; therefore, new hires receive OJT – on the job training, so we leap in the fire, and we course correct as we go along”.

This form of training places academic advising at a disadvantage especially if they come from a neighborhood where there are few or no individuals of color. Is training a lost art? If universities and colleges advisors are receiving OJT, how can human resources ensure that they hire individuals possessing the knowledge and skills necessary to interact with diverse student demographics?

Advisor Self-awareness and Biases

“Appreciative advising presents an opportunity if you are aware of your own feelings, whatever biases you may or may not have, and again, it brings up that authenticity or the intentional nature of the work in order to break down the barriers for interaction”. – Amber

On the other hand, appreciative advisors must also be humble and vulnerable in order to recognize their own socialization and rise above it. Implicit biases can intervene in the purposes and goals of advising and counteract the mission of the university or college to diversity and inclusion. Implicit bias is defined as an unconscious attitude towards others. The Perception Institute, a research institute based on science and perception, (2019) claims:

Our brains like to be right, our hearts strive to be good. The very experience of racial difference, however, can send these basic human impulses atwitter. Unless disrupted, stereotypes embedded in our brains can turn into implicit bias and lead to discrimination over time.

Genuine lifelong learning requires being in the moment and connected emotionally to the educational environment in order to acquire skills and accept challenges, anticipate internal
conflicts, and recognize barriers that may interfere in collaboration and relationship building, eventually eliminating the voices of diversity. Tom explores these ideas:

I am a little cynical in terms of …. Educators ought to be able to minimize their bias, and most can, and many do, but there are still the biases that run deeply that some people would not be able to adapt. But I think for the most part, the answer to that is yes, I think appreciative advising would provide them a framework. Literally, the whole notion of taking a look at potential, rather than limitations is one that is really significant in establishing that relationship between the majority advisor and the minority student.

Tom here implied that academic advisors who are professionals should be able to suspend any biases they have acquired. However, this is true only if such biases are not too deeply ingrained. Darryl commented:

With the appreciative advising framework, you can suspend biases. Take that bias off stating I am going to help this person. Really following the six tools and taking the person through them to discover who they are, what are their strengths, what makes them feel strong, what are the things that really light them up when they talk about it?

Darryl here seems to claim that the appreciative advising framework offers an advisor the opportunity to negate their biases even when they believe them to be true. Similarly, Amber argued:

I think the appreciative advising framework presents an opportunity to overcome biases through recognition of your own feelings, whatever biases you may or may not have, and again, it brings up that authenticity or the intentional nature of the work. You yourself must be open about who you are. Look at the way you design your space. The way that
you greet and interact with your students. But you must open the way and I think sometimes that is not so comfortable to be able to do.

Sheila scrutinized the subject matter even more, saying,

I don’t want to say appreciative advising helps others with their bias. Because I think that implicit biases are implicit, and so I think that it certainly takes a level of recognition from the person in understanding and in openness. I think that, again, it is about intentionality. I think that it does take a lot of self-awareness and then it also takes I think being humble, so that when someone calls you out on something that you have done or said, that you can recognize it as opposed to reacting in defensiveness or fear.

The participants were honest, admitting that it takes a concerted effort to suspend one’s implicit biases as the position of power begins with the advisor. Nonetheless, in order to be appreciative, they must reflect upon their own reality and perspectives when interacting with students of different cultures and take steps to become informed. The main factors are to recognize, know, and understand the norms and cultures of the university’s students in order to be effective at fostering collaboration, building relationships, and committing to engage all students. To ignore students’ experiences invalidates their identities and lives.

Research shows advisors who are cultural navigators, open to concepts such as compassion, empathy, and trust, and who explore their own biases, understand the proper guidelines necessary to advise students of color with purpose and intention toward academic and social success (Strayhorn, 2015, p. 59). Strayhorn (2015) also explained that cultural navigators know “the codes of conducts, customs, dominant values, language, requirements, rules, and traditions. They do more than tell someone where to go; they show them via demonstration,
illustration, or simulation of possible paths” (p. 59) creating equity and social justice within their spheres of influence.

**Student Narratives**

“In cultural context, storytelling is a huge part of students’ culture and that is how they express themselves, advisors must recognize their lived experiences and being cognizant of multiple identities.” - Sheila Patton (2016) emphatically insisted, “higher education still represents the complex relations between race, property, and oppression” (p. 320). In support, Mitchell et al. (2010) investigated higher education’s approach to advising as well as the set-up of the academic advisor’s office. Their conclusion was “approaches to advising ignore the racial nature of the environment: spaces are not race-neutral, and thus serve to entrap individuals of color in certain racialized representations, roles, contracts, hierarchies, and other hegemonic processes” (as cited in Lee, 2018, p. 78, 79).

Delgado and Stefancic (2017) explained, “legal storytelling and narrative analysis under CRT allows individuals to hear the validity of the perspective of color to bridge the gap between persons who experiences are different from others” (p. 44, 45). The purpose of building relationships between advisor-advisee through narratives or stories is to establish advisors’ credibility and sincerity with students whose experiences are different than their own. It is to acquire understanding and establish expectations between the two. Ladson-Billings (1998) emphasized, “[s]tories provide the necessary context for understanding, feeling, and interpreting. Furthermore, CRT focuses on the role of ‘voice’ in bringing additional power” to the relationship” (p. 18).

As a result of years of stressors and wrongs, African American students have an innate ability to recognize when Caucasian faculty, staff, or students feel uncomfortable in their presence. The students’ innate ability to recognize when they are not welcomed or validated on
campus is important for appreciative advising, and something for which advisors need to be prepared. As one of the constant individuals in their educational journey, appreciative advisors incorporate mindfulness as a frame of reference to counteract limiting concepts. The appreciative advisor attempts to address Mitchell et al. concerns about race-neutral offices as they begin with first impressions in their professional space.

First impressions give the advisor the opportunity to highlight their authenticity and belief in education for all citizenry, regardless of race or ethnicity, in advising sessions and beyond, by the pictures, music, office décor, and furniture arrangement, as well as by acknowledging the individual in front of them. Sheila had strong viewpoints on why first impressions are worth noting. She stated:

Efficacy of advising can start when the student books an appointment, ensuring that you are using proper pronouns ensuring that you understand and clarify how to pronounce a student’s name, ensuring that you are conscious and aware of language, body language, your office arrangement, etc. From a cultural context, what does that look like? It is understanding how different things are viewed.

The participants were very passionate and expressive in discussing their experiences and actions with students when using this emergent advising model. The excerpts from the interviews below, provide a strong indication of the tone of Ted’s words.

Appreciative advising essentially encourages you to really think about what you are asking students. You tend to be much more intentional about how you interact with students, how you address them, and what ramifications that means. It will not always be the same. It focuses you to think on the perceptions of the students. You need to
understand what makes them tick. What is going to encourage them and what is going to shut them down? I learned academic advising through appreciative advising.

Additionally, Earl believed appreciative advising made him a better advisor despite his years of experience in higher education. He continues to learn and grow. He also claims the framework works very well when he incorporates developmental advising with his advisees: “So, as I learned more about it, it was one of those things that just made good sense based on my experience. The framework permits ease of moving through the six different phases and seeing it in practice. So, I think a lot of it came out of anecdotally knowing that this stuff is working. And, it is working for all students, not just this student or that student.”

Similarly, during advising sessions, the appreciative advisors focus on guiding students in discovering their strengths and skills by addressing their successes through past lived experiences. This strategy includes the importance of active listening to student narratives. In 2008, Bloom, Hutson, and He explained that the appreciative advising model defines how advisors work in concert with students during their advising sessions as they attempt to develop trust and rapport (p. 11). Earl explained how an advising relationship became powerful through student narratives: “The power of understanding people’s stories, where they are coming from, and commonalities, and the power-end of the advising relationship. It is just powerful.”

Amber echoed Earl’s passion, believing narratives are the overall opportunity to begin building connections and relationships; appreciative advising also expects academic advisors to share their stories with students to show the advisor’s humanity as someone to whom students can relate. Amber observed: “Sharing personal stories includes the understanding that what you see is not necessarily all there is and that there is so much depth to who we are and it pulls in all of that understanding about differences in culture and background.”
Appreciative inquiry emphasizes the value of positive questions for change and strength-based inquiry to impact the future of human beings or organizations. Ellen described her love and passion for the appreciative advising framework:

I have seen the framework change fundamentally the course of where students go. When we start believing in students, we see their potential, we call it out of them, they start to believe it. They start believing what they never once thought possible and I have seen our students of color achieve more than they ever once thought possible because someone believed in them.

She continued:

Students must figure out, they have to reveal who they are and where they have been and what their challenges are. It is not feeling sorry for oneself. That is not the purpose. It is being able to share that story, but also be empowered along the way to say, this is where I am going…

Storytelling has been crucial in the legal field for many years, as stated in CRT. Attorneys created visual pictures in jury’s minds of the defendant’s or plaintiff’s life experiences in order to persuade or inform, which is expressly stated in critical race theory and the cycle of socialization. Appreciative advisors also use this guiding principle as a strategy to guarantee students’ voices are heard. Furthermore, the advisor is purposefully attempting to understand different perspectives without assumptions, and caring for the other’s potential as a human being.

Darryl noted the meaningfulness of student stories in advising. He stated:

If our students are the experts of their experience, we ought to listen. We cannot just prescribe without really hearing what they want, because we have our own ideas of what they should want, but we need to check that and just listen to what their high order need
is. For example, it is hard for a student to hear what the teacher is saying if their stomach is grumbling too loud. It is tough for them to focus and concentrate.

Through Darryl’s passion and voice, appreciative advising illustrated how advisors seek students’ strengths from their past and current experiences in order to empower and engage them in concrete goals, action plans, and academic success, which are crucial when advising diverse students.

Since race is constructed by society, Delgado and Stefancic (2017) argued, “[s]tories can give voice” and “[e]ngaging stories can help us understand what life is like for others and invite the reader or listener into a new and unfamiliar world” (p. 48). Appreciative advisors engage students in meaningful conversations and actively listen to their voices in order to give positive reinforcement, recognize good work, and build self-esteem, which helps students discover, or rediscover, their strengths over any deficits or limitations.

It is an opportunity to help students clarify their goals and educational plans, as well as the practice of advisors and students realizing potential and possibilities in their current space. It is impossible to communicate a vision to the students if you do not understand the back story of their lives. Earl plainly stated:

And, one of the things that I feel so strongly about, related to appreciative advising, is that it is so much about understanding the student in front of you, and hearing their stories and where they are from. And, then taking and leveraging those strengths, and making sure they connect up with what it is they are dreaming and wanting to do. And, what I find myself talking about with underrepresented students, or first-gen students, low-income students are talking a lot about grit and resiliency. And saying, “Man, your story is so awesome, and so encouraging. And you had to work so hard to get here.
Some of that grit and resiliency is going to serve you well as you go through this educational experience.”

Sheila also pointed out that advisors must be attentive listeners when students describe their stories in order to ask positive open-ended questions. She stated:

I think where appreciative advising really kind of falls in line is with design and the idea of using positive open-ended questions to get out student’s stories. And, this is really, I think, the crux of social justice is understanding stories and about hearing in their own voice their story and then how that impacts their success of their academics and then being able to then move from that spot and allowing us to understand multiple identities.

Sheila claimed listening validates the student’s identity and gives the advisor the opportunity to practice social justice within their space.

In summary, as universities and colleges embark on this journey of inclusion and diversity, student-centered relationships prove to be very critical, and provide a guiding principal central to the appreciative advising framework. The framework enhances universities’ and colleges’ core missions, if they want what advisors are doing to be more than mere window dressing. Through the data gathered from the interviews, the results amplified the significance of advisors’ self-awareness and their perceptions and assumptions about others over and above unbiased collaboration with changing student demographics on college campuses. Again, narratives or stories place the focus directly on the student in front of the advisor, if he or she is actively listening.

Prioritizing Student Needs

“What is central? What is operating right now so that I can figure out how can I best serve you? Because it is going to be important as the variable change in your life that I understand what those are so that I can figure out how I can direct you? How do we rewrite what is going on?” - Amber
Roscoe (2015) unmistakably accentuated the fact that “[t]o meet the needs of current and future minority students, particularly those of African American and Hispanic cultures, advisors will need to understand the unique challenges for this population and tailor strategic interventions to help these students to be successful in their academic careers and beyond” (p. 1). Academic advisors’ expectations are to nurture and cultivate an internal and intentional connection with students for the purpose of creating a bridge to the institution, so they are assured their needs are met.

As the human touch becomes a priority in higher education, student services are embracing the needs and expectations of students holistically, that is, looking at the whole student. Universities and colleges must take a more in-depth approach in their recruitment areas, the pipeline from high school to college. Transitional programs focused on academic rigors can assist with the matriculation stage of education. The universities and colleges can begin to build relationships and comfortability in the summer via cohort. In fact, a few of the participants are actively involved in the matriculation and orientation of new students on their campuses.

Universities’ and colleges’ adjustment to African American needs includes personalization, knowing feeder-schools student population, high school preparation, curriculum and other factors weaved into students’ lived experiences. Appreciative advising challenges the academic advisor to recognize the above-mentioned needs on top of thinking critically, beyond the inner sanction space of the office, and viewing the student holistically. In the past, advising was viewed as “loco parentis” whereby faculty or administrators determined degree conferral upon students without collaboration or care (Grites, 1979).

Presently, appreciative advising is viewed as a collaborative interaction between student and advisor with high expectations placed upon both for success. The purpose is to inform
students, especially African American students, that advisors are aware of their needs and the challenges they face in PWIs, so they feel valued and validated throughout their journey. Appreciative advisors as leaders can invigorate traditional advising practices to support students through an equity lens and with empathy, not sympathy, into safe spaces with open communication. Good open-ended questions direct an honest and transparent conversation in a non-threatening way, so students feel comfortable to expose their feelings.

Appreciative advising is also a commitment to personalizing an educational plan reflective of students’ needs, interests, and future career goals long term. Darryl reflected:

As student enrollment changes, you adjust and adapt to your student population. Student demographics change across time, so when you are serving a higher population of a certain ethnic group, they come in with different needs, period! You are serving more students with disabilities, you must make sure they can navigate the campus and do what they need to do. Just like you need to support them, better students will need certain things, African American, Latino males, just going on and on down the line, LGBTQ students, they all need certain levels of support.

Student narratives provide an opening to discovering the needs and expectations of African American students, so the necessary support is provided throughout their educational experiences. As Sheila enthusiastically declared, “our university developed a student success center composed of academic advisors and career counselors to integrate support which encourages students a little bit more holistically and provides them the support they need together” in one space. No student is left behind.” Similarly, Ellen affirmed,

One of our responsibilities as advisors is to be aware of different theories or different approaches and to me, it is using your expertise as an advisor to figure out what are those
theories or approaches that then can be combined to be able to meet the needs of each student. And one combination may look very different for one student than it does for the next. So, appreciative advising offers that framework, so you move through the phases applying those different theories or approaches as appropriate. The framework provides that guide to get through that.

Rosalind also pointedly observed:

We are trying to grow a diverse body of learners to go into a workforce or to be competitive in a workforce. For me, this institution is that beacon of hope for a lot of people in the community. Our mission is we are recognizing a diverse body of individuals in the community and making sure that we are providing opportunities for growth and economic and personal growth.

Moreover, all participants declared appreciative advisors must have certain characteristics and practice certain behaviors when interacting with diverse student populations on PWIs campuses: care, sensitivity, empathy, commitment, active listening, a welcoming attitude, and support in order to connect with the students, that is, reaching and seeing students where they are. Most importantly, a few participants emphasized how they execute connection and commitment during interactions with their students. For example, Amber expressed her commitment to students:

It is important to listen and read cues that students give to you. Understanding the rules and the guidelines and all those things are important; but, at the end of the day, for me to better serve my students, it is important that I am taking notice, that I am being observant about what I am seeing.
When speaking with students who are different than you, Kendall (2012) emphasized, “one must turn off all channels in your mind except the listening one. Don’t finish the person’s sentences; the moment you do that you have switched from listening to her or him to listening to yourself” (p. 127). The participants emphatically insist the emergent model increased their knowledge base on delivery of student services; however, authentic application of that knowledge is what defines the participants’ success with their students. Appreciative advisors view their social role in student services as extremely important to the context of advising for student retention and graduation. It is the responsibility of the advisor to demystify the new landscape, clarify resources, and establish guidelines to interpret and navigate the campus.

**Student Success**

“The definition will change with every student. I need to cater my advising to what success means for them and support them to meet those challenges and to challenge them more. What is a greater success for you?” – Ted

Education defines success in two ways – institutions and students. On the one hand, it is strongly suggested that institutions rely heavily upon retention and graduation as their measuring stick. Student success in higher education includes monumental involvement by advisors with many factors that intersect in universities and colleges, such as family, expectations, academics, campus experiences, sense of belonging, curriculum, policies and procedures, administrators, and student and faculty interactions. Strayhorn (2015) posited, “[s]tudent success is two simple words that when put together become a critical goal in higher education” (p. 57). He continued, stating, “[i]ncreasing student success rates takes hard work, but hard work is no excuse for retreat; working together we can do it” (p. 57). The participants in this study are not retreating. They imply they want to be part of the solution, especially for students of color.
As students acclimate to the education environment, academic advisors are to provide the necessary resources to succeed. Through years of experience, the participants understand that students measure their own success through two benchmarks, that institutions are providing a safe, inclusive, rewarding, and enhancing curricular experiences for them, and the ability to accomplish their individual goals, dreams, and the ability to be able to accomplish those with the support they need as they transition from high school to higher education. The advisor attempts to help the students find a balance.

Rosalind, for example, defined student success:

I am learning to shape my definition of student success by my students and not have this “global” overarching – hey, this is what success is……. The college administrators would say, “Hey, competitive GPA and you persisted to the next semester which is student success. But, in our offices, with the students is a little different. Before they leave my office, I always ask, “Did you get from me what you wanted”? You have to genuinely want to know what these kids want to do and show them the plan. Ask questions! I think advising is the crutch of student success. It is what makes students successful – a great advisor.

Amber agreed:

To me, student success is a lot about what the student wants for themselves. What are their individual circumstances and what is going to be important to them in the long run? It is important for me to figure out what is central to my students. Is mom and dad paying for school? Is the student working? I’m trying to figure out not just meeting the big picture of the university goals, but for my student, what is going to be important. Are they happy?
Amber and Rosalind specifically stated universities goals and guidelines are important, but students’ well-being is important as well, if they are to serve the student and appreciate where the students are at any given time. Sheila explained:

Institutions tend to define student success as success at the institution, which is usually measured through two measures – retention and graduation. I think there are two lenses. I think student success for institutions being able to provide a safe, inclusive, rewarding and enhancing curricular or co-curricular experience for students. And that student success for students is based on their own individual goals, dreams, and the ability to be able to accomplish those and the supports in order to do that.

Sheila’s remarks were very interesting. She included the concepts of safe space, inclusion, and curriculum in her definition, which are the very things that are sometimes most challenging to African American students on PWIs campuses, especially with a lack of structural diversity. After all, I am sure students of color or African American students did not excel in high school to matriculate into higher education to lose their direction. They want success, too. The advisor’s responsibility is to meet students’ needs, to provide resources of belonging, to empower, to engage, and to keep them focused on academic self-efficacy to graduation. Additionally, they clearly expressed a conflict with institutional requirements and students’ outlook on success. It is clear that one cannot departmentalize or segment different areas of campus for student success. The entire campus is another ingredient or component to student success, not only the advisors.

*Sense of Belonging or Isolation*

“We want to belong. That is why people join fraternities, sororities, why people join gangs, why people join professional associations. It is innate for us to want to yearn to belong. To be a part.” - Darryl

Freeman et al. (2007) defined sense of belonging as a “feeling students have when they are part of the community at large and create a connectedness with campus. It is associated with
social acceptance and pedagogical caring by professors” (as cited in Rodgers and Summers, 2008, p. 176). Scholars such as Pascarella, Terenzini, and Tinto have researched and published many articles on how imperative it is for students to acquire a sense of belonging in their learning environment. In support, Hurtado and Carter (1997) stated, “supportive relationships may facilitate students’ social adjustment to college and enhance their sense of belonging” (as cited in Strayhorn, 2008, p. 37).

On the other hand, belonging is not a prerequisite for persistence in PWIs for African American students, as demonstrated by many who have managed to navigate the environment despite its challenges and barriers. But, regrettably, for years, many scholars have researched and presented findings on African American students who suffer from lack of a sense of belonging or isolation into the academic and social environment of PWIs campuses because our society is transfixed by the social construct of race, excluding African American students’ voices and denying them access to equity and opportunities for academic excellence.

Tinto (1993) also explained that “retention is a function of the degree to which a student becomes academically and socially integrated or tied to campus life” (as cited in Strayhorn, 2008, p 37). Ted agreed the PWIs atmosphere to African American students’ sense of belonging is challenging. He explained:

[P]ersonalization and the need to foster a sense of home is of utmost importance. What is their culture? What is their norm? What can I do to better make your time at the university your home? It is not just a service level. I continually try to make sure they feel supported and taken care of here. When they see that I am genuine, they will return to my office.
Participants acknowledged African American students’ struggles on PWIs; however, they insisted they can aid them by providing resources, clarity, sincerity, and genuine care. Earl argued:

I assist African American undergraduates towards graduation completion. One of the things that I am such a firm believer in is the sense of belonging on campus, and this is a space where everybody feels comfortable, and feels like they belong. And one of the things that I feel strongly about, related to appreciative advising, is that it is so much about understanding the student in front of you and hearing their stories and where they are from.

Ellen likewise emphasized the importance of belonging:

Advising is more than just getting students through college. This is about helping them succeed in life. In my research on thriving, we know that sense of belonging, that psychological sense of community is the number one driver to students thriving. Students who are thriving, they are much more successful, higher grades, persisted to graduation, involved, connected, and engaged. It is important as advisors that we build that culture to counter a negative campus climate, an interference to sense of belonging. Appreciative approach and mindset can be a conduit for helping to overcome and develop a positive environment.

Appreciative advisors cemented the framework as a foundation to empowering African American students and increasing their sense of belonging, academic self-efficacy, and persistence through motivation, support, positivity, and validation of their existence on campus. Nevertheless, Steele (2011) stresses with concern, “advisors unfamiliar with historical and systemic school of thoughts and its connection to reductions in sense of belonging and academic
self-efficacy of African American students, necessitate the need to review relationships in environments students navigate in and its invisible causes of action which may be the source of disparities and fewer opportunities in PWIs toward degree conferral” (p. 18). Steele’s remark is a clear warning about perceptions and assumptions in present collegiate environments as a result of socialization. Strayhorn (2015) agreed with Steele, noting, “[d]ecades of social psychological research has shown that it is virtually impossible for people to excel or strive in places where they feel threatened, vulnerable, or lonely” (p. 60).

**Non-Cognitive Barriers**

“Students may receive microaggressions and some racism, not all advisors know how to handle that since everyone is on a different level of cultural competences as an advisor.” - Kenneth

With the inclusion of social constructivist theory in appreciative advising, critical race theorist would say that the appreciative advisor is closer to acknowledging the systemic nature of “power, privilege, racism, and Whiteness and the impact of these constructs on interactions with students” (Lee, 2018, p. 80). Scholarly research continually exposes stereotyping, microaggressions and negative campus climates as barriers contributing to African American students’ perception of being “outsiders looking in” (Collins, 1986, p. 526) eventually affecting their commitment and connection to college life.

For that reason, Lee (2018) emphasized that “[a]dvisors can affirm student experiences and combat daily microaggressions by engaging in daily practices of microaffirmations” (p. 81). Rowe, (2008) who created the term, simply stated “microaffirmations are small gestures extended on a daily basis that fosters inclusion, listening, comfort, and support for people who may feel unwelcomed or invisible in an environment” (as cited in Lee, 2018, p. 81). In addition, Powell, Demetrious, and Fisher (2013) expanded the definition to include affirmations of common experiences for African American students to increase their sense of belonging, self-
efficacy, and resiliency to persist despite barriers (as cited in Lee 2018, p. 81). Holistically thinking, microaffirmations validate African American students’ existence, as well as their multifaceted lives and needs in PWIs’ spaces.

Participants in this study affirmed appreciative advising’s use of delving into students’ stories supports advisors in learning and understanding where the students come from, what their impediments are, and what are some of the barriers they may encounter like stereotyping, microaggressions, and negative campus climates, all of which may hamper African American students’ academic self-efficacy. The primary goal, however, is to mitigate the negative effects of barriers that may lead to attrition.

Appreciative advising upholds advising as the ability to maintain a cultural lens with purpose and intention to invite students, especially African American students, into a judgment-free zone and safe space. This statement implies advisors are prepared mentally to participate in cross-cultural advising with students who are different from them. I am not sure this is true of all advisors, who may or may not have the proper preparation and training in cultural competencies and critical race theory knowledge as stated by Kenneth.

Ellen poignantly emphasized that the genuine involvement of administrators, staff, and faculty campus wide is one way to show support and provide a safe space for African American students who encounter barriers to education. She stated:

[A]ppreciative advising with students, by default, also impacts how you interact with colleagues which is our whole goal in appreciative education. The question is how we help build positive campus environments in which not only students but faculty and staff thrive because when we are all in…. creating a positive climate, we all benefit from it. We need to do, all of us, a favor and build that positive environment for all of us.
Because it does all of us good and we are going to retain good faculty and staff that in turn will help be there to support the students who need them the most changing the culture and the climate.

In the Great Value for Colleges article, activist Moira Kenney (2001) asserted, “[c]olleges today are more diverse than ever, and students are lobbying across the country for their universities to provide a safe space, or inclusive environment where students of any race, gender, sexuality, class and ability go to find compassion and empathy while escaping the pressures of barriers and obstacles” (as cited in Kratsas, 2016). Brown and Mangan (2016) use the phrase safe space to describe “centers such as center for identity which self-identifies as a safe space because the students can receive help from supportive staff members and find community among other black students” (p. 4). However, can PWIs grow to be genuine in counteracting non-cognitive barriers by creating and requiring appreciative safe spaces campus wide, in addition to the subpopulations of their own creation such as multicultural centers and diversity and inclusion offices?

Are top-level administrators in higher education creating subpopulations to satisfy the masses so the reality of a negative learning environment escapes the eye? Appreciative advisors claim to keep the reality of PWIs and African American history front and center through appreciative training. Ellen implied universities and colleges cannot demonstrate sustainability if diverse students continue to withdraw and consider a campus unsafe or negative for students of color and African American students.

This emerging appreciative advising practice may be necessary to mediate human collateral damage and harm resulting from years of racial division and socialization, whether consciously or unconsciously. Stereotypes, microaggressions and negative campus climates add
to African American students’ anxiety, confusion, and emotional stress. Darryl had students whose outlook to barriers on campus begins with students doubting themselves and their abilities, and paraphrases their words:

“I hate being here. I feel invisible. I feel like an imposter. I feel like nobody understands me. They are not going to understand a student like me, where I come from. I am not supposed to be here.” When students have these thoughts, they are suffering in silence. It is festering inside of us and eating at us, and kind of, in some situations, tormenting us.

Are students suffering from what scholars have described as *imposter syndrome*, that is, feeling like they don’t belong, which makes them stressed and tired? Because *imposter syndrome* is an internal barrier to empowerment and achievement, Sherman (2013) described it as “a person who doesn’t feel good enough, is unsure of what she or he is doing, and feels she or he can’t live up to others’ expectations” (p. 57) which is in relation to the stereotype *threat in the air* by Claude Steele. A stereotype *threat in the air* impacts African American students intellectually while internally creating extra stress to continually perform high, eventually causing burnout or a decrease in academic self-efficacy.

As an appreciative advisor, Darryl immediately accentuated the significance of “courageous conversations” with students whether in a professional space, walking across campus, or at an event. He emphasized the importance of listening, empowering and engaging students in their own power of resilience and strength to overcome these negative perceptions, based on the color of their skin, in academic and social spaces. Darryl wholeheartedly understood and acknowledged African American students’ intersection with barriers because of their identity on PWIs; however, he insists the road to survival and success is possible with
advisors who enjoy working with human beings and impacting them in college and beyond.

Amber argued that such barriers are common:

> It’s like, that is life. Unfortunately, it is just another day. You must deal with that just in the nature of where we are located. However, we have offices designated as support groups for students of color. They can off-load, discuss, be with each other and provided with mentors. We dig deep into the conversation with questions such as, “What is negatively affecting your space?”

Amber challenged students to accept their color as their strength and take control from the barriers to their success. She structured her advising sessions intentionally and purposefully to assist students through this kind of defeatism crisis. Similarly, Sheila noted:

> I think that culturally right now that…. But again, when you think about things like social justice and conversations around it, it stems from what is happening in society as well. We are engaged in the conversation, diversity mandates and strategic priorities. But our students are very vocal about their feelings of systemic racism and negative climates, both on campus and off campus in the community.

Sheila’s anticipated conflict accentuated the fact that systemic racism is recognized on campus and can be counteracted by giving students an opportunity and a platform to voice their opinions, to express their emotions and dissatisfaction with their treatment on campus. Does it alert the administration that it is time to implement diversity and inclusion in more ways than being reduced to office creation?

My interview with Rosalind was very interesting. Rosalind is employed in a two-year institution. Rosalind attended the very school where she is now the director of the advising department. She claimed:
I think every administrator should probably have their hand in advising. I just think it is the one critical piece in higher education that really makes a difference to students. Touch points are very important between advisors and students. We make the students feel like nothing is stopping them from completing their college experience. Our staff consists of all women and it is all about the student. Our department is student focused.

Here Rosalind seems to express a viewpoint of “womanist caring- maternal, political clarity, and ethic of risk” as poignantly described by scholar Tamara Beauboeuf-Lafontant. Collins (1990), supported by Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2002), explained that womanist ideals consist of three essential themes; womanists “(1) understand that oppression is an interlocking system, providing all people with varying degree of penalty and privilege; (2) they believe that individual empowerment combined with collective action is key to lasting social transformation; and (3) they embody a humanism, which seeks the liberation of all, not simply themselves (p. 72).” Indeed, the participants seemed to touch on the three themes of the womanist-caring philosophy. They acknowledge colonialism and include in their six phases the following: collaboration, first impressions, student action plans, student stories, and validation of the human being in front of them.

As Rosalind and I continued our conversation, she mentioned that her institution utilizes the intrusive advising approach, requiring mandatory meetings and follow-ups for students to show they care about students’ future success and goals. However, they are in the process of reviewing other advising models and the appreciative advising framework to practice is one of the models they are researching. Relative to appreciative advising it seems how the mandatory meetings are conducted is what is important. Focusing on student’s strength and possibly following the six phases.
Rosalind was very interested in participating in this study for many reasons. She emphasized how their feeder schools have changed through the years and notes that their responsibility in supporting the matriculated students, and their goals, is of the utmost importance.

Over the years, Rosalind witnessed the institutional landscape change from majority-minority to minority-majority student populations. She surprised me with her next statement, “We are at 80% African American and recently on our way to becoming a Hispanic Servicing Institution.” However, although the student landscape has changed, the majority of faculty remained Caucasian. She noted that her professors from thirty years ago remain as faculty. As the student landscape changed in real time many issues have surfaced between students and faculty:

The students here are very much aware of stereotyping and microaggressions from the faculty and inform us all the time. The institution is now focusing on the human resources department because how can you have a minority-majority campus and not have your faculty look a little bit like the students in front of you? The staff would like to see better relationships between the faculty and students. The institution is also considering inviting a culturally focused consultant to train faculty and staff because of student complaints. Despite such issues, however, the training is not mandatory. Indeed, the issues may remain if participants do not agree to participate campus-wide. Systemic changes are difficult. Consequently, the question becomes whether the university is sincere and prepared to listen and understand the differences of others for the future growth of the institution. Rosalind is unsure. As a result of these student challenges, Rosalind encouraged her advisors to keep students engaged:
Students are encouraged to file formal complaints with Academic Affairs, and some have won. One student won because a faculty member was purposefully placing barriers in his way. The student felt vindicated voicing their concerns.

We explain to the students how important it is to keep their eyes on the prize. They will always have these obstacles and barriers if you live in the United States of America, so you cannot wear it like an albatross around your neck. You must put that energy someplace else.

Much like other participants, Rosalind recognized the impact of barriers on students of color; particularly African American students. Barriers cause an internal struggle in African American students leading to setbacks such as academic self-efficacy and loss of belonging. But Rosalind expressed the fact that, with genuine care, the barriers are not insurmountable to student success. However, Kenneth interjected, perhaps more intentional training may be necessary for advisors who are struggling with non-cognitive barriers to African American students’ success.

Despite Rosalind being employed in a two-year institution, her outlook on student needs aligns with the other appreciative advising participants’ perspectives. Clearly, through genuine reflection and self-awareness, they can learn and understand that they are not only assisting African American students through higher education but also elevating their awareness for the future. Strayhorn (2015) accentuated the fact that students’ need “effective advisors [to] recognize the college culture, [who] hold high expectations for all students and themselves, care about their students, know their students strengths and weaknesses” and “do not see this as coddling but as trust, they make the implicit explicit, the hidden known, and the unfamiliar commonplace” (p. 62).
Mastering Content Specific Knowledge

"It is about starting the conversation. It can happen at any time when you get to engage and talk. Because what I have learned is you have these beliefs, and then that is your expectation and that is your reality. Our perception is our reality, right?" - Darryl

Several scholars such as Davis et al. (2004); Jones, Castellanos, and Cole (2002); Love (2008); Rodgers and Summers (2008); Sedlacek (1999); and Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) have reported African American students at PWIs who are inundated with conscious and unconscious forms of racism, stereotypes, and feelings of alienation and loneliness, as well as a constant need to prove one’s worthiness (as cited in Hoston, Graves, & Fleming-Randle, 2010, p. 70). Such reports provide even more reason for mastering content knowledge through equity and a social justice lens, for safe spaces and open communication for academic advisors and students to construct interactions where they can authentically build relationships, rapport, collaboration, and trust.

Mastering content knowledge is fundamental to building connections and relationships with students who matriculate into universities, and is an essential ingredient to transforming academic advising, especially with students of color. Thus, academic advisors must be lifelong learners in order to grow professionally and socially. Etkina (2010) defined content knowledge as awareness in educational history, understanding, and knowledge of various concepts, advising models, student demographics, and universities and colleges policies and procedures as well as the campus landscape (p. 3, 4) and culture.

Etkina emphasized one concept, an awareness of educational history and social structure. Similarly, to Etkina, the data revealed content knowledge as the lead factor in academic advising and identified the importance of five components: 1) equity and social justice; 2) appreciative advising and student demographics; 3) university policies and procedures; 4) colleagues’
relationships; and 5) retention and accountability. Sheila, for instance, emphasized the importance of content knowledge in historical beginnings and traditions in education:

We would be hard pressed to find any racially visible students, staff, and person who do not face systematic racism, discrimination and negative climates, probably daily. And institutions which are grounded in colonialism and European that were established by white males, and so that lens is all over the institutions.

If academic advisors wish to address the student holistically, they must be well versed in improving the efficacy of advising and aware of the historical impact upon diverse student populations. This requires seeking knowledge above and beyond minimum requirements. Understanding the historical background of education allows the advisors to understand the impact of a cyclical economy and socialization upon education’s roots, as well as societies’ outlook on African American students’ lives when addressing their needs and barriers to success. The appreciative advisor must focus on social actions and interrelations of personalities, values, and minds involved within social structures and culture.

**Equity and Social Justice**

“Social justice is fundamentally at the heart. If you are a proponent of social justice, you are a proponent of people.” - Ellen

Solomon et al. (2011) provided us with a definition of equity, describing it as “processes where individuals are working to achieve fair and equal opportunities for all students, based on their individual needs, it ‘does not necessarily entail equal treatment’” (as cited in Tuters, 2017, p. 49). An equity lens adds an unambiguous meaning to content knowledge because it exposes the majority view of African American students’ vulnerability, visibility, acceptance, and inclusion and their consequences, such as the questioning of campus and advisor beliefs, values, and socialization.
Lawton (2018) claimed, “[a]cademic advising can be the catalyst for equity” (p. 33) and calls for a more “systematic approach” to advising in which students are successful despite social and educational structures wrapped in bias and barriers (p. 33). Appreciative advising, as stated by the participants, offers a systematic approach to student advising with the six phases and the toolbox. Equity is an authentic lens of fairness, coupled with social justice, where African American students should have access to educational opportunities and resources without the additional stress of socially created barriers. Associate Justice Stewart of United States Supreme Court (n.d.) stated clearly in two of his direct quotes, “Fairness is what justice really is and ethics is knowing the difference between what you have a right to do and what is right to do”.

Ted agreed succinctly:

As far as equity, appreciative advising gives you the opportunity to explain to students that no opportunity is ever going to be equal. It is just not going to happen. That is the way the United States was founded. It is about how can we give you a fair opportunity? How can we give you a fighting chance? And so, we talk about different resources that are available, different ways we can support our students because we don’t want them with this belief that you are here on equal playing field. No. That is just not the case. And so, how can we give you a fighting chance?

Ted’s poignant remark mirrors Aristotle’s claim, “the worst form of inequality is to try to make unequal things equal.” Evidently, Ted surmised that African American students will face challenges in PWIs. He implied that the status quo can never be equalized. However, he does emphasize that as an appreciative advisor, it is his responsibility to open doors to opportunity and assist students during their pursuit of an education to succeed despite challenges. Content knowledge encourages Ted, as an appreciative advisor, to view every situation as a learning
opportunity while advising the “whole” student. An equity and social justice lens demand change through consensus, not individualism. It affords advisors elements of power to address the mishaps of the past within their space and sphere of influence in the delivery of services across campus.

Hoppe (2004) defined social justice as “bringing about a more equitable distribution of society’s wealth” (as cited in Mather & Konkle, 2013, p. 77). Sheila explored this definition, stating,

I think that the idea of social justice and appreciative advising they are really entwined and can be really used together. We use a model here of restorative justice, we have a restorative justice approach with our cold cases and conduct. And, there is a lot of similarities between restorative justice and the appreciative advising too, like about dialogue, and inquiry, and reframing. I think that is what you need to do with an approach. So, again talking about appreciative advising as an approach or a framework or whatever, it is not about just using that. How do you bring all these other pieces and kind of fits that in? That is where I think those connections are.

Like the appreciative advising framework, restorative justice appears to work to empower students and address any harm to the students and their needs in an equitable fashion, by sharing their experiences. Restorative justice works if the mindset is open to change and fair play. It appears that restorative justice acknowledges race as a socially constructed barrier that can be overcome through collaborative relationship and care.

Much like teachers, and because the campus environment is limited by educational history, Ted argued that advisors cannot limit themselves to one area of content knowledge if they want to advise all student demographics. Ted explained:
Conversations tend to be more of the majority representation. And so, you know, the school tends to focus on where we are located at which is, I believe, in a White, low socio-economic area. So, when we are talking about the school experiences, we are talking about that group. We are striving to be more holistically for all students.

Here, Ted recognized the weaknesses of his university and the need for it to expand its boundaries to reach out to others if the top-level administrators wish the university to grow as the nation becomes more diverse. Social justice is important for campus communities to recognize, requiring the need to be objective, open, and honest when addressing different student demographics. Ellen clarified this idea:

Social justice is fundamentally at the heart. If you are a proponent of people. I think we must be self-aware and know what messages we are communicating and how we are clearly supporting and more importantly advocating for our students, not only individually but I think when opportunity allows, at the campus level, at the policy level administrative and structurally.

Lawton (2018) seems to support Ellen’s voice with her comment, “[o]nly when individual and systemic actions are pursued in tandem as part of an overarching strategy will the student experience of academic advising be transformed to support equality of opportunity at scale” (p. 35). In addition to advisors, Ellen and Lawton highlight the fact that it will take the campus community as a whole to take ownership of student barriers in systemic structures to ensure student retention and graduation.

**Appreciative Advising and Student Demographics**

“I became a certified appreciative advisor because it just made sense. It validated the work that I do, and it was like filling holes, and filling in gaps for me, in how I was practicing it. That was, it brought a lot of meaning and structures to how I was servicing my students. It made me look at things I would not think about. For example,
my social media presence – what does it say about me. And I focus better on the messages I am sending.” - Darryl

The ethos of appreciative advising is positioned in care, support, and advising students holistically. Weiston-Serdan (2017) contended that it is “impossible for advisors to work with students if they view students’ culture separate from students’ education goals and dreams” (p. 20). Students’ cultures are an intricate part of their human makeup because it is what makes the students valuable to education and society.

Revisiting the past, as curricula increased in difficulty and faculty were required to accept more responsibilities for research and scholarship, professional advisors were sought. By the 1970s, various advising approaches or models were developed. Here, the participants insisted the framework-to-practice model gives immediate consistency and structure for academic advisors and has the capability to include other advising models within its structure. Sheila acknowledged those other models:

I agree there are other approaches to advising — proactive advising, strength-based advising, advising as coaching. All those things are approaches to advising. There are many people who believe that as advisors, we must know all approaches and be able to use all approaches with students because all students are different. Being aware of various theories and perspectives, you still have a theory in which you base, kind of as your work around. And, that is how I view appreciative advising, in that appreciative advising is built on different theories and approaches. And, so obviously strength-based psychology, appreciative inquiry, and positive psychology are included. Dr. Jennifer Bloom talked about it as the “Pocket of Greatness”. A pocket of greatness is an idea that you create in the area you can inform and influence.

Earl stressed:
In appreciative advising sense, there is times when I am prescriptive. And, there are times when we are intrusive in terms of, we are reaching out heavily to try to make sure that those students who need to be here, get here. So, even though I am an appreciative advisor, I utilize all the different advising theories and ideas that I have learned.

Clearly, appreciative advisors believe that it is their responsibility to self-evaluate to bring any implicit bias, values, or beliefs from the unconscious to consciousness, and to learn, observe, and add their voices to the conversation through authenticity and purposeful advising for all students. Highlighting and comprehending the dominance of the majority historical perspective, an appreciative advisor encourages self-awareness and respect for others, empowering and engaging students to rise above the structural inequities through the coupling of an equity and social justice lens.

Academic advisors are not expected to be perfect; however, we do expect advisors to be respectful, aware, and courageous enough to recognize humanity in all human beings for both equity and social justice. Advisors are charged with leadership and the responsibility to recognize the humanity and cares of others and assist students with opportunities to be successful toward their academic self-efficacy. Ellen noted:

I know we’ve had critiques of the model. Some people have said we dismiss the negative. You dismiss student stories, or you dismiss where they come from and that isn’t true. In learning students’ stories, you do figure out and you do learn where they are coming from, what their impediments are, and what some of the barriers may be.

The participants’ enthusiasm for appreciative advising is clear in the excerpts below. For example, Ted argued:
Appreciative advising essentially encourages you to really think about what you are asking students. You tend to be much more intentional about how you interact with students, how you address them, and what ramifications that means. It will not always be the same. It focuses you to think on the perceptions of the students. You need to understand what makes them tick. What is going to encourage them and what is going to shut them down? I learned academic advising through appreciative advising.

Henry viewed appreciative advising from a practitioner’s point of view. Since practitioners act to connect, Henry viewed the appreciative advising framework as an opportunity to connect with students and assist them with their educational journey. He stated:

At the core is it has a strength-based approach to building relationships, and you can basically apply this to anything. As a good example, when we taught this to our admissions folks, if you think about the first three phases, that is what admissions do. They disarm (what are we portraying to the students – first impression, comfortable and welcoming environment) they discover (what the students are interested in), and they sell the dream (being possible at the institution at that institution). The relationship building is about connection and that is as close to a magic bullet as you are going to get for retention and persistence.

Additionally, Earl believed appreciative advising made him a better advisor despite his years of previous experience. He also deemed the framework successful when he incorporated developmental advising with his advisees. Earl explained:

So, as I learned more about it, it was one of those things that just made good sense based on my experience. The framework permits ease of moving through the six different phases and seeing it in practice. So, I think a lot of it came out of anecdotally knowing
that this stuff is working. And, it is working for all students, not just this student or that student.

Ellen and Amber recognized that the appreciative advising framework is not linear; therefore, at any time, an advisor may circle back to any one of the six phases to meet students’ needs. All participants declared that the shared language, collaboration, and six phase design – disarm, discover, dream, design, deliver, and don’t settle — are the highlights of integrating the framework when engaged in cross-cultural advising.

**Positive Mindset**

“If you do not have a true belief at heart, that there is positive and goodness in every individual you meet, you won’t be a successful appreciative advisor. If you believe that everyone has the potential, students will not speed through it and they know you are true.” – Ted

One is mindful when the reality of the environment is recognized, and one is living within the moment to make a difference on yourself or others. Arguably, if a positive mindset, skills, and qualifications are not intertwined, one may view the world through the lens of stagnation and old traditions, leading to misperceptions and the denial of human growth and potential. Incorporating students’ voices through their own narratives gives advising sessions a more collaborative and engaging conversation where students feel safe to share their experiences before and during their learning.

Right from the start, the appreciative advisor’s purpose is to remove the word *deficit* from student language to engage them and empower them with a positive outlook, emphasizing that change is possible when addressing strengths and helping students to see their potential. Used in education for years, deficit language is characterized as detrimental to student success because it continually focuses on weaknesses or problems in any given situation. Weiner (2006) analyzes
the deficit paradigm: “This bureaucratic culture fosters the pervasive assumption that when students misbehave or achieve poorly, they must be ‘fixed’ because the problem ingrained in the students or their families, not in the social ecology of the school, grade, or classroom.” She continued, “[s]chool practices and assumptions emerging from the deficit paradigm often hide student and teacher abilities. These assumptions are especially powerful because they are unspoken. We overlook our taken-for-granted ideas and practices to an extraordinary degree” (p. 1).

With the Brown vs Board of Education watershed moment, deficit thinking, and language has existed in education and been applied to African Americans learning capabilities for years. Appreciative advising addresses the issue of deficit-thinking. Since the underpinnings of appreciative advising are composed of positive psychology and strength-based theories, these theories claim deficit thinking is a total deviation from the humanness of the other. Participants agreed that the appreciative advising model is an exceptional advising framework that blocks deficit thinking by keeping the focus on positivity; although, they emphasized, you cannot ignore negativity. Ted elaborated, stating:

Yes, we must deal with deficits. But it is about how you frame those conversations. If they can talk about something, they really enjoyed and a course maybe they did well, praising them for that success first and then say, okay how can we apply that in courses you did not do so well in?

Appreciative advising formalizes its theoretical foundation in creating a shared language of positivity and consistent open consciousness among the advisors, reminding them of the importance in believing in the potential of others and the importance of relationships to build trust and rapport.
Dweck (2006) differentiated between two types of mindsets in her book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, fixed or growth mindsets: (a) individuals with fixed mindsets place limitations upon themselves when confronted with challenges to their beliefs or abilities; (b) growth mindsets accept their beliefs; but, strive to stretch themselves beyond limitations with effort and purpose when confronted with obstacles or challenges (p. 6, 7).

Similarly, Bloom, Hutson, and He (2008) included six components related to a positive mindset which is necessary for appreciative advisors to acquire. They are: “(1) caring about and believing in the potential of each student; (2) [an] attitude of gratefulness for the opportunity to positively impact other peoples’ lives and the future of the country; (3) advisors can always become better by refining their questions and listening skills; (4) serve students and remembering they are one of the most important people in education; (5) must become adept at eliciting students’ narratives by asking positive, open-ended questions; and (6) cultural awareness and responsiveness in interactions with students” (p. 27).

Undoubtedly, Dweck’s mindset definitions are applicable to the advisor and student relationships. As set by the appreciative advising framework, the advisors are accountable for working genuinely with African American students confronted by barriers in the learning environment. They can teach students to acknowledge the causes and consequences of limitations. Then, the appreciative advisor can assist the student, with purpose, to overcome the obstacles so they can visualize their success, despite the hurdles, with positive questions to motivate them.

The positive mindset consciously makes purposeful steps to help students push beyond the limitations of deficit words through stereotypes, microaggressions, and negative campus environments. As deficit wording can easily overwhelm the student, as scholarly articles have
shown, African American students need additional support navigating the sometimes invisible and visible blockades to success on PWIs campuses.

Henry pointed out individuals with a negative mindset limit their abilities to see beyond what is in front of them. He argued:

Well, certainly, advisors should have an open mindset to use the appreciative advising model. Now, does that mean somebody can’t change? Absolutely not! I think maybe a good way to explain is generally speaking — I’m looking for folks where the glass is always half-full, not half-empty. If you’ve gone through life looking at the negative, it is pretty darn hard to change and suddenly start looking for positive things. Is it possible to change? Sure. But I would much rather start with somebody who their general aptitude and outlook on life is going to be very positive and supportive.

Indeed, a positive mindset is a prerequisite for advisors who interact with students of color and African American students and can serve as a reminder to stretch themselves beyond limitations of their own minds acquired throughout their lives since such a mindset helps to encourage a resolve of internal motivation. This is a continual reminder of the importance of understanding one’s socialization and the limitations placed on human beings in education through traditional practices.

Furthermore, the mindset components and definitions imply self-awareness and life-long learning is of utmost importance in order to advise, advocate, support, and assist students, especially African American students, as they navigate unfamiliar territory in predominantly White institutions. Amber and Charles noted the magnitude of a positive mindset. Amber indicated, “it opens you to learn how to listen and read cues that students give you, “while Charles asserted, “one must have the mindset and positive attitude because without it, you just
won’t work.” Again, they are referring to the importance of a positive mindset as campus landscapes continue to change.

Extending the appreciative advising model from students to staff, Sheila described how appreciative advising and a positive mindset are rooted in training staff to create an appreciative office structure. She elaborated, explaining,

Absolutely, I operate from an appreciative perspective and positive mindset, and so, my thing is if we are going to do this with students, then, I should be doing it as a supervisor and as a manager. And so, how are we appreciative in our structure of our services with one another. One of the things with the professional development that I do with my advisors is they all do the strengths quest, and they talk about their strengths and how that relates to their own needs and how we can build upon those. So, incorporating that is very important and produces a lot of preparation with student’s interaction.

It is obvious from Sheila’s response that she is striving to be authentic and intentional with staff and students to ensure the purpose of the office meets the appreciative standards for all. She insisted that appreciative advising framework operated from the “inside out,” implying that advisors’ endurance depends upon how much they understand themselves before assisting students. By having her staff participate in professional development, Sheila guarantees an inviting and welcoming office for all students holistically, regardless of race and ethnicity, declaring, “when students observe appreciativeness among staff — it propels staff and students forward.”

**University Policies and Procedures**

“I feel like we do not get trained anymore. We leap into the fire and we course correct as we go along. It seems preferences rule at the time of that leadership in the office.” - Darryl
The rapid changes in student demographics on universities and colleges landscapes has forced administrators to recognize the need for campus adaptation for connections and relationships. Lawton (2018) commented, “[o]nly when individual and systemic actions are pursued in tandem as part of an overarching strategy will the student experience of academic advising be transformed to support equality of opportunity at scale” (p. 35). Ted adds to this discussion of balancing institutional policies with student success. He contended: “I work for the University, and I am here to uphold policy, but I am also here for you. I really lay it on because I want them to know that I hear them.”

Top-level administrators cannot afford to be disconnected from systemic social structures and not be mindful of their high school pipeline to college, chiefly with awareness of curriculum, students’ socioeconomic status, and their lived experiences, to ensure African American students receive support in every aspect of their educational experiences. Ream, Ryan and Yang (2017) stressed:

It is only by bringing equity more intentionally into daily and strategic decisions that higher education institutions can ensure they are designed to support students in achieving their goals regardless of how societal structural bias has impacted their access to opportunity prior to stepping foot on campus. (as cited in Lawton, 2018, p. 33),

Ellen similarly argued that administrative hierarchy must also take ownership of student retention and graduation, beginning with a review of traditional and historical policies and procedures that have not changed since educational structures were socially created, and viewed as the stepping stone to one’s success and an increase in socioeconomic status.

Colleague Relationships

“What is powerful is when there is a coalition of faculty and staff who collaborate and team up and can embrace this model collectively on their campuses because I think it gives a common
Henry’s outlook on appreciative advising is that advisors must actively participate in students’ lives as a practitioner in order to authentically connect and communicate on levels of maturity and expectations during touch points such as advising sessions, campus interactions, or when discussing student concerns in academics, social environment, and barriers that generate extra stress.

Ellen summarized campus community connections and the necessity in recognizing the need to be objective, open, and genuine when addressing different student demographics and different approaches to the connections. She argued:

I think we must be self-aware and know what messages we are communicating and how we are clearly supporting and more importantly advocating for our students, not only individually but I think when opportunity allows, at the campus level, at the policy level, administratively, and structurally.

Including the importance of campus connections when advising the unique needs of African American students, Ellen also acknowledged:

Working with African American students, it was very important that I was very well connected, that I knew my community on campus and in my surrounding community so that I could recommend resources and that I had positive working relationships with my colleagues so that I could make referrals.

Amber agreed, stating,

It is important to listen and read cues that students give to you. Understanding the university or college rules and the guidelines and all those things are important but at the
end of the day, for me to better serve my students it is important that I am taking notice and being observant about what I am seeing.

Sheila added to the growing body of evidence surrounding the emergent model. She, implied the model can influence administrators, faculty, and staff to become better advocates for students. These are all signs (semiotics) of life and activities to which meaning is attached with the use of appreciative advising exemplifying its emphasis on content knowledge and the power of care. The advisors believe the appreciative advising framework offers advisors, and the campus community, the opportunity to grow with students, challenging everyone with the reality of their existence and lived experiences in the social world of higher education.

**Cultural Competencies**

“Moving forward, the college is trying to bring somebody on campus to do some culturally focused training for faculty and staff here. But culturally training is not mandatory – it just doesn’t happen and clearly the students are aware and astute when something is feeling off.” - Rosalind

We live in a world where cultural awareness, domestic or international, yields to the reform of delivery services by academic advisors and their responses during interactions with African American students. Diversity and inclusion have become core strategies and challenges to universities and colleges as the student landscape changes the academic and social environments of today. Window dressing is no longer an option. Academic advisors must attain cross-cultural advising skills to address the preferences and needs of students of color, mainly African American students.

On the other hand, advisors themselves face challenges to power and traditional practices in an environment where the majority rules. Hicks and Generett (2011) affirmed that “the responsibility of crossing cultural boundaries, of mastering the codes of power without severing the ties to our African American community” (p. 685) is important to the sustainability of
predominantly White institutions. Advisors are challenged to balance the power of their office and their institution’s policies and procedures in order to create equity for African American students in the learning environment.

In addition, scholarly articles continue to highlight the increase in diversity within higher education and its interruption to traditional norms of practices. In order to be transformative as change agents, advisors must enhance their lens of equity and social justice and infuse them into training as encouraged by critical race theorists. CRT in education stresses that academic advisors should be self-aware, prepared, and willing to address race, racism, and ethnicity as they view “distortions, omissions, and stereotypes” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 18) saddled on African American students.

CRT theorists insist that courageous conversations enhance interactions with students of color or African American students. Similar to the cycle of socialization, CRT theorists believe that one can change if the habits of life are addressed honestly and openly. The fact that advisors no longer only advise students who possess the same perspectives, cultures, or lived experiences as themselves calls for in-depth training and professional development in CRT, socialization, cross-cultural advising, education history, and equity and social justice to increase their cultural competencies. Ellen touched on these points, noting,

I feel we are intentional in including cultural competencies, but I feel like we can take a deeper dive into it. I think it is touched upon, but it isn’t necessarily completely delved into. I think it can be more robust, but I think that again, that self-awareness piece, the appreciation for diversity, for meeting each student where they are at, for welcoming and understanding and being empathic and again, looking for the value in each of our students and being able to really help each of our students discover for
themselves, their strengths, and their gifts and their talents and their purpose and how they in turn can make this work a better place.

Earl echoed Ellen’s point of view on cultural competencies with an interesting twist. He explained:

Cultural competencies are critical during the students disarm and discover advising sessions. How do we create a safe space? How do we introduce ourselves? How does our personal office look? Showing students, we are genuinely interested in them and where they come from and what they are doing this time of the year is of utmost importance. Also, what are their traditions? What do they like to do?

Additionally, Earl added:

How best to have these conversations. I think about it a lot of times with our students who are first gen, low-income? Sometimes, when we talk about college, and we talk about why people go to college, we talk about, well, it is a place where you go find yourself. That is such a privileged view. That is, in a lot of ways, for students that may have people to fall back on if they do not end up getting the degree and getting the job. And so, talking to them about when you are coming to school, what it is that you are most excited about? And when they are talking about, “Oh, I am excited to get trained to get a job,” that is not a bad thing. We have got to understand where their frame of reference is and be like, “that is awesome.” Talking about community – the first to go to college, the first to………

Kenneth and Charles similarly point out that appreciative advising can address cultural competencies and its significance to the educational success for students of color in PWIs. Yet, Charles, Ellen, and Earl included an important factor when advising students – the significance
of self-reflecting and self-awareness during their own life journey before assisting students of
color and African American students. As Charles articulated,

The framework is more of how a person will look at themselves and however you want to
be appreciated, you are trying to bestow that upon that student you are dealing with as
well and the training that you go through with the six different steps and phases.
Sometimes, you have to look at yourself first, before you start doing appreciative
advising. If you got a problem with yourself, then you need to use appreciative advising
model on yourself.

Participants enthusiastically agreed on the evaluation of cultural competencies as a critical
component to content knowledge for the current and future sustainability of higher education.
Thus, there is a consensus that cultural competencies can be a constant stream of consciousness
awakening so as to avoid cyclical patterns of cultural intimidation on campus, loss of sense of
belonging, and a decrease academic self-efficacy.

The conversation also illuminated the complexity of African American students’
experiences on campus where their “history, culture, or background is not represented in
textbooks or the curriculum” (Ladson-Billings, 2009) meaning education administrators continue
to miss teaching moments in higher education. Just that fact alone is a challenge for African
American students to overcome. Finally, we know that it is more than likely that some advisors
or employees who are hired by PWIs are interacting with African American students for the first
time. Nevertheless, the participants agreed with CRT theorists that it is possible for human
beings to change if they are willing to speak of race, and genuinely celebrate diversity, not on the
margins, but within the campus landscape to transform delivery of services to all students who
matriculate into higher education. Darryl ended the conversation appropriately, noting that our “similarities bring us together; our differences teach us.”

**Retention and Accountability**

“Appreciative Advising does help with retention. I have used it specifically with African American males. I think it helps. Our first- and second-year retention rate has increased.” - Kenneth

From the beginning, the participants were consciously aware of and understood that higher education was not originally designed for students of color. Cuseo and Farnum (2011) posited that “student retention depends as much or more on what an institution actually does with the students it admits (e.g., on its educational practices and policies) than on whom it admits (Tinto, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005 as cited in Cuseo and Farnum, 2011, p. 2). Moreover, “better students (i.e., academically well-prepared students from college-educated families) represent a shrinking proportion of the college-age population” (as cited in Cuseo and Farnum, 2011, p. 2). The participants firmly believe utilizing the appreciative advising framework with students across demographics can and does assist universities and colleges in retention and graduation.

Based upon Cuseo’s and Farnum’s position, they support the appreciative advising framework as an updated intervention to systemic traditions education social structures. Three participants addressed retention. Ted, for example, stated,

Retention is something we talk about all the time with appreciative advising. It is just the simple concept that what this does and says to the students is that someone cares about me. I am not a number. I am a person and they are invested in me. You are creating an emotional connection and empowering them at the same time.

Henry reinforced these ideas:
The relationship building is about … and that is as close to a magic bullet as you are going to get for retention and persistence. Our retention from year to year has gone up about two percentages every single year over the last four years. Graduation rates of course are up as a reflection of that. Yes, we are moving in the right direction.

Appreciative advising is all about accountability for everyone. It is not about avoiding a tough conversation it is just about not starting there. Show the students with examples. Indeed, appreciative advising makes a difference in student advising sessions, Kenneth insisted:

I agree, appreciative advising helped with retention of African American students. I think it has been successful for our first- and second-year retention rate… I was looking at that the other day. It is about 80% for African American students. I think we do a good job and we can do better. I specifically work with African American males.

Since retention is important to academic achievement and student success, stakeholders place accountability directly on the university and colleges. Ushomirsky, Williams, and Hall (2003) stipulated that “accountability systems in and of themselves do not close gaps – only educators and students can do that. But well-designed accountability systems can be a much-needed source pressure and support in this work” (p. 5). Furthermore, the scholars included the need for transparency, stating, “accountability systems are meant to send powerful signals that drive action” (p. 4). Dahir and Stone (2003) stressed, “accountability is about sharing responsibility to collectively remove barriers that impede learning and involves all of the critical players in a school environment” (p. 215).

Participants in this study possessed an optimistic outlook on appreciative advising as an intervention tool that may assist with accountability. Additionally, they are adamant that appreciative advising can be the power signal that drives action to make changes in systemic
structures and impact the trajectory of students of color and African American students on PWIs campuses.

More importantly, critical race theorists implore academicians to include critical race theory in education as a learning and teaching tool to increase understanding and accountability for educating the citizenry. Historical research clearly exposes the consequences of devaluation, misperceptions, and barriers faced by students of color (Stovall, 2005, p. 95) on PWIs’ campuses. For these reasons, it is important for academic advisors to place the race conversation in their repertoire of lifelong learning in order to delve deeper into the lived experiences and journey of students of color and African American students.

**Conclusion**

Systemic practices deter change and prohibit the social world from moving forward. The role of universities and colleges are changing as the world goes through a transformative process impacting higher education, which often reflects society. As a result, institutional traditions and cultural differences have produced challenges and difficulties for predominantly White institutions in the 21st century. Universities or colleges need to recruit diverse students for sustainability; however, top-level administrators have not changed or adjusted traditional policies from the top down that support change or equity that affect students of color’s access to opportunities.

The participants acknowledged the challenges within the majority-minority environment for students of color and know they must be attentive to the needs and success of students when providing assistance with resources and navigating the campus in order to overcome any challenges and barriers to their education. The consensus is to empower and motivate students toward their goals and dreams regardless of their race and identity.
The academic advising role and its increased responsibility to assist PWIs with welcoming students is obviously an underlying possibility of the appreciative advising framework. The intention is that the framework would eventually create a stronger connection throughout campus with faculty, administrators, and students creating an appreciative campus that is welcoming to all students. Currently, the appreciative advisors exercise their advising skills and knowledge within their professional space and sphere of influence – Collins (2007) described it as a “pocket of greatness” (as cited in Bloom, Hutson & He, 2008, p. 29) – to increase student success and retention on PWIs campuses for students especially African American students and students of color in order to adjust the pipeline or trajectory of African American students in PWIs.

The following chapter discusses the study’s findings. It begins with a brief introduction and overview of the questions and participants and theoretical frameworks that shaped my analysis. The chapter concludes with limitations, implications, and final thoughts.
CHAPTER 5: LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, FINAL THOUGHTS

This qualitative study was designed to explore and better understand the use of the emergent appreciative advising framework as a tool to support African American students at PWIs. More importantly, the study spoke directly to professionals in the context of their roles as academic advisors (Kot, 2014; Thompson, 2004) to understand if the model, when utilized by appreciative advisors at different institutions, had the potential to aid students when they encountered challenges or barriers to their academic success. Theories including the cycle of socialization, critical race theory, and racial microaggressions were used to frame the study.

Methodologically, grounded theory and semi-structured interviews were used with eleven certified appreciative advisors, six of whom are Caucasians and five of whom are African Americans. They were interviewed in their professional spaces via Go-to-Meeting platform, an online service. The interview questions and subsequent discussion centered on the application of the appreciative advising framework during advising sessions, as well as how the advisors used the framework to address a lack of structural diversity, race, and academic and social challenges for African American students on their PWIs’ campuses. The interviews were analyzed in response to two research questions aimed at exploring the social world in learning communities without trivializing its impact upon African Americans presence in PWIs:

1. How does the academic advisor’s knowledge and understanding of the appreciative advising framework relate to their knowledge and understanding of social and cultural differences that may influence the cultivation of authentic relationships with African American students at a PWI?
2. In what ways, or to what extent, do academic advisors perceive the appreciative advising framework as a useful tool for supporting the academic, social, and cultural experiences of African American students at PWIs?
The data provided insight into the continuing difficulty PWIs have in their efforts to sustain diverse student bodies in an ever-increasing racially diverse society. The data also emphasized the ever-increasing knowledge academic advisors must acquire and the responsibilities they must shoulder in order to assist universities and colleges with retaining students, especially African American students and students of color, when structural practices and social experiences inherently interfere in students’ academic success. These social and institutional practices may support the continuation of marginalizing students through constructs such as racial microaggressions, stereotypes, and negative campus climates in the learning communities.

In this study, the participants insist the appreciative advising framework-to-practice model can advance diversity and inclusion through authentic relationship building, stressing that the framework keeps the advisor-advisee collaboration on student potential and possibilities, and the dynamic and creative thinking of the advisors.

The data also indicated that the Caucasian advisors employed a fully cognizant approach to and acknowledgement of the reality and challenges of building relationships with African American students. They seem to accept that challenge and feel the appreciative advising model provides them with the tools to begin the process of stepping outside their comfort zone and come up with innovative strategies and solutions. The African American advisors offered their perspective on Caucasian-African American relationship building, agreeing that Caucasian advisors can build relationships with African American students if they participate in deep self-reflection about their own bias, values, and beliefs in order to emphasize with and understand the students’ frames of reference. This chapter includes a discussion related to the advising role as pertinent to students’ academic success, retention, and graduation. Additionally, the importance of student narratives was highlighted as a way for advisors to respect their reality, identity, and
meet the students where they are at any given point their education without judgement. The chapter concludes with limitations, implications for research, implications for future practice, and final thoughts

Further Thoughts

Harper, Patton, and Wooden (2009) posited, “[a]t many predominantly White colleges and universities, Black students have been excluded longer than they have been afforded opportunities to matriculate” (as cited in Harper, 2013, p. 186). They insist Black students continue to be marginalized and are not genuinely accepted into the fold of PWIs because of traditional beliefs and practices. Indeed, the overarching societal construct amongst predominantly White institutions is race, and its exclusion from conversation, which has mangled educational institutions’ visions and missions to educate the citizenry in these learning environments.

The appreciative advising model uses an ecumenical dialogue to increase the efficacy of academic advising and propel action by advisors as change agents to make a difference in the learning environment with all students especially with a more diverse student landscape. Its framework (Figure 4), when used intentionally and effectively has the potential to support and bring to the forefront the real needs of African American students and give academic advisors the opportunity to demonstrate to the students that they care about their success.

Participants Charles and Darryl mentioned, “intentionality and purpose make the students feel like they are somebody and not just a number and that the person to whom they are speaking empathizes with students’ situation.” For the advisors to be intentional, they must know and understand the culture of the student who is standing before them, beyond physical appearance. The assumption is the appreciative advisor is prepared to address student differences even with
those who have different cultures, values, and beliefs from their own, without hesitation, as they proceed through the six phases and tools. Can the advisors be humble and vulnerable enough to understand and admit that race opens the door to a different reality?

Critical race theory focuses on the absence of race conversations in postsecondary education. For many years, scholarly articles and research on race and its significance to recognizing students’ identity and reality, instead of the so-called color-blind farce used in society today, gives rise to social discourse and conversation. Delgado (1989) suggested that there are three reasons to “name one’s own reality: (1) much of reality is socially constructed; (2) stories provide members of outgroups a vehicle for psychic self-preservation; and (3) the exchange of stories from teller to listener can help overcome the drive or need to see the world in one way” (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 13).

Society has changed based upon socioeconomic status, economy, and the interdependence of the domestic and global worlds. Therefore, claiming to not see color is no longer acceptable. An awareness of history and its very powerful and constant influence upon our social world is a necessity for all to recognize, and part of the cycle of socialization.

Harro understood the influence of family, church, and technology on our growth as people, members of a community and society. Her cycle of socialization theory posits that all humans are immediately socialized from childhood to adulthood, beginning with family and their socioeconomic status in society. Indeed, she attempts to awaken the consciousness of society to realize how their environment affects their way of thinking in adulthood and the roles they play in society. Furthermore, Harro reminds us that a mindset can be changed thus there is hope.

In higher education, everyone, from top-level administrators to faculty, administration to staff, and students, has a role in sustaining traditional practices. Eagly (1980) espoused the
belief that “human beings expand their differences into their perception of reality because they have ‘observed and participated in role performances’ for years” (as cited in Thompson, 2004, p 218). Consequently, without various voices and perspectives in the conversation from the top down, the bandages continue without authentic healing or change.

Three themes emerged from the data: building student-centered relationships, prioritizing student needs, and mastering content-specific knowledge. The themes tell the appreciative advisors’ narratives and the steps they are taking to be humble and vulnerable when confronted by challenges to transform the learning environment for all students, especially students who possess cultural values and beliefs different from their own. When advisors submit to this positive thinking process, they understand that appreciative advisors must open themselves to self-reflection and examine their own beliefs and values to counteract any bias they may possess. Darryl, in fact, insisted that anyone using the appreciative advising model intentionally and purposefully can eliminate bias.

Furthermore, if advisors wish to build active and authentic relationships with students of color, they must intentionally pursue more specific content knowledge based upon education history and its impact upon the African American community. Advisors in PWIs with an eye toward race, equity, social justice, and learning purpose must be able to advise in any given situation; otherwise, the advising sessions will be ineffective and unfruitful.

While speaking with participants, I realized the Caucasian and African American participants were addressing my question differently about interaction with students of color or African American students. One participant openly and honestly stated it will take some “heavy frontloading and research” to ensure Caucasian advisors advise with equity because it is about goal setting and building trust and rapport and addressing the inner struggle the students have in
speaking with someone who does not look like them. The Caucasian participants explained that since they do not walk in the shoes of students of color, their listening skills are imperative to understanding the narratives of the students if they are truly to be authentic.

In addition, it was mentioned that the appreciative advising model is the best “intelligent framework” for what the advisors do and could assist with the retention of African American students in PWIs, which provides yet more evidence for why critical race theory in education is essential for advisors to learn and understand. It would also increase the understanding of socialization, the ability to meet the students where they are, forge connections, and provide the opportunity to reach beyond to what we do not know and enable advisors to learn with eyes wide open.

Participant Sheila expressed a noteworthy point regarding student discussions of issues of racial microaggressions, campus climate, and stereotypes. She said, “listen to the student and don’t say maybe you misread the situation because you have stopped listening and the student is turned off. You have lost that relationship.” Sheila again expresses the importance of active and intentional listening. By interrupting the student’s narrative, in an attempt to explain the experience, you have devalued the student’s existence and identity.

In contrast, it is easier for the African American participants to work with African American students or students of color because of the obvious: similar and familiar experiences. However, despite the obvious, they must also build relationships with African American students so they are comfortable in their space, particularly when issues or barriers arise, the students must know they can trust them and seek their help.

African Americans employed in PWIs are required to be competent to build cross-relationships because of the majority population and culture infused throughout the institution.
Underlying points that need addressed include: (1) African American advisors are expected to advise all cross-cultural student populations without hesitation (White, Black, Asian, and so on) while Caucasian advisors hesitate and question their abilities to advise cross-cultural student populations especially with African American students, and (2) students trust those advisors who look like them. Is this a result of our socialization and the absence of African American history in our society, in PWIs? McGee and Stovall (2015) explore other points of struggle for African American in PWIs:

Racialized survival strategies are an intricate set of actions developed to circumvent deeply embedded, persistent historical social problems. Thus, some black students have developed a racial toolkit to help protect themselves from the damage that racial battle fatigue inflicts. William Smith introduced the concept of racial battle fatigue to describe the stress associated with being black in predominantly White educational environments. Smith affirms that being marginalized at predominantly White universities create racial tension for students of color that takes many different forms, including racial microaggressions and racial stereotyping which are racial assaults on the character of students of color (p. 495).

Being authentic in relationships, appreciative advisors are concerned with collaboration and “emancipatory interests to empowerment” (Lorsbach & Tobin, 1995, p. 19) for the students as well as providing a safe place where the students can use their voices to describe their lived experiences, in and out of school. The philosophy of appreciative advising is also one of hope for advisee and advisor, to share a bond of trust and rapport, and act upon their own learning process to create mutually symbiotic relationships, meaning one cannot operate on campus without the other.
How can one create hope and agency if students are bombarded with unidentifiable obstacles or hurdles? For these reasons, it is best if universities do not operate in silos without influences from every aspect of the campus community, including advisors, students, and staff who may unconsciously harbor such constructs as bias and racial stereotypes, or who may commit microaggressions in the learning environment, to make it whole.

After interviewing the participants via technology, I found them to be very professional, knowledgeable, and inspiring human beings. Each of them realizes the importance of being in the moment. They want to be involved in the learning process of all students, including students of color and African American students, in postsecondary education; some even venture to include their appreciative practice outside their educational boundaries. Their hearts are open to change, and they want to be a beacon of light for the campus community, families, and society. They want to aid their institutions through appreciative education and have accepted the challenge to influence others in understanding and caring for our children’s future – spreading equity and social justice.

Research suggests that their efforts towards inclusion will not be easy, as emphasized by McCabe’s “implication for educational policy”. McCabe (2009) stressed, “universities should review its structural diversity, administrative policies and procedures, and student policies” (p. 147) in order to seriously investigate the attrition rate of African American students. He also argued, “universities must support the subcultures they created to answer their call to diversity and inclusion in order to create a sense of belonging with employees who support their racial, gender, and race-gender identities” (p. 147). Otherwise, they too will continue to live on the margins. As Strayhorn (2015) asserted, “retention can never be the primary aim of administrators because it does not motivate the university. Graduation, degree conferral, and
academic success is more beneficial to the student and society” (p. 56). Strayhorn suggests that retention will always be the by-product of success when African American students have a sense of belonging in PWIs, if the focus remains on graduation and student success. Ellen agreed and declared that students who have a sense of belonging strive and persist towards graduation.

Mastering content specific knowledge becomes significant to academic advisors who are change agents under the auspices of being an ally and involved in transformative action, meaning, and purpose because it dares one to reach beyond the confines of the office and fluidly involves the campus, and community (Taylor, 2008; Taylor, 2017; Etkina, 2010). Equity mandates acquired learning outside the realm of the advising role to understand historical perspectives and one’s own reality to fight the metaphorical shackles and chains, which hinder student success and ignore the needs of African American students or students of color.

The participants conceded that a conversation and training around cultural competency and barriers are mentioned but deserve a more complex and thorough exploration to add additional truths within the certified training of the appreciative advising framework.

**Limitations to the Study**

The results were based in real time on the voices and perspectives of eleven certified appreciative advisors who are employed in predominantly White institutions located in the United States, from East to West; six of the advisors were Caucasians, and five were African Americans. First, to explore and understand the generalized appreciative advising framework, I conducted a qualitative study using open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews to gather descriptive data that I could record to explore the internal structure of the framework and the six phases in application when advising students, especially students of color or African American students. Qualitative data permitted me to capture the participants’ voices and perspectives via technology on an online Go-to-Meeting platform.
There were a number of limitations. First, the findings were limited to a subset of eleven certified appreciative advisors who work in PWIs. A comparison between uncertified academic advisors and certified academic advisors were not included in the study. Second, the emergent appreciative advising framework is new. Students currently in PWIs where the appreciative advising framework is being practiced were not surveyed at this time, specifically African American students. Third, another limitation on the study is researcher bias. As the researcher, I have worked in higher education for over thirty years and in various positions including as an academic advisor. Furthermore, I have personally witnessed and experienced bias, stereotyping, and microaggressions. I believe that I know and understand the barriers African American students face within the walls of PWIs. Finally, in keeping with transparency, I have not participated in the appreciative advising certification training to date.

**Implications for Future Research**

The findings lend themselves to further exploration, understanding, and research. These findings demonstrate a need to expand the appreciative advising framework to include the cycle of socialization, critical race theory, and racial microaggressions theories to increase the level of equity and social justice to more authentically support African American students to counteract stereotypes, microaggressions, and negative campus climates in PWIs. Glasser and Strauss (1967) stressed, “qualitative results are generally accepted to be generalizable to others outside the study” (as cited in Schwitzer, Griffin, Ancis, & Thomas, 1999, p. 196). However, my qualitative results are not generalizable. My research commenced and led with the emergent appreciative advising framework to explore the efficacy of the advising approach and its intervening strategies when African American students or students of color encounter barriers
such as stereotypes, microaggressions, and negative campus climates. The appreciative advising framers should explore the following recommendations:

- Include the cycle of socialization, the CRT tenets, and racial microaggressions in the theoretical framework certified training, with race as the overarching topic.
- Assess and collect data on the effect and inclusion of students of color and African American students who interacted with and were advised by appreciative advisors.

The National Center for Education Statistics (Table 3) continues to remind the nation of the radical change in demographics for the near future, referring to it as the “diversification of America.” Further research may involve understanding that it behooves academic advisors, especially Caucasian advisors, who are uncomfortable with diversity to become aware of colonialism and empathize with African American students and students of color regarding the education and historical events that impact their lives, so the advisors are knowledgeable, aware, and understanding of the importance of education success for all. This may solve the dilemma of students feeling the need to have an advisor who looks like them because they will recognize authenticity during the interactions and advising sessions.

Some of the participants implied they were proud of having a diverse office to address students of color or African American student issues if students prefer it. This raises questions as well: Is it a form of avoidance? Does that make it easier for Caucasians advisors to avoid mastering specific content knowledge? Appreciative advisors are described as very observant with student cues — what they are saying and what they are not saying. Based upon the participants’ perspectives, as long as the advisors know their limits, are comfortable in their knowledge, and are empathetic and understanding, they will be impactful during advising sessions.
Dahir and Stone (2003) stated why data is important to assessments, noting, “data informs and challenges our thinking to determine the need for systemic change, confirm progress, and reveal shortcomings in student performance along with recognizing student needs” (p. 216). Participants realized the future will involve more than academic advising as they prepare to “influence the school climate to ensure that high standards are the norm in a safe and respectful environment” (p. 216).

Advisors will also need to incorporate programs and assessments, as defined by Shaw and Vanzandt (2015), into their responsibilities which may include four types of assessment: (1) institutional assessment; (2) individual student assessment; (3) formative assessment; and (4) summative assessment. Shaw and Vanzandt (2015) also assert that as education becomes more accountable to society, parents, students, and institutions will be held accountable for student withdrawals or success “using institutions mission statements as the beginning” (p. 6, 7). Such accountability begins with the following: utilize surveys, predictive analysis, and other assessment tools with appreciative advisors and students who are under the auspices of the appreciative advising framework, and differentiate between races, ethnicity, and other intersections of students’ lives to assess programs and the appreciative impact on students.

Everyone wants to review evidence of program results. Technology provides another “touch point” when advising students; therefore, it is not only important to maintain connection with students, it provides a means to use tools such as strength quest tools, holistic student surveys, metrics, dashboards, and learning and study strategies inventory (LASSI). Johnson (1995) suggests that technology educators should “engage in research that probes for deeper understanding rather than examining surface features” (as cited in Hoepfl, 1997, p. 47).
In agreement, Gaines’s (2014) research concluded that “advisors need to know how, when, and why students utilize technologies in the academic advising relationship to generate efficient and effective outcomes for both advisors and advisees” (p 48). However, a participant warns that one must be very good with technology or it will consume advising sessions with students, limiting relationship building opportunities.

As far as technology in advancing professional development, participants mentioned the importance of attending conferences for inspiration and knowledge. They also continue to use the appreciative advising tools among staff and other tools to enhance the staff’s knowledge or identify bias or cultural differences of which they may not be unconsciously aware.

Milner (2011) emphasizes, “educators must continue to advance their knowledge because student needs will surely change from year to year” (p. 67, 68) as the student demographics change and retention remains a significant goal of universities and colleges.

Therefore, as advisors are given more responsibility in student retention and graduation, they will need the skills, abilities, and knowledge to be efficient and effective with diverse student demographics in order to be better change agents, the “Pockets of Greatness” as stressed by Collins, 2007 (as cited in Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008, p. 29), meaning “academic advisors have the power” within their sphere of influence to assist universities and colleges with sustainability. Therefore, it is significant that racial disparities be reviewed as the overarching construct to having African American students or students of color feel safe and achieve equity and social justice in all areas of the institution besides the multicultural and diversity and inclusion offices.

**Implications for Practice**

With continued reinvestment of student demographics on PWIs’ campuses, Lee (2018) suggested that “CRT provides a foundational understanding of the way marginalized students share the structural oppression that hinders help-seeking behaviors with advisors and leads to
further marginalization at PWIs” (p. 83). Furthermore, Lee implies that barriers within the learning environment interferes in students’ attempt to trust and build authentic relationships with individuals employed in institutional structures with traditional practices.

Thus, in terms of being inclusive and dedicated to serving African American and students of color in the academic and social environments of PWIs, I am suggesting that the appreciative advising framework may answer the call to action against systemic structures within higher education. In order to attain equity in education for African American students, deep-seated social barriers and ingrained beliefs leading to stereotyping, microaggressions, and bias against marginalized groups can no longer be treated as invisible and unmentionable on campus.

Colleagues need to acknowledge and recognize subtle and overt racial disparities as they exist on PWIs’ campuses. As advisors are given more responsibility in student retention and graduation, they must acquire knowledge and awareness of their own socialization in order to influence and transform the norms or status quo. Taylor (2017) affirms this idea, and notes that if academic advisors are willing to “transform in the process of helping students transform, they need to develop a deeper awareness of their own frames of reference and how they shape practice, there is little likelihood that they can foster change in others” (p. 25). I think the appreciative advisors are progressing towards that transformation.

Taylor defines frame of reference as, “structures of assumptions, expectations that frame an individual’s tacit points of view and influence their thinking, beliefs, and actions” (p. 17). Clearly stated, Taylor brings “reality of narratives and advisors’ approach to support equity in higher education for African American students” to transform norms (p.17).

Appreciative advisors must acknowledge that race should be included in self-reflection in order to be an authentic ally and change agent for all students. The history of injustices and
inequities in this country suggests that African American students and other students of color do not always move fluidly through PWIs’ environments as freely as other students. The appreciative advising model presents itself as a viable option to support change in higher education learning institutions.

Its six phases already include two tenets of CRT — student narratives and building authentic relationships. With the inclusion of an in-depth analysis of critical race theory, socialization, and racial microaggressions within the six phases of the advising approach, the appreciative advising model is an optimistic beginning to understanding how appreciative advising can increase African American students’ academic success, retention, and graduation despite socially constructed barriers. It may also reduce the stigma surrounding race and ethnicity on campus that emulates an operation of fear.

The data suggests that participants internalized their social advising role in education and have already begun to institute social justice into their sphere of influence through the six phases in the appreciative advising framework. In the interviews, the participants were determined to address students’ needs in a shared and collaborative conversation to build authentic relationships. Again, however, CRT is indispensable when creating an authentic relationship with students of color and African American students, which is part of their reality, in order to break the cycle of barriers and negative influences. In addition, critical consciousness, as established by Ladson-Billings, “cannot be developed if the advisors do not ‘consume knowledge and critically examine it’” (Milner, 2011, p. 68) as applicable to the advising practice.

Caucasian and African American participants alike agreed the appreciative advising model framework-to-practice is an ideal model to take us into the future. The participants claim other worldwide advising models can be situated into the framework if need be. With the
additional sound theories underpinning appreciative advising, the direction of consistency, shared language, and the efficacy of advising is possible.

Recommendations for future practice involve: (1) the appreciative advising framework-to-practice include historical factors such as colonialism, CRT tenets, PWI history, and African American history in education; (2) intersectionality of race and problems in homogeneity; (3) mandatory professional development; and (4) appreciative education campus wide. Finally, the appreciative advising framework is also designed and applicable to many student demographics including race, ethnicity, and LBGTQ.

**Final Thoughts**

The ability of some professionals to build relationships with African American students or students of color is a critical aspect of postsecondary education and a struggle for many to achieve. The appreciative advising framework-to-practice is an emergent theory for academic advising in postsecondary education as a goal-oriented and solution-focused framework, which may have a substantial impact upon future advising practices. Current literature has limited knowledge as to how to build relationships with African American students or students of color. The appreciative advising framework, on the other hand, recognizes social norms are not conducive to the learning environment for students of color and recognize the requirement for academic advisors to self-reflect and examine their own values and beliefs. Indeed, race must be included in the conversation and training to advance the framework in the future transformation of higher education towards equity. The appreciative advisors seem to include social justice within their space. However, as Kendall stated earlier, in order to create equity, it most go beyond an area of comfort.

This dissertation is an attempt to expand the appreciative advising framework to understand how certified appreciative advisors use the framework to build relationships and
assist students in their academic success and degree conferral. My focus was to determine if the framework was sufficiently critical, inclusive, and diverse to prepare the advisors for building authentic relationships to support a sense of belonging and academic self-efficacy in African American students in the learning environments of PWIs.

In society, students and parents are promised, convinced, and assured that postsecondary education is the answer to a better life, improved socioeconomic status, and social mobility in America. Furthermore, college and universities support that social thought by continually invading high schools with high expectations of an inviting and welcoming learning environment. The marketing strategy claims that students need is my (university or college) degree. Since higher education is interpreted as the next step for economic stability, students’ expectations are heightened.

Unfortunately, some students become disenchanted with the learning environment when they become aware that the promises and advertisements do not meet their expectations. Kalsbeck (2013) agreed that educational institutions’ claims, “shapes students’ expectations for their college experiences” (p. 49) implying that students are transitioning into a place of authentic relationships where it is safe to display emotions, trust, and rapport. Shaw and VanZandt elaborated further, noting that “schools’ market itself to potential students as being a great place to learn (i.e., acquire necessary knowledge, skills, and values). In other words, promising certain student learning outcomes” (p. 5). Nonetheless, PWIs are struggling with these promises with the influx of diverse students and the challenges of meeting their needs for academic self-efficacy and sense of belonging.

Finally, historical evidence continues to show African American students and students of color encounter social and structural barriers daily, raising the issue of whether African
American students and students of color are being harmed by embedded traditional practices in PWIs. Furthermore, is the harm an intentional or unintentional consequence, a result of years of colonial influence, which continues to keep African American students and students of color on the trajectory of withdrawal without degree conferral? As a result, with the addition of CRT teaching and training, appreciative advising may offer students another option to combat when students feel less emotionally connected and outside the margins of the campus learning community.

Moreover, assessments and outcomes on the effectiveness of CRT in advising should be included to determine the effectiveness of advising, and other programs with African American students and students of color within the advisors’ sphere of influence, expanding the learning curve and possibilities for the appreciative advisors to understand people different from them who are challenged every day within systemic norms. Shaw and VanZandt (2015) elaborate further, “the purpose of assessments is to determine the meaning behind institutional assessments, individual student assessments, formative assessments, and summative assessments which is ultimately measured by whether it is achieving its stated mission” (p. 6, 7) to meet the needs of all students.

The researcher hopes this study will be a resource for appreciative advisors who wish to develop authentic relationships and encourage advisors to explore thoroughly the cultural experience and background of students of color or African American students. As student demographics continue to change the landscape of universities and colleges, students involved in cross-cultural advising want to know they are investing in a collaborative relationship that is real. We owe students the best education we can provide them. Mistakes will be made, but the goal is
to keep growing as we educate all citizenry with equity and social justice, regardless of race or ethnicity.
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Appendix A

The National Association of Advising Associations (NACADA)

Statement of Core Values reflects the many cultural and educational contexts in which academic advising is practiced globally. A diverse, globally represented task force in conjunction with the input of NACADA members contributed to the creation of the statement. By virtue of this process, the following represents the Core Values of the academic advising profession. These values apply to all who perform academic advising by any role, title, or position as educators at their institutions.

While nations, institutions, and students will offer unique circumstances, the Core Values provide guidance to academic advisors in their professional lives. Academic advisors are committed to the students they advise, their institutions, their professional practice, and the broader advising and educational community. There may be times when balancing all Core Values equally is not possible. In those instances, academic advisors are encouraged to reflect and engage other academic advising professionals in a dialogue to resolve any conflict to the best of their ability.

The Statement of Core Values is reviewed periodically to ensure its alignment with current professional practices, competencies, and philosophies. NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising encourages institutions to adopt the Statement of Core Values and support the work of those who provide academic advising.
The Core Values

Caring

Academic advisors respond to and are accessible to others in ways that challenge, support, nurture, and teach. Advisors build relationships through empathetic listening and compassion for students, colleagues, and others.

Commitment

Academic advisors’ value and are dedicated to excellence in all dimensions of student success. Advisors are committed to students, colleagues, institutions, and the profession through assessment, scholarly inquiry, life-long learning, and professional development.

Empowerment

Academic advisors motivate, encourage, and support students and the greater educational community to recognize their potential, meet challenges, and respect individuality.

Inclusivity

Academic advisors respect, engage, and value a supportive culture for diverse populations. Advisors strive to create and support environments that consider the needs and perspectives of students, institutions, and colleagues through openness, acceptance, and equity.

Integrity

Academic advisors act intentionally in accordance with ethical and professional behavior developed through reflective practice. Advisors value honesty, transparency, and accountability to the student, institution, and the advising profession.
Professionalism

Academic advisors act in accordance with the values of the profession of advising for the greater good of students, colleagues, institutions, and higher education in general.

Respect

Academic advisors honor the inherent value of all students. Advisors build positive relationships by understanding and appreciating students’ views and cultures, maintaining a student-centered approach and mindset, and treating students with sensitivity and fairness.

Appendix B

NACADA Academic Advising Core Competencies Model

At the request of the association’s leadership, the NACADA Academic Advising Core Competencies Model (2017) was developed by the association's Professional Development Committee. The purpose of the model is to identify the broad range of understanding, knowledge, and skills that support academic advising, to guide professional development, and to promote the contributions of advising to student development, progress, and success. It is intended that the model may be used by:

- **Primary Role Advisors** for self-assessment and evaluation, and to guide learning, career development, and advancement.
- **Faculty Advisors and Advising Administrators** to clarify academic advising roles and responsibilities, and to highlight the contributions of academic advising to teaching and learning.
- **Advising Supervisors, Managers, and Mentors** to identify strengths and areas for staff development, and to guide hiring, training, and evaluation.
- **Learning Professionals, Trainers, and Researchers** to support curriculum development, establish learning priorities, and advance the scholarship in the field.

**Framework**

Underpinning the core competencies for academic advising and serving as the foundational elements for effective advisor training programs and advising practice are three content categories – the **conceptual**, **informational**, and **relational**. An understanding of these three major areas provides advisors the knowledge and skills to be effective guides for their students.
• The **Conceptual** component provides the context for the delivery of academic advising. It covers the ideas and theories that advisors must understand to effectively advise their students.

• The **Informational** component provides the substance of academic advising. It covers the knowledge advisors must gain to be able to guide the students at their institution.

• The **Relational** component provides the skills that enable academic advisors to convey the concepts and information from the other two components to their advisees.

To achieve excellence in their work, regardless of the specifics of their individual campus’ advising mission, all advisors must understand all three components, and be able to synthesize and apply them as needed in advising interactions.

**Core Competency Areas**

![CONCEPTUAL](image)

Core competencies in the **Conceptual component** (concepts academic advisors must understand) include understanding of:

- **The history and role of academic advising in higher education.**
- **NACADA's Core Values of Academic Advising.**
- **Theory relevant to academic advising.**
- **Academic advising approaches and strategies.**
- **Expected outcomes of academic advising.**
- **How equitable and inclusive environments are created and maintained.**
Core competencies in the **Informational component** (knowledge academic advisors must master) include knowledge of:

- **Institution specific history, mission, vision, values, and culture.**
- **Curriculum, degree programs, and other academic requirements and options.**
- **Institution specific policies, procedures, rules, and regulations.**
- **Legal guidelines of advising practice, including privacy regulations and confidentiality.**
- **The characteristics, needs, and experiences of major and emerging student populations.**
- **Campus and community resources that support student success.**
- **Information technology applicable to relevant advising roles.**

Core Competencies in the **Relational component** (skills academic advisors must demonstrate) include the ability to:

- **Articulate a personal philosophy of academic advising.**
- **Create rapport and build academic advising relationships.**
- **Communicate in an inclusive and respectful manner.**
- **Plan and conduct successful advising interactions.**
- **Promote student understanding of the logic and purpose of the curriculum.**
- **Facilitate problem solving, decision-making, meaning-making, planning, and goal setting.**
- **Engage in on-going assessment and development of the advising practice.**
Appendix C

Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS)

This CAS member association has permission to post a link to these standards on their website. Standards are developed through a consensus model of member associations and other experts, including the association on whose page this link is found. You are invited to use the attached materials in the design and assessment of your programs and for your staff training and development. These materials may not be duplicated or redistributed for other purposes without permission from CAS.

These standards and all other standards are available along with information on self-assessment procedures in the most recent edition of the book CAS Professional Standards for Higher Education. You are particularly encouraged to examine the learning and developmental outcomes (see www.cas.edu/learningoutcomes) in the design and assessment of your programs.

This set of standards has an accompanying Self-Assessment Guide (SAG) available for purchase from www.cas.edu for use in program evaluation.

CAS MISSION STATEMENT

CAS, a consortium of professional associations in higher education, promotes the use of its professional standards for the development, assessment, and improvement of quality student learning, programs, and services

CAS STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

Each set of CAS standards contains 12 common criteria categories (referred to as “general standards”) that have relevance for each functional area, no matter what its primary focus. In addition to the general standards, all functional area standards are comprised of both specialty standards and guidelines. All standards use the auxiliary verbs “must” and “shall” and appear in
bold print so that users can quickly identify them. Guidelines are designed to provide suggestions and illustrations that can assist in establishing programs and services that more fully address the needs of students than those mandated by a standard. CAS guidelines appear in regular font and use the auxiliary verbs “should” and “may.”

OVER FORTY YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) has been the pre-eminent force for promoting standards in student affairs, student services, and student development programs since its inception in 1979. For the ultimate purpose of fostering and enhancing student learning, development, and success and in general to promote good citizenship, CAS continues to create and deliver a dynamic and credible book of professional standards and guidelines and Self-Assessment Guides that are designed to lead to a host of quality-controlled programs and services. These standards respond to real-time student needs, the requirements of sound pedagogy, and the effective management of over 45 functional areas, consistent with institutional missions. Individuals and institutions from more than 40 CAS member organizations comprise a professional constituency of over 115,000 professionals.

DISCLAIMER

The standards and guidelines published in CAS Professional Standards for Higher Education by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) and referred to in each of the CAS Self-Assessment Guides (SAGs) are developed through the voluntary efforts of leaders of professional associations in higher education. The purpose of the standards and guidelines is to identify criteria and principles by which institutions may choose to assess and enhance various areas of their academic, administrative, or student affairs programs and services. CAS specifically disclaims any liability or responsibility for any perceived or actual
shortcomings inherent in the text or application of the standards. Further, CAS does not certify individuals nor accredit programs. No institution, whether it has met some or all the CAS standards, is authorized to indicate that it is “approved, endorsed, certified, or otherwise sanctioned by CAS.” Institutions that have conducted a self-assessment of one or more functional areas addressed by CAS Standards and Guidelines using the appropriate CAS Self-Assessment Guide (SAG) may, where that self-assessment provides evidence that an institution meets these standards, make accurate representations to the effect that the designated program or service meets the CAS Standards.

**ACADEMIC ADVISING PROGRAMS CAS Contextual Statement**

Academic advising is an essential contributor to the success and persistence of postsecondary students (Klepfer & Hull, 2012; Kot, 2014; O’Banion, 2016). While the organization and delivery of academic advising reflects an institution’s culture, values, and practices (Habley, 1997), academic advisors translate and directly influence personal, institutional, and societal success through their practice. Specifically, academic advisors “work with students to enable them to be confident and assertive in their own abilities to learn, generate, and apply new knowledge and to empower them to embrace their own knowing, learning, thinking, and decision making” (White, 2015, p. 272). In this regard, advisors help students “become members of their higher education community, think critically about their roles and responsibilities as students, and prepare to be educated citizens of a democratic society and a global community” (NACADA, 2006, Preamble, para. 7) and “teach students how to make the most of their college experience” (Miller, 2012, para. 1). As higher education curricula grow increasingly complex and constituents demand accountability, stakeholders feel the pressure to make students’ academic experience as meaningful as possible. Academic advising professionals must be ready
to meet these challenges and embrace advising as an integral part of an institution’s educational mission and equal to instruction (White, 2015).

The role and function of academic advising mirrors the growth and changes in higher education (Cook, 2009; Thelin & Hirschy, 2009). In the 1870s, electives introduced in the academic curriculum meant advisors needed “to guide students in the successful pursuit of their chosen paths” (Kuhn, 2008, p. 5). The 1970s ushered in a new era for academic advising with O’Banion and Crookston’s (1972, 1994, 2009) articles advocating a developmental academic advising approach. As the colleges and universities grew in student enrollment and academic offerings, it was clear that there was a need for professional staff members to complement faculty and share certain responsibilities, such as academic advising, to support students as they achieved their short and long-term goals (Combs & Gerda, 2016). Today, higher education recognizes more than a dozen relational styles of academic advising (Drake, Jordan, & Miller, 2013). Each approach encourages primary-role, faculty, and peer advisors to help students delineate their academic, career, and life goals and craft the educational plans necessary to complete their postsecondary objectives. These approaches are often customized to meet the diverse needs of today’s college student (Drake et al., 2013).

In 1977, the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) was formed to provide direction and purpose for practicing academic advisors (Grites & Gordon, 2009). Today, NACADA flourishes with more than 13,000 members in over 40 countries. The NACADA Statement of Core Values (NACADA, 2017b) offers the ethical principles that guide advising practice. Along with the NACADA Concept of Academic Advising (NACADA, 2006), the NACADA Academic Advising Core Competencies (2017a), and the CAS Standards, the Core Values serve as a framework all academic advisors can use to examine their professional
practice. As advisors examine their practice, the NACADA Core Competencies identify the breadth and depth of this role in facilitating student success. Based on the Core Competencies advisors should understand theories that support student learning, comprehend foundational information that is necessary to guide students as they achieve goals, and develop skills necessary for building productive relationships (NACADA, 2017a). Information on the NACADA resources, programs, and services can be found at www.nacada.ksu.edu.

As academic advising programs respond to a changing postsecondary environment, advising structures employed must include exemplary practices that pay particular attention to key institutional learning outcomes, serve the distinctive needs of a range of student populations, promote national agendas on degree completion (Drake et al., 2013), and contribute to our understanding of the impact of academic advising on student success. In addition, the increasing public attention placed on college completion means increased visibility for academic advising. Reports such as Guided Pathways to Success (Complete College America, 2013) and Show Me the Way: The Power of Advising in Community Colleges (Center for Community College Engagement, 2018) point to the importance of academic advising to student success.

The NACADA Concept of Academic Advising (NACADA, 2006) purports that academic advising objectives differ among institutions based upon the mission, goals, curriculum, co-curriculum, and assessment methods established for the respective campus (White, 2000). NACADA’s intensified research agenda over the past two decades has resulted, in part, in the recognition of the role of effective advising on student retention and persistence. Klepfer and Hull (2012), for example, note “the strength of academic advising as a factor in persistence. College students who reported visiting with advisors frequently had a much greater likelihood of persisting than their peers who never did” (para. 17). In turn, the resulting “intensified focus on
advising makes it imperative that we assess our academic advising programs to make sure that students are learning from their advising experiences” (Robbins, 2016). According to NACADA (2018a, 2018b) there has been an increased demand over the past two decades for professional development opportunities on assessment of academic advising, a growing number of NACADA consultations involving assessment of advising, an increase in NACADA Conference presentations concerning assessment of academic advising, and more advising programs initiating assessment processes each year. Further, assessment of student learning and development is a fundamental component of the CAS General Standards (CAS, 2018) as well as the CAS Standards for Academic Advising.

Habley (1994) notes that in fact "academic advising is the only structured service on the campus in which all students have the opportunity for on-going, one-to-one contact with a concerned representative of the institution" (p. 10). Today, advisors utilize many theories and strategies from the social sciences, humanities, and education to inform practice. When applying these paradigms, they foster productive relationships with students in support of their higher education goals. Thus, advisor adherence to CAS Standards advances the common goals of academic advising. Lowenstein (2006) observes that “an excellent advisor does for students’ entire education what the excellent teacher does for a course: helps them order the pieces, put them together to make a coherent whole, so that the student experiences the curriculum not as a checklist of discrete, isolated pieces but instead as a unity, a composition of interrelated parts with multiple connections and relationships” (para. 5). Academic advisors meet these obligations through applying frameworks for good practice, including building partnerships with pivotal campus offices such as orientation, first-year student programs, and career services.

As institutions seek to increase and diversify enrollments, academic advisors are vital to ensuring
appropriate matriculation and transfer leading to degree completion for all students. The evolving manner by which student’s complete college degrees, including the blending of courses offered on a variety of campuses and online, places new challenges on academic advisors, who must possess the tools needed to meet the demands of students in virtual space and across multiple institutions (Complete College America, 2013).

A crucial component of the college experience, academic advising encourages students to cultivate meaning in their lives, make significant decisions about their futures, and access institutional resources. There is growing evidence that when practiced with competence and dedication, academic advising is integral to student success, persistence, retention, and completion (Klepfer & Hull, 2012; Kot, 2014; O’Banion, 2016). Therefore, academic advisors must develop the tools and skills necessary to address the many issues that influence student success and do so with respect to the increasing diversity on college and university campuses.

The 21st century college student listens as society questions the value of their higher education, engages with social media for resources, and experiences identity development and salience through multiple venues.

Appendix D

APPLICATION PACKET
Appreciative Advising is the intentional collaborative practice of asking positive, open-ended questions that help students optimize their educational experiences and achieve their dreams, goals, and potentials. Certified Appreciative Advisers demonstrate both a conceptual understanding of the Appreciative Advising framework and have demonstrated specific Appreciative Advising skills and techniques. Certified Appreciative Advisers are committed to a standard of excellence in the field of advising and optimizing their students’ educational experiences.

Benefits of Becoming a Certified Appreciative Adviser:

- Advance your professional qualifications
- Increase your skills and knowledge
- Raise your professional stature and expectations
- Provide your students with the best possible advising experience
APPRECIATIVE ADVISING CERTIFICATION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How long does it take to get certified?
It depends. To become a Certified Appreciative Adviser, candidates must first fulfill the educational requirement by attending the Appreciative Advising Institute or successfully completing the on-line Appreciative Advising course. In addition, candidates must complete the other requirements listed in this packet. Once you have met the education requirements, we anticipate that it will take most people three to four weeks to complete the application.

How much does it cost to become a Certified Appreciative Adviser? The cost of certification is $245. This does not include the cost for the online Appreciative Advising course or the Appreciative Advising Institute.

Do I ever have to renew my certification?
Like all good things, certification does come to an end. We believe that all Appreciative Advisers should demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement. Thus, you have to renew your certification every five years. The renewal criteria are focused heavily on continued professional development.

Do I have to be an Academic Adviser?
Not necessarily! Appreciative Advising initially emerged from the field of Academic Advising, but has quickly spread to other areas in the field of education. If you work with students in an advisory position, we encourage you to read through the application and decide if this certification is right for you!
Application for Certification

A candidate for the Appreciative Adviser Certification must submit a completed application packet to the Office of Appreciative Education. Please provide the following for Certification:

- Completed Applicant Information Sheet
- Three completed 3-page Appreciative Advising Skills Rubrics
- A letter of Recommendation
- Resume/Curriculum Vitae
- Personal Appreciative Advising Theory Statement
- Successful completion of the Appreciative Advising Online Course -OR- Appreciative Advising Institute (Please include a copy of your completion certificate, if you have it)
- Payment ($245)

<table>
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<th>APPLICANT INFORMATION</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
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<td>Date:</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current Employer:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employer Address:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
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<td>City:</td>
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<td>City:</td>
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<td>Major/Minor:</td>
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</table>
APPRECIATIVE ADVISING SKILLS RUBRIC

You can print or e-mail the Appreciative Advising Skills Rubric to be completed. Your application must include three (3) completed 3-page Appreciative Advising Skills Rubrics from:
1. A self-evaluation completed by the adviser
2. A supervisor evaluation completed by the supervisor after observing the applicant in an advising session
3. A peer or student evaluation completed by either an advisee of the adviser -OR - a professional colleague after observing the applicant in an advising session

Rubric One – Completed Self-Assessment

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<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>E-mail:</th>
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<tr>
<th>Relationship:</th>
<th>Length of Relationship:</th>
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Rubric Two – Completed Supervisor Assessment

<table>
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<th>Name:</th>
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<tr>
<th>Relationship:</th>
<th>Length of Relationship:</th>
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Rubric Three – Completed Student/Peer/ Colleague Assessment

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<th>Name:</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship:</th>
<th>Length of Relationship:</th>
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</thead>
</table>

RECOMMENDATION LETTER

One letter of recommendation from your supervisor is required. The letter of recommendation should include:
1. Verification of at least 1 year of successful professional experience in Academic Advising or other similar area.
2. Evidence of candidate's positive contributions to the profession.
3. Evidence of candidate's positive student impact.
4. Evidence of candidate's use of Appreciative Advising behaviors and skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Phone Number:</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<th>Title:</th>
<th>Length of Relationship:</th>
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</table>
RESUME or CURRICULUM VITAE

Please include the most recent copy of your resume or curriculum vitae.

PERSONAL APPRECIATIVE ADVISING THEORY STATEMENT

Your Personal Appreciative Advising Theory Statement should address the following:
1. How do you incorporate the phases of Appreciative Advising into your work?
2. How does Appreciative Advising help you encourage student success?

EDUCATIONAL CREDIT VERIFICATION

Please note whether you have completed the Appreciative Advising online course, attended the Appreciative Advising Institute, or both. Please attach a copy of your completion certificate.

Appreciative Advising Course Completion Date:
- OR -

Appreciative Advising Institute Year Attended:

SIGNATURE

Please verify that your application is complete and the information is accurate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applicant Information Sheet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appreciative Advising Skills Rubrics</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• 3-page Self-Assessment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• 3-page Supervisor Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 3-page Student/Peer/Colleague Assessment</td>
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<td>Letter of Recommendation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Appreciative Advising Theory Statement</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Appreciative Advising Education Credits Verification</td>
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</table>

SIGNATURE: DATE:
### APPRECIATIVE ADVISING SKILLS RUBRIC (p. 1 of 3)

You must submit 3 completed 3-page rubrics (please indicate which of the 3 required rubrics this is):

1) Self-Assessment _______ 2) Supervisor Assessment ____ or 3) Colleague/Student Assessment ____ (circle role)

Evaluator Name: ____________________________

Person Seeking Certification: ____________________________

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Comments:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appreciative Mindset</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treats student as if he/she is full of potential</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively seeks out the best in each student</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reframes through a positive lens</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truly enjoys working with students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believes learning between students and advisers is reciprocal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>

| **Verbal Immediacy Behaviors**                  |   |   |   |   |   | Comments: |
| Correctly calls the student by name early and often | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |           |
| Uses inclusive pronouns (i.e. we, us)           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |           |
| Gives feedback to student                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |           |
| Explains meaning of acronyms                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |           |
| Tone of voice conveys that the adviser is happy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |           |
| Speaks at a comfortable pace                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |           |
| Appropriately paraphrases and summarizes student comments | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |           |
| Identifies specific examples of the student’s strengths and/or accomplishments | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |           |

| **Non-verbal Immediacy Behaviors**              |   |   |   |   |   | Comments: |
| Authentic Smile                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |           |
| Appropriate eye contact                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |           |
| Conveys enthusiasm throughout the meeting       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |           |
| Appropriate, open, and welcoming gestures       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |           |
| Relaxed, yet appropriate, body posture          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |           |
| Squarely faces student                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |           |
| Mirrors student’s non-verbal behavior as appropriate | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |           |
### APPRECIATIVE ADVISING SKILLS RUBRIC (p. 2 of 3)

**Evaluator Name:**

**Person Seeking Certification:**

**Scale:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>

**Disarm**

- Has perused the student’s file prior to the appointment
  - 1 2 3 4 5

- Meets the student in the waiting area or at the door (as appropriate)
  - 1 2 3 4 5

- Warmly greets the student
  - 1 2 3 4 5

- Clarifies how to pronounce the student’s name (as appropriate)
  - 1 2 3 4 5

- Clarifies how the adviser prefers the student address the adviser (e.g. by first name)
  - 1 2 3 4 5

- Engages in appropriate small talk with the student
  - 1 2 3 4 5

- Explains that any notes the adviser takes will be copied for and given to the student at the end of the appointment
  - 1 2 3 4 5

**Discover**

- Asks positive, open-ended questions designed to elicit student’s stories
  - 1 2 3 4 5

- Asks appropriate follow-up questions in response to student’s stories
  - 1 2 3 4 5

- Gives student adequate time to respond to questions
  - 1 2 3 4 5

- Summarizes/paraphrases student’s main points
  - 1 2 3 4 5

- Positively reinforces student when the student takes responsibility for past actions/mistakes (as appropriate)
  - 1 2 3 4 5

**Dream**

- Asks good open-ended questions about the student’s hopes and dreams for the future
  - 1 2 3 4 5

- Appropriately reacts to student’s dreams
  - 1 2 3 4 5

- Makes connections between student’s answers to Discover questions and the answers to Dream questions
  - 1 2 3 4 5

**Comments:**
## APPRECIATIVE ADVISING SKILLS RUBRIC (p. 3 of 3)

**Evaluator Name:**  
---

**Person Seeking Certification:**  
---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale: Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<td>5</td>
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</table>

### Design
- Partners with student to develop plan for accomplishing student’s goals  
  
- Encourages and positively reinforces student engagement in brainstorming options  
  
- Encourages student to create manageable goals to achieve larger plan  
  
- Monitors student’s non-verbal behaviors to make sure student has confidence in ability to achieve the plan  
  
- Clarifies who is responsible for which pieces of the plan.  
  
- Writes down goals and action steps  
  
- Provides appropriate campus & community resources  

**Comments:**

### Deliver
- Brainstorms with the student how to meet potential challenges that may occur in pursuit of the plan  
  
- Encourages student about the student's ability to carry out the co-created plan  
  
- Encourages student to return if the student runs into roadblocks or decides to change majors  
  
- Reviews what has been accomplished during the appointment  
  
- Makes a copy of the notes that he/she has taken to give to the student  
  
- Thanks student for coming in and encourages the student to keep the adviser notified of progress  

**Comments:**

### Don't Settle
- Turns mistakes into a “win-learn” process  
  
- Appropriately challenges the student to raise (or lower) own expectations, as appropriate  
  
- If student has not followed through, adviser helps student refocus on designing a new plan and regain positive momentum  

**Comments:**
APPENDIX E
RECRUITMENT LETTER

Date

Dear:

I am a doctoral student in the School of Education at Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA. I am conducting a research study on the impact of appreciative advising on building meaningful relationships with African American undergraduates.

I am investigating perceptions of the appreciative advising framework from academic advisors. I am interested in learning if the addition of the appreciative advising theoretical framework to traditional advising practices creates an academic environment that better supports African American undergraduates towards college completion. Specifically, I am investigating if academic advisors can build more equitable relationships and connection with the student to empower and engage them in their academic and social development during their pursuit towards degree completion.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to:

- Participate in 45 minutes to one and half hours in a semi-structured interview which will be conducted via telephone, Skype, Go-to-Meeting, Zoom, or face-to-face if my travel budget permits. The interviews will be audio taped and transcribed with your permission.
- Complete a demographic form. It should only take about 15 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this study will be kept confidential. Research information will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my home. I am the only one with access to the information. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings or conferences; but your identity and school will not be revealed.

You may withdraw participation at any time. There are no benefits to participation in this study beyond the potential to connect with other professional academic advisors, nor are there any consequences for declining participation.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please complete the attached consent forms, scan them, and send them as a reply to this email so that we can decide. If you would prefer to complete consent forms in hard copy format, please let me know by emailing or calling me. I will be happy to answer any questions you have about my research study or your rights as a research participant. You may contact me at 412-396-6295 or via email at harper@duq.edu (work).
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE: Exploring Appreciative Advising as An Equity Approach: A Grounded Theory Study of Academic Advisors at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)

INVESTIGATOR: Valerie J. Harper, Doctoral Student
harper@duq.edu
Ed.D. in Educational Leadership
School of Education
(412) 396-6295

ADVISOR: Dr. Gretchen Givens Generett, Professor and Chair
generettg@duq.edu
Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership
Director, UCEA Center for Educational Leadership and Social Justice
(412) 396-1890

SOURCE OF SUPPORT: This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in the School of Education at Duquesne University.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this research project is to explore and understand the perceptions of academic advisors especially Caucasian academic advisors who have been trained and certified in the appreciative advising theoretical framework to practice and apply it during their interaction with advisees; specifically, their interaction with African American students in predominantly White institutions of higher education.

In order to qualify for participation, you must have:
one year or more experience as a professional academic advisor; have used or currently using the theoretical framework of appreciative advising or considering it for the near future; advising includes African American students in a predominantly White four-year institution of higher education.
PARTICIPANT PROCEDURES: To participate in this study, you will be asked to:
1. Participate in an interview that will take approximately 45 minutes to one and half hours in Fall/Spring 2017-2018. Interviews will take place via telephone, Skype, Go-To-Meeting, Zoom, or face-to-face if my travel budget permits. The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed.
2. Complete a demographic form.

These are the only requests that will be made of you.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: There are no known risks associated with this research for your participation.

Your participation will benefit the professional development of academic advising practices and interaction with African American undergraduates.

COMPENSATION: There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

Participation in this project will require no monetary cost to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your participation in this study and any personal information that you provide will be kept confidential at all times and to every extent possible. Your name will never appear on any survey or research instruments. All written and electronic forms and study materials will be kept secure in the researcher’s home on the computer and/or in a secure lockbox. Your response(s) will only appear in qualitative data summaries. Any study materials with personal identifying information will be maintained for three years after the completion of the research and then shredded and destroyed.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time by contacting me to let me know you would like to withdraw. If you choose to withdraw, I will destroy any identifiable information you provided.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request.
VOLUNTARY CONSENT:  I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Valerie J. Harper (412) 396-6295 or Dr. Gretchen G. Generett at (412) 396-1890.

Should you have any questions regarding protection of human subject issues, you may contact Dr. David Delmonico, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board, at 412.396.1886.

___________________________________  __________________
Participant’s Signature                  Date

___________________________________  __________________
Researcher’s Signature                  Date
APPENDIX G

PARTICIPANT
RELEASE OF INFORMATION

This form authorizes Valerie J. Harper the researcher to release audio recordings and field notes of our conversation and interviews for the purpose of transcription.

I am committed to keeping your information as confidential as possible. To that end, any personal identifying information has already been removed from these sources, but it is possible that something said can still identify you to the transcriptionist. You should know that transcriptionists have signed a confidentiality statement that prevents them from sharing any confidential information or using any confidential information for personal purposes. They are further required to shred or otherwise dispose of confidential information in a secure and complete fashion.

By signing below, you give permission for me to release audio recordings and field notes of interviews for the purpose of transcription.

Name: ____________________________________________________________

Signature: _________________________________________________________

Date: ____________________________________________________________
APPENDIX H

ACADEMIC ADVISORS
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research project. Please answer the following questions and return to me by email at harper@duq.edu. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at 412-396-6295 (work) or 412-915-9285 (cell).

Which racial or ethnic group(s) do you most identify?

- ______ African American
- ______ Asian
- ______ Caucasian
- ______ Latino or Hispanic
- ______ Native American
- ______ Mixed race

How long have you advised?

- ______ Less than 3 years
- ______ 3 to 5 years
- ______ 6 to 10 years
- ______ 11 to 15 years
- ______ More than 15 years

What credentials do you have? (check all that apply)

- ______ High school
- ______ 2-year degree
- ______ Bachelor’s degree
- ______ Certificate in advising
- ______ Master’s degree
- ______ Doctorate
- ______ choose not to answer

Is face-to-face academic advising mandatory for all undergraduates?

- ______ Yes
- ______ No

Comments:

How many undergraduates are you responsible for in your department?

________

220
Is academic advising your **primary role** at your institution?

- Yes
- No

Other responsibilities:

Does faculty participate in advising undergraduates?

- Yes
- No
- Shared responsibility

Which department do undergraduate academic advisors report?

- Student Affairs
- Academic Affairs
- Enrollment Management

Does your academic advising department have a mission statement?

- Yes
- No

Mission:

Do you use technology to advise undergraduates? Please check all that apply.

- Yes
- No
- Choose not to apply

What type, please circle: Email, Password protected (Blackboard, Wimba), Podcasts, Twitter, Text messaging, Facebook, Skype, LinkedIn

**Institutional type**

Your institution would best be described as:

- Public, 4-year institution
- Private, 4-year institution

**Location**

Northeast (ME, VT, NY, NH, MA, RI, CT)
Mid-Atlantic (PA, NJ, DE, MD, VA, DC)
Mid-South (WV, KY, TN, NC, SC)
Southeast (MS, AL, GA, FL)
Great Lakes (WI, IL, MI, IN, OH)
North Central (NE, IA, SD, ND, MN, MT)
South Central (KS, MO, OK, AR, TX, LA)
Northwest (AK, WA, OR, ID, MT)
Pacific (CA, NV, HI)
Rocky Mountain (AZ, CO, NM, UT, WY)

**Institutional Size**
- 2,500 – 4,999
- 5,000 – 9,999
- 10,001 – 19,999
- 20,001 – 29,999
- 30,000 – 39,999

**Undergraduates enrolled in the institution**

[ ]

**Percentage of African American undergraduates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td></td>
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<td>3rd</td>
<td></td>
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<td>4th</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Do you conduct surveys to gather data to analyze and assess student satisfaction with the effectiveness of advising?

[ ] Student satisfaction of academic advising
[ ] Student retention and persistence to graduation
[ ] Individual academic advisors job performance
[ ] No, we do not conduct surveys

Comments:
APPENDIX I

ACADEMIC ADVISORS – PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How long have you been certified as an appreciative advising advisor? If you are not certified, are you working towards certification?
2. Why did you become interested in the appreciative advising framework?
3. How much time do you spend with each student in your professional space?
4. How do you define student success? And, how do you as an advisor help students towards their academic success?
5. What is one thing you want your students to walk away from your advising appointment feeling or knowing?
6. Are characteristics such as positive mindset, self-awareness, care, and trust necessary attributes for academic advisors? Why? How do you define these characteristics?
7. How do you intentionally build trust and rapport with your students?
8. How has appreciative advising led to an authentic student/advisor relationship?
9. How many African American undergraduates do you advise?
10. Do African American undergraduates feel safe in your professional space – enough to discuss types of barriers to their success?
11. Does your African American undergraduate population encounter barriers such as stereotypes, microaggressions, and negative campus climates?
12. What do you do to help students refocus and see beyond these barriers?
13. How do you balance your lived experiences when advising students with lived experiences different from your own?
14. Does appreciative advising assist you with bridging cultural differences or lived experiences?
15. In light of the demographic changes in student enrollment, how does appreciative advising assist academic advisors in acquiring a cultural competence skill?
16. Have African American undergraduates informed you if they felt unwelcomed in the institution?
17. Have African American undergraduates’ academics decreased after matriculating into the institution?
18. How does appreciative advising increase African American undergraduates’ emotional connection to your institution?
19. How do you empower the academic and social success of African American undergraduates?
20. Does empowering the African American undergraduates assist them towards graduation completion?
21. How does appreciative advising increase African American undergraduates’ emotional connection to your institution?
22. How can you be sure that the application of appreciative advising during your academic session is successful for students’ especially African American undergraduates?
23. Does Appreciative Advising help to create equity and social justice within your personal space?
24. Do you feel Appreciative Advising encompasses other advising practices?
25. How does an academic advisor measure FIDELITY with appreciative advising and the students?
26. Do you mind sharing your appreciative advising rubric? Surveys?
APPENDIX J

GOTOMEETING

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APPENDIX M

ATLAS.ti 8

What is ATLAS.ti 8

ATLAS.ti 8 is highly intuitive and easier to learn and use than any other QDA program—including older versions of ATLAS.ti.

For our latest offering, we listened closely to our users’ needs and wishes, and have focused especially on a maximum degree of usability. ATLAS.ti 8’s completely revamped interface has been designed to follow rigorous principles of function-oriented usability. It employs a logical ribbon structure, context menus and keyboard shortcuts to make your work flow as ergonomic as possible.

Shortcomings of older versions have been eliminated, and much requested new functionality has been added. Most notably, unlimited Undo/Redo is now possible with every aspect of the program. Full native Unicode support lets you work with material in any language and character set. An easy-to-use search tool performs fine-grained searches on every level of your project. Simultaneous work with multiple data sources supports new comparative approaches. ATLAS.ti 8 is easy to learn. Many formerly convoluted processes have been radically simplified. The focus is on getting results quickly and efficiently. ATLAS.ti 8 is powerful and innovative. Stylish network visualizations serve both the analytical process and provide excellent presentation tools. Importing surveys, data from Twitter as well as from your favorite reference manager is a breeze. ATLAS.ti 8 comes with the future built-in completely rewritten and based on the latest technology, ATLAS.ti 8 allows for rapid, modular expansion. So expect to see previously unthinkable new possibilities in the coming months and years as ATLAS.ti 8 continues to grow by design.

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