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I Should Know Better: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis Of New Counselors' Experiences Navigating Their Implicit Biases

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I SHOULD KNOW BETTER: AN INTERPRETIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF

NEW COUNSELORS' EXPERIENCES NAVIGATING THEIR IMPLICIT BIASES

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By

Okenna Egwu

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I SHOULD KNOW BETTER: AN INTERPRETIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the disenfranchised youth of Peoria, Chicago, Illinois, and the United States who have been relegated to the margins society and the blind spots of peoples' minds. For those who have suffered in silence or whose pleas for justice have gone ignored, I complete this dissertation as a first step in projecting your needs and voices to the academy, and to a world that refuses to acknowledge them. I have been forever changed by my encounters with you and pray that one day the world will repent for its neglect of you, and learn to appreciate the beauty you hold within.

me to think, which I believe is the most powerful thing that a person can do. You allowed me to consider new possibilities and taught believe in myself and my abilities.

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Contents

List of Tables

Abstract

Implicit biases are known to have potentially damaging effects in the work of helping professionals. Although it is widely accepted that all people have these personal and unconscious biases, it has been difficult for researchers to identify strategies for consistently eradicating them on an individual level. To engage in multiculturally competent practice, counselors are directed to make efforts to eliminate latent biases. To understand how clinicians go about doing this, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis was employed to explore the nature of counselors' experiences navigating and addressing their implicit biases. Ten new counselors (N=10) were interviewed about their experiences before, during, and after their training, dealing with their personal biases. Thematic analysis yielded five themes, each with two subthemes. The findings of this study revealed a need for more training in counselor education programs to prepare students to work through the complex psychological challenges that come with addressing personal biases. Unfortunately, participants of this study indicated that they often feel unprepared to manage their implicit biases as they entered the workforce. Racial identity, empathy, obstacles, and a personal orientation towards addressing biases were discussed in relation to individual experiences navigating implicit bias. The findings of this study imply that practitioners' retention of implicit biases imposes added risk for already marginalized groups, and that cognitive and racial identity developmental frameworks might offer some insight in identifying effective practices for reducing implicit biases. Implications for counselors, supervisors, and counselor educators are provided along with limitations of the study and directions for future research.

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CHAPTER ONE:

Introduction

The very act of remembering is a dynamic and reconstructive process (Schacter & Addis, 2007). Although a nonchalant recollection might seem at first to be effortless and automatic, our brains must work to gather details from things that we have learned and assemble them into reasonably coherent memories (Kolb & Whishaw, 2015). These recreations help us anticipate future events based on information that we connect with those memories. Our imaginations can be powerful in helping us identify what we think are appropriate responses to present situations based on what we think might happen, given information from the past. The adaptive value of being able to use old information to solve present and future problems is tremendous, and over time, our brains have gotten extremely efficient. Even when we are not aware that we are remembering, our minds are hard at work assembling details and connections from our past experiences into patterns that make sense to us. For our memories to be interpretable, information must be connected in such a way that it can be accessed for future decision making. While this is a natural process common to most all healthy human minds, the way that associations and correlations are interpreted together have significant consequences.

For our conscious thoughts, the implications of reconstructing a memory with unreliable or inaccurate connections would be concerning. For cognitions and memories that we are not consciously aware of, the consequences of forming unreliable associations are even more worrisome, not only because of the questionability of the affiliations, but the unawareness of the affiliations themselves. With respect to cognitions, the tendency to favor certain connections

2

over others in an attempts to make sense of observations is called a preference or bias ("Bias", n.d.). Because it is fair to say that, as humans, we all make cognitive connections, it is also fair to say that we all have biases (Ross, 2013).

Personal biases have myriad effects across different fields and disciplines with ranging consequences. A meta-analysis conducted by FitzGerald and Hurst (2017) identified 35 studies that found evidence of implicit bias in healthcare professionals and reported that their levels of bias were consistent with those of the broader population. In the field of education, numerous studies have found discrepancies in disciplinary practices as a function of the students' race (Skiba et al., 2011; Wallace et al., 2008; Whitford & Levine-Donnerstein, 2014). Regarding the criminal justice system, when looking at overturned convictions in capital sentencing, Alesina and Ferrara (2014) found that courts in the South tend to be less concerned about falsely convicting minority defendants accused of killing Whites as evidenced by appeal reversal rates. Finally, in a review of over a thousand clinical cases, Schwartz and Feisthamel (2009) found that counselors diagnose African Americans with psychotic and childhood mental health disorders at a disproportional rate when compared with White clients.

Clinical counselors engage in many meaningful interactions with their clients beyond just act of diagnosis. As professionals, counselors endeavor to be as egalitarian as possible (Constantine, Smith, Redington, & Owens, 2008), but treatment protocols, empathy (Avenanti et al., 2010), and even treatment outcomes (Zestcott, et al., 2016; Chapman et al., 2013) are all subject to the personal biases of the clinician. Most of the aforementioned studies have primarily been focused on bias as it relates to race; but biases related to age, sexual and gender identity, perception of mental illness, and social class can all have significant impacts on how counselors engage with their clients and, subsequently, the quality of treatment that they receive.

Biases that professional counselors are aware of are more readily addressed, but those that are not as apparent can create significant problems in treatment. Personal biases that lurk in the unconscious are referred to as implicit, and are the subject of many discussions around social injustice. Because they are not aware of them, implicit biases can create a blind spot for professionals who are trying to operate fairly.

About Implicit Biases

Modern neuroscience has taught us about a variety of mental processes that take place without our awareness (Kolb & Whishaw, 2015). Over the course of our lives, our brains form and reinforce associations between concepts, things, groups of people, and ideas. Over time, these reinforced associations can become automatic and impact our judgments in relevant contexts. An implicit cognition is said to occur when "traces of past experience affect some performance, even though the influential earlier experience is not remembered in the usual sense—that is, it is unavailable to self-report or introspection" (Greenwald & Binaji, 1995, p. 4-5).

Greenwald and Binaji (1995) describe several unconscious processes that influence social behaviors. Implicit bias is considered a driving factor that can predict our preference or aversion for certain people, places, or things because of a positive or negative association with them. Implicit cognitions are thought to be automatic and account for unconscious memories, attitudes, perceptions, stereotypes, and self-concepts. Because of their obscure nature, implicit biases are difficult to measure and track. This may partially account for why they are frequently unaddressed in counseling training programs (Boysen, 2010). Interactions and behaviors that occur because of implicit bias are referred to as implicit actions and are the strongest indicators of the presence of a latent bias.

Implicit bias is defined and distinguished as a construct separate from explicit bias in that implicit bias is associated with cognitions and feelings that are unavailable to introspection (Greenwald & Binaji, 1995). Where a counselor might be aware of their explicit biases in a general context, they would likely be initially unfamiliar with their implicit cognitions, and even experience cognitive dissonance when made aware of them. Implicit biases form without our volition and live outside our consciousness (Greenwald & Binaji, 1995) and are often referred to as personal biases, hidden biases, latent biases, or unconscious biases. For the purposes of this dissertation, these terms will be used interchangeably. In social situations, we can conveniently define *bias* as a preference, cognitive association, or thinking pattern. The word *bias* will be used as a catchall to refer to all types of attitudes, conscious or unconscious, that represent a preference based on cognitive associations.

In the 1990s, study on implicit bias came from the confluence of interest in two other constructs, implicit memory and social cognition (Greenwald & Binaji, 1995). In their initial analysis of experiments involving implicit memory, Greenwald and Banaji (1995) acknowledged that most of the empirical evidence that demonstrated the existence of bias had come from studies conducted in North America during the second half of the twentieth century. They implied that because of this, the construct is somewhat bound by culture and time period, but still has useful application in multicultural contexts and study.

Regarding the measurement of implicit bias as a construct, researchers opt to measure the strength of connections and associations an individual makes. Stronger associations between cognitions or ideas implies a stronger implicit association. Connections are tested in terms of the speed and consistency with which they are made (Greenwald et al., 1998). Researchers indicate that implicit associations are best identified by monitoring people's actions rather than their

performance on tests (Greenwald et al., 2009). They found that levels of implicit bias were a much better indicator of a person's friendliness in social interactions than their self-reported levels of explicit bias. Currently, the Implicit Associations Test (IAT; Greenwald et al., 1998) is the most widely used instrument for measuring implicit bias in research and is available in many versions for free, administered in paper form or over the internet (Greenwald et al., 2009). Implicit association tests have been developed to test for age bias, race bias, ethnic bias, gender bias, LGBTQ bias, and many other types of implicit biases.

It is important to point out, that while implicit biases can be appropriately described as biproducts of our brains' developmental structure (Izuma et al., 2019), neuroscientists have not excused prejudiced behavior (Mattan et al., 2018) as a type of automatic process. Implicit bias has and will continue to be used as a scapegoat for racist and discriminatory practices by those who wish to maintain inequitable power structures. However, proof of the existence of implicit bias should accomplish just the opposite—the institutionalization of structures designed to mitigate bias. Our focus should rest on increasing our knowledge of implicit of biases, but also increasing our will to counteract them.

Statement of the Problem

Implicit bias has a significant impact on clinical care and a professional's ability to judge situations fairly and operate in a culturally sensitive way (Boysen, 2009). Indeed, we find that like all humans, counselors can possess significant implicit bias (Abreu, 1999; Boysen, 2006, 2009, 2010). Unfortunately, counselor educators have rarely been able to integrate bias measurement into training (Boysen, 2010), and as a result, little is known about counseling students' biases and how they affect the students' ability to process the new information they

gather in multicultural counseling training. It is during this training that they undergo the pivotal task of integrating their budding professional identity with their personal identity.

Furthermore, latent bias is a significant concern for practicing clinicians for a variety of reasons that might not be readily apparent. Pederson (1987) outlines several ways that American counselors might demonstrate bias in counseling relationships that include, overvaluing individualism, failing to adequately focus on client's support systems, and ignoring the reality of their own bias. Several studies have demonstrated significant diagnostic biases showing race-based discrepancies in the ways that counseling clients are diagnosed (Feisthamel & Schwartz, 2009; Mizock & Harkins, 2011; Schwartz & Feisthamel, 2009). Moreover, implicit biases impact not just how a clinician might make clinical judgements, but also how they might also perceive information that is contrary to their presuppositions (Greenwald & Binaji, 1995). This means that a counselor's process of evaluating evidence that either supports or refutes their initial judgements can influenced by their held implicit biases. For example, Lord et al. (1979) found that the students' interpretations of arguments favoring or opposing capital punishment were heavily influenced by their preexisting stances on the death penalty. Similarly, and concerningly, Vallone et al. (1985) found in a study that two politically opposed groups of undergraduates both questioned the fairness of reports of a terrorist attack because the reports did not contain content that supported either of their positions on a broader regional conflict. These studies suggest that our openness to persuasive arguments can be predetermined by our biases. Further, and not surprisingly, the more strongly a person feels about complex social issues, the less likely they are to be able to evaluate new information in an unbiased way.

These examples point to the fact that a counselor's judgment is heavily influenced by the biases that they hold. Research in counselor education suggests that personal biases are already

having a detrimental impact on the quality of treatment that minoritized groups receive (Mizock & Harkins, 2011; Abreu, 1999; Schwartz & Feisthamel, 2009). The impacts for clients are tremendous and span experiences of aversive racism, to disparities in provided treatment, to microaggressions and relationship rupture, poor self-awareness, and professional incompetence (Boysen, 2010; Feisthamel & Schwartz, 2009; Muse-Burke, et al.; Barna, 2018). Boysen (2010) suggests that some form of implicit bias testing should be a part of the counselor training process. Currently, counselor training programs employ numerous strategies to help counselors prepare for multiculturally conscious practice (Priester et al., 2008), but little is known about their effectiveness in reducing implicit associations.

Multicultural Counseling Training

In 1992, Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis proposed a landmark set of standards for multicultural counseling competence. As a result, multicultural competence has become a standard by which we evaluate the effectiveness of multicultural counseling training (Abreu et al., 2000). The impacts and challenges associated with multicultural training have been the focus of a large body of research in counselor education (Worthington, et al., 2007). Multicultural competence is one of the most cited measurement outcomes in this area and takes into consideration a counselor trainee's knowledge, skills, and awareness related to cultural interactions. In the original paper submitted by Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992), the authors directly advocated for counselors to be "aware of how their own cultural background and experiences, attitudes, and values and biases influence psychological processes" (p. 482). This awareness of personal biases is critical to counselor's being able to work effectively with clients from different backgrounds. Unfortunately, one of the hallmark characteristics of implicit biases is that they are not normally available to introspection (Greenwald & Binaji, 1995). With respect

to counselor trainees, this raises the question of how to bring unconscious artifacts into conscious awareness.

While creating an awareness of latent biases is considered to be a necessary part of bias reduction, it may not be the first step; nor should increasing awareness be regarded as a final step (Perry et al., 2015). In fact, multicultural counseling training programs can be successful in increasing self-awareness (Castillo, et al., 2007) but studies show that students can still retain high levels of bias and be resistant to engaging with diverse issues (Boysen, 2008; Steward, et al., 1998).

While increasing awareness is an important part of the multicultural competency and counseling training, it does not necessarily imply a resultant attitude change for either conscious or unconscious attitudes. Just as awareness of the speed limit on the road does not imply a driver's adherence to it, any student, once made aware of their personal biases, has a choice to challenge the association the bias represents, or to leave it intact. Additionally, students also have the choice of whether they will explore the characteristic areas identified in the multicultural competency standards (assumptions, values and biases, different world views, and approaches to treatment), or if they will simply focus on fulfilling program and course requirements. Ignorance can even be motivated in cases where exploring biases can challenge social conveniences, established goals, or a sense of self-righteousness (Holroyd et al., 2016). Ultimately, students are still responsible for choosing to explore, process, and integrate new information into their existing worldviews.

Our current approach to providing multicultural training for pre-service counselors follows guidelines established by the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (Ratts et al, 2016) which updated and built upon those introduced by Sue and colleagues in 1992.

These competencies have been adopted and endorsed by the American Counseling Association. The standards implore counselors to become knowledgeable about their own biases and take action to learn about the roles of culture and social justice (Sue et al., 1992; Ratts et al., 2016). These mandates are intended to increase a counselor's awareness; however, it is impossible to know if and how trainees assimilate the information they learn, or how they might leverage it to explore their own biases. While implicit bias has been weakly correlated with self-awareness in a few counseling studies, conflicting results and small effect sizes suggest that this correlation needs to be further explored (Boysen, 2008; Castillo et al., 2007). Moreover, some findings indicated that trainees who scored high on self-report measures of multicultural competence also scored high on measures of implicit bias (Boysen, 2009). This affirms the notion that self-awareness does not presuppose the attitudinal change necessary to root out and reduce bias. Growth is a matter of willingness to improve, and not exclusively dependent on awareness. Ultimately, the goal in bias reduction is to alter implicit attitudes and associations.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine just how, if at all, students in counselor training programs are acknowledging their own implicit biases and working toward attitude change. The Multicultural and Social Justice Competencies have made it easier for students to 'study to the test' when it comes to developing multicultural competence. Counseling students can focus their attention on building the requisite knowledge, skills, and awareness related to multicultural counseling issues, without having any accountability in their personal processes of acknowledging, tracking, and addressing their personal biases. The task of challenging and supporting individual trainees as they navigate their personal battles with bias is difficult to oversee in a classroom setting. The work of navigating individual blind spots is typically left to

9

the student. Counselor educators need a deeper understanding of how students engage with this process and more knowledge about students' relationships with their biases when they graduate from counseling training programs. To understand if and/or why counseling students have levels of implicit bias on par with individuals in the general population, we need to be able to understand the processes or experiences that bring about a change in implicit attitudes. The following research question will be explored: *What are White American counselors' lived experiences with navigating and addressing person implicit biases?* In order to anchor and contextualize this study, a secondary research question is necessary from which to explore the counselors' experiences more holistically: *What are White American counselors' experiences of learning about personal implicit bias in multicultural counseling training?*

Although an individual's distinct implicit biases might be unknown to them, their conscious attitudes about race, gender, or age can serve to protect or expose the unconscious thoughts. Increasing awareness is an integral step in many interventions aimed at reducing bias (Perry et al., 2015). As Sue et al. (1992) described a need for understanding a counseling program's degree of commitment to multicultural issues, an understanding of an individual's degree of commitment to addressing personal biases is also needed. While a focus on awareness is paramount, Sue et al. (1992) also indicate that truly culturally skilled counselors "are willing to contrast their own beliefs and attitudes with those of their culturally different clients…" (p. 482). It is likely that it is the counselor's will to personally challenge themselves that will make them more or less likely to attempt to adhere to the rest of the competencies.

The desire to help others has drawn innumerable trainees to the profession. Although inspired by the most altruistic motives, the willingness to challenge one's worldviews is often an

understated requirement. As with the speed limit metaphor, unawareness of the potential impact of one's actions has never been an acceptable response for infractions.

Theoretical Framework

To approach this study of counselor's implicit biases, a unifying framework is needed to establish the ontological and epistemological assumptions of this research. Through the lens of a theoretical framework, it is possible for the researcher to make determinations about how to construct the research, how to conduct the research, and how to interpret its findings (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). In social constructivist research, the researcher attempts to understand the ways in which others understand their world (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For this study, a social constructivist framework was selected to explore counselors' experiences with their implicit biases because the implicit biases themselves in some ways epitomize our unconscious beliefs about the way in which reality exists. Implicit biases represent the ways that individuals construct their worldviews and attribute patterns to their perceptions.

The social constructivist framework applies to this study because in order to understand how counselors experience their biases, it will be necessary to understand how they have constructed their worldviews. Social constructivism suggests that individuals create meaning from their subjective experiences, and that those meanings are attributed to the things and people in their lives (Rudes & Guterman, 2007). The social constructivist framework also suggests that people attempt to make sense of their world through historical and social perspectives, and that meaning is always made through social interactions (Crotty, 1998). This study specifically seeks to understand how counselors have made sense of their implicit biases both generally and personally, and further, explore what meanings they hold. Additionally, this research explores

how counselors choose to engage with other people based on the reality created in their minds by their personal biases.

Summary

This chapter introduced the concept of implicit bias and offered a few examples of how they can be detrimental in clinical practice. The researcher proposed a deeper investigation into the efficacy of multicultural counseling training on implicit bias. The researcher also stated the purpose of this study which is to develop a better understanding of how counselors navigate their unconscious biases. Social constructivism was also established as the theoretical framework for exploring this issue was established. In Chapter Two, the researcher will establish the prevalence of implicit biases and elaborate on the ways that they can interfere with therapeutic efforts. Chapter Two will also explore the complexities of the research question as it relates to the cognitive processes that relate to implicit bias.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

A casual acceptation that all people have biases can easily overlook the awful consequences that they might bring for professional and the people they work with—namely the potential for vastly discrepant treatment and discriminatory practices. Understanding biases as biproducts of neural processes is a singular and simplified model for understanding why biases exist. Yet, their presence creates multiple problems for practicing clinicians. To understand the nature of the problems they present, it is important to first understand what implicit biases are and what is understood about them. Several definitions are presented to help with this explanation.

Greenwald and Krieger (2006) describe the new science of implicit bias as coming from our knowledge of implicit cognitions. *Implicit cognitions* are mental processes that function without our awareness and can be manifested in our memories, beliefs, stereotypes, perceptions, self-esteem, self-concept, and importantly, our held attitudes (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). In psychological research, *attitudes* refer to an overall evaluation of a person, object, or idea in a way that associates a positive or negative connotation (Bohner & Dickel, 2011; Petty & Wegener, 1998). *Implicit attitudes* are latent attitudes or preferences that are not a part of an individual's conscious awareness, whereas *explicit attitudes* are those attitudes that an individual can express fully because all parts of the attitude are known. *Implicit biases* are products of implicit attitudes and represent a tendency, preference, or aversion for one object, person, or idea

compared to another. Biases are observed based on the judgements and actions that a person makes (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006).

Researchers have also disagreed on how to best characterize implicit attitudes (Fazio & Olson, 2003). Some scholars suggest that implicit attitudes are stable entities that are preserved in memory, and others hold that they are temporary judgements that are constructed in present interactions (Gawronski, 2007). Bohner and Dickel (2011) suggest that some combination of the two perspectives can be used to better understand human behaviors. Both perspectives imply that implicit attitudes involve an object, an evaluation of that object, and an unconscious tendency to apply the evaluation of that object in judgements and decisions (Bohner & Dickel, 2011).

Greenwald and Banaji (1995) provided a necessary context for understanding implicit biases describing them as "traces of past experiences that affect performance" (Greenwald and Binaji, 1995, p. 4-5). In 1998, Greenwald, and colleagues set out to create a method for measuring implicit attitudes and proposed the Implicit Association Test (IAT). The authors established that a bias is said to exist when a stronger association is demonstrated between a subject and a decidedly positive or negative word. For professionals, the traces of their past experiences and the associations they form can create significant consequences for the individuals that they work with (Abreu, 1999, 2001). A counselor's automatic thoughts reflect their personal dispositions and not necessarily the needs of their clients. Implicit cognitions have real world implications that are often manifested as discrimination and prejudice—this independently of the therapist's explicit commitment to fair and culturally sensitive practice.

Prevalence and Problems of Implicit Biases

Perhaps making the blanket statement that all counselors must have implicit biases because all people have implicit biases is still a little too presumptuous and reductive. However,

a more detailed understanding of how counselors experience implicit cognitions in practice is limited by the availability of research on implicit biases in counseling. Despite an absence of literature, practitioners still must work to understand how implicit biases can impact professional practice. This understanding is paramount to the maintenance the ethical principles of autonomy, justice, and non-maleficence (American Counseling Association, 2014; Boysen, 2010; Forester-Miller & Davis, 2016).

Researchers in other helping professions have explored the incidence and impact of biases within their respective disciplines. The findings of these other scholars can be helpful in conceptualizing the potential risks counselors should be aware of. Additionally, the prevalence of biases in other professions that emphasize fairness and egalitarian values might suggest a likelihood that counselors could too hold significant biases as well. In fact, using aggregate data, Greenwald and Krieger (2006) suggest that all subgroups of the US population demonstrate a statistically relevant implicit race bias favoring European Americans over African Americans (with the exception of African Americans who statistically display no such preference for European Americans). Because of the dearth of studies in counseling and counselor education that examine implicit biases and the hazards that they bring to clinical practice, the following sections review scholarship from other disciplines to offer insight on the prevalence of bias among other professionals along with the unique risks those biases pose.

Criminal Justice

Frankly, in judicial and law enforcement contexts, the consequences of implicit biases can be matters of life and death. Several studies have explored a common association many people hold between Black people and weapons, and an inclination to treat them differently as a result (Correll et al., 2002; Eberhart et al., 2004; Payne, 2001). One such study discovered a

tendency for video game players to shoot Black targets over White ones in a simulation regardless of whether the individual was holding was a weapon or some other harmless object (Correll et al., 2002). Additionally, using regression analyses, several studies have found race to be correlated to the level of severity of the charges brought by prosecutors in criminal proceedings (Faigman et al., 2012). Similar correlations have been seen in the types of the plea bargains that prosecutors offered defendants when compared by race (Radelet & Pierce, 1985; Nunn, 1999; Weich & Angulo, 2000). Other studies however were not always able to replicate these discrepancies (Faigman et al., 2012).

When it comes to convictions and sentencing, evidence of latent bias is still present. Despite being specifically instructed to weigh evidence impartially, some studies show that jurors still tend to evaluate people of certain races more harshly (Mitchell et al., 2005). Although this tendency is typically reported with smaller effect sizes, Faigman and colleagues (2012) estimated that in 100 trials with White juries, approximately eight more Black than White defendants would be convicted due to juror biases. Moreover, Rachlinski and colleagues (2008) administered an implicit bias test to trial judges and discovered that 87 percent of White judges had strong implicit attitudes that favored Whites over Blacks. In some studies, no discrepancies in judicial treatment were seen despite measurements suggesting the presence of an implicit bias. In these scenarios, participants were credited with actively working to mitigate their biases and operate impartially.

It is fair to argue that the racial discrepancies seen in policing, convictions, and sentencing cannot be wholly attributable to implicit biases and must be influenced by some other factors. However, in the world of criminal justice, where professionals are committed to justice, fairness, and egalitarian treatment, the victims of racial bias have to live or die with the

16

consequences of inequity. The implication of implicit biases in unequal treatment of Black defendants within the criminal justice system is supported by other psychological forces known to be at work in adjudication processes. Among these are confirmation bias (bias related to the amount of information needed to confirm or reject initial impressions), social judgeability theory (theory suggesting that social rules tell us when it is appropriate to judge someone), and shifting standards (the idea that our reasoning can be motivated and can shift on the fly suggesting that our ideas of merit are malleable) (Faigman et al., 2012). Faigman and peers also describe how studies spanning the last few decades have brought attention to race-based inequities in sentencing (including the use of capital punishment), employment practices, and pretrial adjudication. The authors also describe strategies for minimizing the impact of implicit biases which will be covered in a following section (Faigman et al., 2012).

Healthcare

Unfortunately, another field that sees life and death consequences due to prejudicial discrepancies is the field of medicine. In 2002, when addressing the Institute of Medicine in Washington DC, Dr. Alan Nelson, former president of the American Medical Association, commented on his review of inequities in healthcare reporting that:

> Racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare exist even when insurance status, income, age, and severity of conditions are comparable. And because death rates from cancer, heart disease, and diabetes are significantly higher in racial and ethnic minorities than in Whites, these disparities are unacceptable (Nelson, 2002, p. 666).

While this statement certainly points to an underlying culprit influencing treatment outcomes, identifying the specific reason for these inequities has been particularly challenging. Currently, researchers have not been able to establish direct evidence that a healthcare provider's bias

affects the outcome of treatment (Smedley et al., 2003). However, differences in the patient's

race or ethnicity have been correlated with the types of diagnostic and treatment decisions that

providers make as well as their overall feelings towards those patients (Smedley et al., 2003). Dr.

Nelson continued in his address to say:

> Bias, stereotyping, prejudice, and clinical uncertainty on the part of healthcare providers
>
> may contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare. While indirect evidence from
>
> several lines of research support this statement, a greater understanding of the prevalence
>
> and influence of the processes is needed and should be sought through research (Nelson,
>
> 2002, p. 667).

Indeed, studying biases, especially implicit biases, is challenging, but researchers in the

medical field are taking steps to overcome those challenges to get at the root of the problem. In

2018, after reviewing 37 studies examining implicit bias in healthcare, Maina and colleagues

found that healthcare providers with various levels of training generally held implicit biases

against Blacks, Hispanics, Indigenous Americans as well as people with darker complected skin

(Maina et al., 2018). Comparably, widespread studies of implicit bias among counselors have not

yet been conducted, but following the review of 17 different studies of implicit bias in medical

literature from 1993-2013, Chapman and colleagues (2013) found enough evidence of pro-White

bias to categorically state that "Implicit bias is present in physicians and correlates with unequal

treatment of patients" (p. 1508).

Regardless of the discipline, researching the consequences of implicit biases in

professional interactions is important. With respect to healthcare, patients who perceive bias on

the part of their providers are thought to become less engaged and ultimately experience

substandard treatment (Maina et al., 2018). This interaction reveals a reciprocal relationship in

which poor outcomes can be a result of an interplay of several factors including bias, mistrust, and discrimination (Smedley et al., 2003). Complicating this interaction even further, multiple studies have found that some providers are biased in that they perceive Black patients as less compliant and cooperative than their White counterparts (Cooper et al., 2012; Green et al., 2007; Oliver et al., 2014; Sabin et al., 2008; Sabin & Greenwald, 2012). Similar concerns might be relevant for counselors who exhibit biases.

Education

In classrooms across the country, the opportunities for discrimination and unequal treatment are plenteous. Unfortunately, researchers suggest that those opportunities start presenting themselves as early as preschool. Even at an early age, students can be seen more or less favorably exclusively on the basis of how their name sounds to other students and teachers (Erwin, 1999, 2006; Conaway & Bethune, 2015). Further, The Yale Child Study Center found that Black boys in preschool are 3.6 times more likely to be suspended than their White counterparts while only making up 19 percent of all enrolled students (Gilliam et al., 2016). Other studies demonstrate that teachers are more likely to perceive Black children as: more culpable in wrongdoing, more likely to cause problems, and more likely to be a threat to other school children when compared to students of other races (Gilliam & Reyes, 2016; Goff et al., 2014).

Turning from behavior to achievement, researchers have been able to demonstrate that a teacher's implicit biases correlated with their expectations of elementary school students' achievement according to the ethnic backgrounds of the students (Van der Bergh et al., 2010). Even more disheartening, the authors found the actual achievement gap between students of different ethnic groups within those classrooms were also correlated with the teachers' levels of

implicit bias. With respect to high school students, biases towards adolescents of certain backgrounds can impact how students are supported in career decision making. Discrepancies are especially seen when considering which students more typically receive support to enter science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields (Robnett, 2016).

Finally, Boysen & Vogel (2009) made several discoveries after surveying college professors regarding biases (explicit and implicit) that they observed in their classrooms. Results from questionnaires revealed that 38 percent of respondents witnessed biased behavior in their classrooms within the last year. Most commonly, these behaviors came in the form of stereotyping, derogatory remarks, and microaggressions. While most professors indicated that they did respond to the offenses, 40 percent of professors who responded said that they were unable to assess the effectiveness of their intervention. In this study, however, the researchers cited that they had difficulty ascertaining the extent to which the professors tried to intervene after witnessing biases. They also faced challenges in accurately assessing instructors' awareness of student wrongdoings in a general sense.

Counseling and Counselor Education

Considering that trial judges, physicians, and educators, as individuals who are purportedly committed to impartiality and have made express commitments to nonmaleficence, can and do demonstrate significant bias, it would seem unwise to imply that counselors, counselors in training, and counselor educators do not also hold significant biases of their own. While the number of studies demonstrating the prevalence of implicit bias in counseling is limited, the trends found in other disciplines along with the findings of a handful of inculpatory studies in counseling journals suggests that counselors indeed hold levels of bias that are on par with those found in the general population (Abreu, 1999; Boysen, 2006; Boysen & Vogel, 2008;

Castillo et al., 2007). Essentially, biases should be assumed in the absence of evidence suggesting otherwise. Given the substantial evidence that counselors just like all other professionals harbor implicit biases, those within the counseling profession must question the ways in which these biases pose a risk, and how our clients are potentially impacted. A review of studies that describe implicit biases in counselors follows.

Although testing for implicit biases is difficult, a number of studies have employed a few methods to do this. In 1999, Abreu used a method of stereotype priming to trigger implicit cognitions that might suggest a bias. Participants were licensed psychologists, predoctoral interns, master's level counseling students, and clinical and counseling psychology students. Priming was carried out by flashing stereotypical words associated with Black people on a computer screen for a predetermined amount of time. Participants in the control group were flashed more neutral words. Immediately following the priming procedure, participants were asked to read a short excerpt from a therapy session as well as a short clinical description. They then responded to a form asking for their diagnostic impressions and completed a short rating scale that assessed nondiagnostic impressions such as hostility and kindness. Results on the hostility related scale indicated a significant effect for stereotypic priming—participants in the group with higher levels of stereotype priming rated the client more negatively than participants in the control group. Consistent with previous literature about the priming effect (Devine, 1989), Abreu attributes these results to automatic processing initiated by stereotype priming.

Using another common method of testing for of implicit bias, Castillo et al. (2007) administered the race-based version of the Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald et al., 1998) to a group of first year master's counseling students. The IAT measures implicit associations by comparing response times to a task administered by a computer. Participants also

received the Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI; Sodowsky, et al., 1994) as a measure of multicultural competency. The instruments were administered to students during the first and final weeks of the semester who were either in multicultural counseling course or some other foundational counseling course. Data collection spanned three years and aggregated responses from a total five multicultural counseling courses and five alternative foundational counseling courses. The researchers intended to test if the multicultural class would be an effective intervention for reducing implicit racial prejudice and increasing cultural awareness. With respect to implicit racial prejudice, the researchers found a moderate decrease in scores on the IAT with a medium effect size. Interestingly, no significant correlations could be found between the any of the subscales of the MCI (knowledge, skills, and awareness) and scores on the IAT when examining both pretest and posttest scores. This might suggest that a reduction in implicit racial prejudice is not dependent on an increase in knowledge, skills, or awareness. This finding points to the need for more studies exploring the mechanisms of implicit attitude reduction.

Finally, Boysen and Vogel (2008) also set out to measure correlations between multicultural competency and implicit bias in students enrolled in counseling psychology, rehabilitation counseling, school counseling, and clinical mental health counseling programs. programs. In addition to the African American race-based IAT, the researchers also used a version of the IAT specifically designed to measure bias towards lesbians and gay men. Participants also completed the CCCI-R (LaFromboise et al., 1991), a measure of multicultural competency. In their study, Boysen and Vogel administered pen and paper versions of all their instruments on the last week of the semester. Most notably, the participants' scores on both versions of the IAT confirmed the researchers' hypotheses that implicit biases toward African Americans, lesbians, and gay men were present in counseling trainees. Further, when comparing

students within their cross-sectional sample, Boysen and Vogel found no statistically significant difference in IAT scores between students who had not yet completed a multicultural counseling course, students who had just completed a multicultural counseling course that semester, and students who had completed their multicultural counseling course more than one semester prior. The authors suggest that training had little or no correlation with the presence of bias.

Contributing to the case that counselors and counselor trainees possess implicit biases is Boysen's dissertation study (2006) which also explored potential correlations between multicultural competency and implicit bias. Although Boysen cautions the use of his results because of the low reliability he obtained when using the pen and paper version of the IAT, his findings implied both the presence of implicit bias in counseling trainees and that the multicultural course alone did not produce a significant decrease in implicit bias.

Counseling-Related Concerns

Having established the likelihood that counselors at all levels of training have implicit biases, it is important to understand the implications of this conclusion. In the limited number of studies available, we see that an implicit bias towards Black people is common, however to the knowledge of this researcher, little or no experimental studies have been conducted to test for the presence of counselor biases towards other groups such as LGBTQ+ persons, the elderly, or religious minorities such as Muslims. Notwithstanding, the presence of biases has implications for how counselors do their jobs within the therapy room and for the therapeutic alliance itself.

Pedersen (1987) laid out important and compelling considerations for counselors who are acculturated to the Western societies. Delving into the prevailing culture, he points to biases that are rooted in our social, economic, and political perceptions. Pedersen describes how biases can be so deeply ingrained into our way of living, that they become imperceptible, built upon, and

left unchallenged. The underlying implicit attitudes can be universally accepted in ethnocentric environments further reinforcing their hidden status. Pedersen lays out ten common assumptions that counselors in the United States commonly make. They are paraphrased here:

1. All people share a common understanding of what is normal behavior.

2. Counseling should be directed toward the development of individuals rather than groups of people.

3. There are distinctions and boundaries between different academic disciplines.

4. Concepts should be described in abstract terms in order to be best understood.

5. Independence is more favorable, and dependence is typically a negative state.

6. Natural support systems are infrequently associated with an individual's health.

7. Everyone uses linear processing.

8. Clients need to change to fit the system that surrounds them rather than the system needing to change itself.

9. Focusing on the antecedents of a problem is more important than focusing on a rich detailed historical context.

10. Counselors already know and understand the extent of their cultural encapsulation.

While all these assumptions can be points of further introspection for a counselor in training, the last one reveals a condition that makes it possible for the other nine to remain unconscious. Counselors who do not understand the limitations of their perspective are at particular risk for making assumptions that harm their clients (Pedersen, 1987). Ignorance about one's own level of cultural encapsulation can be a critical factor in the development and preservation of implicit attitudes. Counselors who do not make conscious efforts to understand their degree of cultural encapsulation further protect their implicit biases.

Moving from a focus on how counselors perceive the world they live in, to a focus on how they perceive their clients, several concerns related to implicit bias become apparent. Research conducted by Hugenberg and Bodenhausen (2003) presents a case that individuals with implicit stereotype bias can misinterpret the faces of the people that they interact with. Previous literature has demonstrated that various displays in affect can be interpretable across cultures (Ekman et al., 1969). However, Hugenberg and Bodenhausen found that individuals with higher levels of implicit bias towards Black people (as measured using the IAT) perceived affect in the faces of Black people differently than they did in the faces of White people. Specifically, participants in these studies were asked to denote when they perceived hostility in the face of a person viewed in a short video. Participants were shown computer generated clips showing faces of a Black or White person. Participants who had scored higher on the IAT, indicating a stronger bias, identified hostility in the black faces sooner than participants who had scored lower on the IAT. Those individuals also tended to identify hostility as lingering longer on the person's expression as well. These alarming findings introduce questions about a counselor's ability to interpret of expressions of other emotions in cross-cultural counseling. While researchers have often studied stereotypes that associates Black people with hostility, other stereotypes should be explored to better understand the ways minoritized groups could be misinterpreted in counseling sessions.

In addition to identifying implicit bias as a moderator in the interpretation of client's affect, a historic body of research implicates implicit bias as a factor in the misinterpretation of behaviors (Duncan, 1976; Greenwald et al., 2009; Sagar & Schofield, 1980). Again, focusing primarily on the stereotype linking African Americans with hostility, this body of research has shown that ambiguous behaviors tend to be interpreted more negatively when they are performed

25

by Black actors and are linked to a negative bias towards Black people (Hugenberg & Bodenhausen, 2003).

Potential for Harm

Several cautions related to implicit biases should be observed by counselors looking to engage in fair practice. Because counselors share delicate relationships with their clients, extra care should be taken to monitor prejudices. Unintentional biases and poor counselor competence threaten to damage therapeutic relationships and expose clients to risk (Constantine, 2007). The client's perception of the counselor's competence, or lack thereof, has a significant bearing on the development of a safe and trusting environment. Constantine (2007) and others have suggested that biases can manifest as microaggressions. These offenses can lead to premature termination of the counseling relationship (Boysen, 2010). Researchers have also questioned how implicit biases can interfere with a professional's ability to experience empathy depending on the race of the person in distress (Avenanti et al., 2010; Cosmides et al., 2003; Feagin, et al., 2001). Individuals with higher levels of implicit bias also appear less friendly to observers, are more likely to misinterpret behaviors of persons from different ethnic groups, and are more likely to predict the behavior of outgroup members in a negative way (Dovido, et al., 2002; Gawronski et al., 2003).

Moving beyond the therapist-client interaction, there is also strong evidence in counseling literature that clients from different backgrounds receive inequitable treatment. Researchers have demonstrated that African American boys are diagnosed with psychotic disorders and conduct disorders at rates much higher than boys with European American backgrounds (Mizock & Harkins, 2011; Schwartz & Feisthamel, 2009). Other studies imply that confirmation bias can influence the perceptions of client behaviors long after a diagnosis has

26

been made, even when the diagnosis is based on the clinicians preconceived notions (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). In this way, people who hold unfavorable identities are at risk for receiving treatments that are not indicated, potentially detrimental, and that do nothing to relieve their distress.

Considering the risks of cultural encapsulation, the potential for misinterpretations of behaviors, misjudgments of client's affect, varying capacity empathy, potential for unintentional slights, and grossly disproportionate diagnostic practices, implicit biases can completely disrupt the counseling process if not addressed. While most counselors enter the field hoping to leave a positive impact, they must also be aware of what pieces of themselves they inadvertently carry into the therapy space.

Current Approaches

Having established a rationale that says that mental health professionals, like many other professionals, do hold implicit biases, it is imperative to understand what counseling training programs are doing to mitigate their impact. Researchers and educators must also consider whether implicit attitudes are malleable, and if so, which interventions might yield the best results.

Multicultural Counseling Training

To understand the current practices that counselor education programs use to address biases in multicultural training, the standards established by the Counsel for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2009, 2016) are a good starting point. With respect to social and cultural diversity, the 2009 standards require that accredited programs provide an understanding of "counselors roles in eliminating biases, prejudices, and processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination" (p. 10). The 2016 standards employ

27

more streamlined language and require that curriculums include "strategies for identifying and eliminating barriers, prejudices, and processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination" (p. 10). While not speaking directly to the subject of implicit bias, the standards clearly appear to support a training process that eliminates unintended biases and prejudice. The CACREP standards do not provide specific instructions on how this must be done but do hold counseling trainees responsible for knowing and understanding the multicultural counseling competencies proposed by Sue et al. (1992) that were adopted by the American Counseling Association (ACA) and incorporated into their code of ethics. These standards were updated in 2016 to include social justice competencies and reflect the evolving foci of the counseling profession (Ratts et al., 2016). Since the introduction of the original standards, multicultural competence has received the most attention with respect to multicultural counseling training (Barden et al., 2017; Priester et al; 2008; Sue & Sue, 2016).

Traditionally, multicultural competency training has centered around three domains, knowledge, skills, and awareness (Barden et al., 2017; Sue et al., 1992). Regarding personal biases, the original competencies call for trainees to become aware of how their cultural background, experiences, values, and biases influence their definitions of normality and psychological processes (Sue et al, 1992). In this foundational literature, attenuation of bias is primarily addressed as a matter of increasing knowledge and self-awareness (Boysen, 2010). To this end, a variety of strategies have been employed in counseling training programs to help students address their biases.

Undoubtedly, the most common mechanism used satisfy CACREP requirements in this domain and to promote multicultural competence in counseling programs has been the multicultural counseling course in its various forms (Abreu et al., 2000; Pieterse et al., 2009;

28

Ponterotto, 1997). In the course, multicultural skills, knowledge, and self-awareness are addressed, typically with cultural knowledge receiving the most attention. Multicultural self-awareness receives an either very high or very low level of emphasis (Priester et al., 2008). In a review of syllabi, Pieterse and colleagues (2009) found that the most common strategies used to promote self-awareness in counselor trainees required students to engage in immersion exercises, journal their thoughts, complete reflection papers, and write cultural autobiographies. With these methods, instructors tend to address implicit biases by increasing knowledge and awareness through education and reflection, often with the hope of creating dissonance (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959; Boysen 2010). As students become more aware of their own privilege or experience resistance to new information, educators are encouraged to remain mindful of student difficulties by carefully balancing supportive and challenging experiences (Yoon et al., 2016). For students who wish to be egalitarian (and perceived as so), learning about their personal biases can be anxiety provoking (Boysen, 2010). Other students might actively attempt to conceal their explicit and implicit attitudes in fear because the multicultural course requires them to share in a social context is not supportive of prejudice (Plant & Devine, 2003; Plant et al., 2003). Finally, some students will be outright resistant of engaging in conversations about cultural competence and express clear explicit biases (Steward et al., 1998). Abreu (2001) highlights the challenge in training for competent attitudes as compared to the knowledge and skills domains. "The process that leads to competency in beliefs/attitudes… is not well developed and, consequently, it is more problematic from a training perspective" (p. 488).

Challenges Facing Competency Based Training

The development of the original multicultural counseling competencies was thorough and grew out of an important national conversation outlining a need for cross-cultural counseling

competencies (Sue et al., 1992). The original competencies had tremendous content validity and were based on important ethical standards, theory, and previously established guidelines (Sue et al., 1992). The original competencies themselves, like many of the scales that measure them, have tremendous construct validity but still need a firmer empirical grounding or more "[truly] experimental research" (Worthington et al., 2007, p. 352). As such, training programs centered around competencies have been criticized for several reasons. Firstly, while multicultural competence is frequently used as an outcome measure for treatment and training interventions, it is often highly correlated with social desirability (Ponterotto et al., 2000). Because most multicultural competence scales are self-report measures, they are not considered reliable for capturing implicit attitudes (Boysen, 2010; Boysen & Vogel, 2008). This highlights a need for better instrumentation that can provide more empirical evidence that multiculturally competent counselors are more effective. Some scholars have argued that mastering the competencies does not necessarily make one a good counselor. This argument introduces the idea that other latent constructs not initially described by the competencies are at work in effective multicultural counseling (Constantine & Ladany, 2000).

Current Gaps

Exploring the benefits and shortcomings of the competency model draws attention to a question initially posed by Ponterotto et al. (2000) which is, "Do counselors who possess these competencies evidence improved counseling outcome with clients across cultures?" (p. 641). With respect to biases, another question that could be asked is, does a counselor who possesses multicultural competencies effectively mitigate the effects of their personal biases?

The Role of Awareness

To answer the question of whether culturally competent counselors demonstrate bias, it is important to understand the requirements of the competency. One might suggest that because "Culturally skilled counselors have specific knowledge about their own racial and cultural heritage and how it personally and professionally affects their definitions and biases of normality-abnormality and the process of counseling," that competent counselors should know exactly how their implicit biases interplay throughout the counseling exchange (Sue et al., 1992, p 482). This supposition contained in the original competencies infers that knowledge and awareness of one's personal biases will naturally lead to a reduction in bias. Czopp and colleagues (2006) found support for this supposition in a study that involved direct confrontation of an individual's biases. Participants who were confronted and made aware of their racial bias were less likely to respond in a biased manner in a subsequent experimental task. The implications for these findings are significant because they suggest that counselor trainees who are confronted with their biases are likely to treat their client's more fairly in cross-cultural interactions. However, the researchers indicated that they were hesitant to attribute changes in behavior to attitudinal change, conceding that changes in behaviors following confrontation were likely a result of the immediate social and interpersonal consequences associated with being perceived as prejudiced. These findings are noteworthy because they provide evidence of an intervention that produces behavioral change. Nonetheless, this literature uncovers a variety of factors that impact the effectiveness of a confrontation. This study also reveals many different possible responses to one's discovery of their personal biases. Particularly, the challenge of effecting genuine attitude change highlights perhaps the most significant obstacle in reducing biases.

Changing Awareness vs. Changing Attitudes

Should counselor educators primarily seek behavioral or attitudinal change when helping students navigate their biases? Ultimately, behavioral change is what is necessary in order to affect the treatment that clients receive. However, extrinsic motivations for behaviors are typically seen as short-term, weak reinforcers and long-term negative reinforcers having hidden drawbacks when they are over emphasized (Lepper & Greene, 2015). Indeed, intrinsic motivation is associated with longer lasting behavior changes. Therefore, the goal of multicultural counselor educators should be to inspire intrinsic motivation for reducing bias by encouraging attitudinal change.

Until this point, much attention in multicultural counseling training has been given to identifying ways to increase students' awareness, and tangentially, increase their awareness of their biases as suggested by Sue et al. (1992). However, studies have shown that an increase in awareness does not necessarily forecast a reduction in bias (Boysen & Vogel, 2008; Castillo et al., 2007). Students who learn about their biases can respond in a variety of avoidant ways (Czopp et al., 2006). Often, counselor trainees seek to quickly resolve the discomfort that comes with the discovery of their personal biases (Boysen, 2010). Students may do this by discrediting the validity of the source of the confrontation, working to appear unbiased, minimizing the significance of their bias, and in some cases, becoming hostile towards the confronter (Boysen, 2010; Czopp et al., 2006). Researchers suggest that some forms of anti-bias education may even have detrimental effects if they increase bias awareness without also providing skills for managing the accompanying anxiety (Bohner & Dickel, 2011). Fighting against self-bias awareness are the powerful forces of self-preservation, comfortability, and fragility (DiAngelo,

2018). These reactions demonstrate that an increase in awareness does not imply attitude change; students still must go through a process of integrating new information.

From a developmental perspective, the transtheoretical model suggests that stages of change frame psychological growth (McConnaughy et al., 1983; Norcross et al., 2010). People in a contemplative stage of change are aware that a problem exists and likely can identify various reasons to make changes (Prochaska & Norcross, 2001). From this perspective, it is easy to understand that an individual can become aware of their implicit biases and even find them unfavorable but still be unable to make a commitment to reducing their bias. Awareness is necessary but insufficient. A will to change is also necessary for growth. Because attitude change is critical to understanding how biases are reduced in the long run, a new focus on attitude change in needed in counseling literature.

Tracking Implicit Attitudes

Attitude change appears to be a significant key in improving the treatment biased counselors can offer. So far, studies seeking to compare multicultural competence with levels of implicit bias have not been able to demonstrate a meaningful correlation between levels of implicit bias and cultural awareness (Boysen & Vogel, 2008; Castillo et al., 2007). This may be because measures of implicit bias are designed to measure implicit attitudes rather than individual awareness (Greenwald et al., 1998). In fact, an awareness of biases would hypothetically be more related to explicit attitudes because they are known by their holder (Greenwald & Binaji, 1995).

Different cognitive models have been presented to understand the nature of attitudes. Theories about attitude change are numerous and diverse (Crano & Prislin, 2006). Social scientists have provided different explanations for how attitudes form, are recalled, and replaced

(Fazio & Olson, 2003). Theorists hypothesize that attitudes may be either relatively static, and stored over time, or more labile and constantly recreated as necessary (Bohner & Dickel, 2011). Some researchers suspect that attitudes likely fall somewhere on a spectrum between being stable entities stored in our long-term memory and changing cognitions that are constructed on demand using available information (Fazio, 2007; Schwarz, 2007). While the large influence of contextual elements in evaluative judgements supports the constructionist perspective, the high stability of most implicit attitudes supports a model that is based on stable memories (Bohner & Dickel, 2011). In the constructionist perspective, long term stability is described through automaticity that results from repeated construction of the same attitudes in similar contexts that yield similar judgements (Higgins, 1996). In the stable memory model, variability in attitudinal judgements is associated with weak attitude strengths and labels that we might consciously assign to them as false, or invalid (Bohner & Dickel, 2011).

Tracking attitude change has necessitated some means of measuring attitudes. Directly monitoring behaviors is considered to be the most accurate way of tracking attitudes and biases because no interpretation is needed (Greenwald & Binaji, 1995). Unfortunately, tracking behaviors effectively and thoroughly is extremely difficult. For decades researchers have been looking for ways to measure attitudes that offers strong predictive validity (Greenwald et al., 2009).

Although it is not the only such measure, the Implicit Association Test (IAT) has been used the most frequently to measure implicit attitudes in research studies, but it is not without its shortcomings (Fazio & Olson, 2003). In meta-analyses, the IAT has demonstrated very weak correlations with intergroup and interethnic behavior reports as seen in numerous studies (Greenwald et al., 2009; Oswald et al., 2013). Oswald and colleagues (2013) call into question

the validity of the IAT due to its weak or null correlations in a selection of criterion studies. These results dispute either the reliability of the instruments used to measure implicit bias or the validity of implicit social cognition as a construct. The low correlations might also suggest that implicit cognitions are transient or operate under the influence of environmental factors. Because of the stable entity and constructionist views of attitude formation, variation in implicit attitudes can be accounted for without discrediting the entire theory and research base supporting implicit social cognition and implicit bias. These models also allow for both positive and negative associations to be simultaneously made regarding an object of an implicit judgement through either incongruent labeling or inconsistent environmental context (Bohner & Dickel, 2011; Rydell & McConnell, 2006).

Additionally, theorists have suggested that implicit cognitions might be better conceptualized as state responses rather than trait responses (Bohner & Dickel, 2011; Boysen & Vogel, 2008). Because of the low reliability coefficients and correlations seen in studies that use the IAT, Oswald et al. (2013) suggest that the prevalence of prejudice and discrimination apparent in our society is not the result of implicit or explicit attitudes, but some other unknown construct. The authors suggest that the predictive validity of the IAT could likely be improved by altering the algorithm-based approach that the test uses. Greenwald and colleagues (2009) attribute relatively low correlations to the relative unreliability of the predictor and criterion scales.

Despite having weak correlations in most studies that use it, the IAT does show stronger correlations in studies that search for evidence of implicit cognitions in brain scanning (Oswald et al., 2013). This may imply that, while not being a perfect estimator of prejudiced behaviors, tests of implicit associations may be useful in understanding implicit and automatic cognitions.

35

Greenwald and Binaji (1995) originally described implicit associations as offering new information about cognitive processes not available from self-report measures. The direct measurement of implicit attitudes was never intended to replace the use of explicit criterion measurement (Greenwald & Binaji, 1995). In fact, low correlations between implicit and explicit measures hints at the existence of multiple cognitive processing systems.

Implications of Dual Processing

Smith and DeCoster (2000) describe a system of dual processing that makes it possible for implicit and explicit attitudes to exist independently and simultaneously. This two-tier system is based on the existence of a dichotomous memory system which simply implies that cognitions can be stored in two different ways. The first operates in the *associative processing* mode and integrates new information slowly. The associative processing system is focused on completing patterns and understanding associations. The second system operates in a *rule-based* mode, and while it has access to information in the first system and is capable of processing slowly, it primarily operates through quick processing modes using established norms and symbols to process information using a basic rule structure (Smith & DeCoster, 2000). In this way, the first system, associative processing, can be responsible for the formation of general stereotypes and patterns while the second, the rule-based system, accounts for social rules that condemn such associations (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006; Wilson et al., 2000). This arrangement further reveals the potentially insidious nature of implicit cognitions, in that while an individual might consciously hold a positive regard for a person or a group, another memory system in their brain might still hold information that is contrary to their conscious rule abiding thoughts (Wilson et al., 2000). Rydell and McConnell (2006) demonstrated that implicit and explicit attitudes can

change independently because they operate in different systems of reasoning. These two systems can diverge creating contradictory attitudes and inconsistent behaviors.

This conceptualization of dual processing modes is supported by neurological theories of brain function. In 1992, Masters described how associative learning, memory, and decision making all require neuropathways that travel through the emotion regulating center of the brain, located in the limbic system. Later, it was discovered that activity in the amygdala precipitated implicit prejudices towards members of an ethnic outgroup in human subjects (Izuma et al., 2019). Mattan et al. (2018) identified multiple neural structures and systems associated with the formation of prejudice, starting within the amygdala, and moving up towards structures in the forebrain and prefrontal cortex. They identified the medial and lateral prefrontal cortexes as the structures responsible for monitoring and overriding prejudiced impulses using information based on social reward systems and intergroup goals. Mattan et al. identified neural structures designated for overriding prejudicial impulses that originated lower in the brain. These results corroborated findings from studies almost 30 years prior that implicated the medial prefrontal cortex in the extinguishing of fear in rats that had developed and aversive response to a stimulus (Morgan et al., 1993). Taken together, these results, obtained from neuroimaging techniques used in decades of studies, validate theories suggesting that separate processing systems can coexist, and lead to conflicting implicit and explicit attitudes. This also implies that measurement of implicit attitudes can be muddled by the presence of inconsistent and conflicting implicit attitudes.

Understanding Attitude Change

With a better understanding of what attitudes are and how they are formed, the crucial process of attitude change expands on the notion that an individual can maintain multiple

attitudes towards an object at any time. Thus, Bohner and Dickel (2011) describe attitude change as a process that involves the integration of new information in a way that overrides old information. From both the stable memory and constructionist perspectives of attitude synthesis, this process involves interacting with old information while attempting to make new associations. Within the constructionist perspective, changes are considered differences in the way that attitudes are constructed in each instance that they are created. According to the memory-based model, changes are a process of replacing old information with new information at the time that it is recalled. For both models, new associations must be presented in a way that appeals to the associative reasoning process, particularly regarding implicit attitudes (Bohner & Dickel, 2011). In several experiments exploring the attitude change processes, Rydell and McConnell (2006) concluded that implicit attitude change takes place through slow learning in the associative system of reasoning. Implicit attitudes responded best to large amounts of counter-attitudinal information, whereas explicit attitudes respond best to logical information that appeals to the rule-based system of reasoning. This means that implicit attitudes are more likely to respond to an inundation of information rather than to concise logical arguments and explicit attitudes are more likely to change from information that fits well into a rule-based system.

With an understanding of dual attitude theory, it becomes clearer how individuals can hold attitudes that value justice and equity, and yet maintain deep-seated prejudice and negative bias. A dual attitude perspective supports aversive racism theory which asserts that White people often sustain strong convictions regarding fairness, justice, and racial equality while still experiencing uneasiness, discomfort, and fear when around Black people (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). The multiple systems of reasoning model also affirm cognitive developmental models

and, similarly, racial identity development models, both of which allow individuals to hold characteristics of two different stages of development simultaneously with respect to issues of multiculturalism. Finally, this framework offers an additional explanation for the findings of Katz and Hass's (1988) study of racial ambivalence and dual cognitive structures that discovered the presence of independent dimensions of attitudes towards Black people in White students that were linked to discrete value orientations.

A New Approach

A deeper understanding of the theories of attitude change reveals a complex world that allows spaces for multiple complex attitudes towards one person, group, or idea. The once black and white interpretation of prejudice becomes much more shaded as ideas are tagged, inhibited, repressed, and opposed in intersecting mental processes. Ultimately, the professional and ethical standards that counselors uphold demand fair and equitable treatment of all clients from all backgrounds. So, while it is important to balance a nuanced and complex understanding of implicit cognitions, it too is imperative that client's experiences are free of prejudicial and discriminatory treatment. A deeper understanding of implicit cognitions should in no way be used to excuse discrepant treatment outcomes, but rather should be used to fuel theories and studies aimed at eliminating prejudicial treatment of clients. Many years have passed since scientists first hypothesized the hierarchical organization of the brain that makes halting prejudiced thoughts possible (Masters, 1992). Today, implicit attitudes in counselor trainees, counselors, and counselor educators still pose a significant risk to the clients who are impacted by them.

In light of this problem, many scholars have offered perspectives on how to reduce bias with varying levels of theoretical or empirical support. Among these, reconditioning attitudes,

making long term commitments to change, incorporating bias reducing systems, creating positive associations, engaging emotionally, flooding, self-identification, interrupting neural pathways, increasing self-awareness, lovingkindness meditation, affirmative action, blinding, neurocounseling, taking the IAT, habituation, multicultural training, immersion experiences, and interpersonal confrontation have been noted (Abreu, 2001; Boysen, 2010; Burgess et al., 2017; Byrne & Tanesini, 2015; Castillo et al., 2007; Czopp et al., 2006; Faigman et al., 2012; Greenwald & Binaji, 1995; Mattan et al., 2018; Mizock & Harkins, 2011; Rydell & McConnell, 2006). Nonetheless, most prescribed strategies in literature still require experimental backing.

Summary

Dual processing models provide a helpful explanation for the high levels of bias that we see in various professions, especially those that esteem egalitarian values. The introduction of the multicultural counseling competencies revolutionized the field of counseling and ushered in the current training model. Unfortunately, a focus on implicit bias has not been sustained since they were first addressed in original competencies (Sue et al., 1992). Many have attempted to address biases through efforts focused on building competency and self-awareness. The scant body of literature in counseling currently suggests that an increase in awareness is not definitively followed by implicit attitude change (Boysen & Vogel, 2008; Castillo et al., 2007). Thus, more research is needed to determine just how, if at all, students in counselor training programs are acknowledging their own implicit biases and working toward attitude change. Further exploration is also needed to understand the processes of attitude change within a dual processing framework (Bohner & Dickel, 2011; Mattan et al., 2018). Within counselor education, studies exploring students' experiences with dissonance associated with conflicting

attitudes and their reflections on experiences that led to a reduction in bias should be conducted

to provide a better understanding of how the training process influences attitude change.

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

Introduction

In Chapter Two, it was established that counselors at all levels likely harbor relevant levels of implicit bias. This chapter will describe and explain the procedure used in this study to explore counselors' experiences with their biases. This chapter will also explore the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings that went into the selection of the method, and the implementation of the study. Finally, this chapter will discuss the author's positionality with respect to the current study and the identified phenomenon of interest.

Although counseling training programs focused on reducing student's biases invoke the ACA multicultural counseling competencies (Sue et al., 1992) and the multicultural and social justice competencies (Ratts et al., 2016), little is known about how counseling professionals are responding to their training in this area. This is at least partially because students are capable of creating associations through two independent memory systems, each with a different way of processing new information (Bohner & Dickel, 2011). These independently operating memory systems make it possible for students to increase their awareness of personal bias in their quick processing memory system and simultaneously experience no change to the implicit attitudes in their slower processing memory system. To best understand to how these two systems interact from a student's subjective experience, and learn how, if at all, counseling students discover, acknowledge, and address their personal implicit biases/attitudes during their training programs, investigation into students' lived experience is needed.

An inquiry into the lived experiences of students learning about their personal and implicit biases in counseling training programs would offer valuable insight into whether students are consciously reconciling their implicit and explicit attitudes and, if so, how they are accomplishing this feat. The study of human experience from a subjective perspective has been practiced for centuries through the discipline of phenomenology (Sokolowski, 2000). Edmund Husserl, considered the father of phenomenology, suggested that a phenomenon could be understood at its essence through pure description using detailed language (Husserl, 1927; D. W. Smith, 2006). As counseling students learn about, engage, and address their biases, the phenomenon of interest of this study appears. Such a phenomenon is perceived in the student's lifeworld, has context, can be described, and has interpretable meaning (J. A. Smith, 2009/2012). At the heart of this study is the goal of gaining a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of students' experiences with their biases and is summarized by the overarching research question: *What are White American counselors' lived experiences with navigating and addressing person implicit biases?* Because the experience of navigating implicit biases can potentially be widely varied and not restricted to one point in time, this study will primarily focus on counselors' experiences stemming from their training programs. Thus, a narrower secondary research question has also been included: *What are White American counselors' experiences of learning about personal implicit bias in multicultural counseling training*? The assumptions, philosophy, and techniques of phenomenology will be employed to answer these research questions.

Philosophical Context

One of the foundational tenets of phenomenology is the ontological belief that an individual's awareness does not occur or exist in isolation (D. W. Smith, 2006; Sokolowski, 2000). Husserl insisted that a person's awareness must be *of* something and could not exist on its

43

own in a general sense (Husserl, 1927). From this assumption came the foundational

phenomenological concept of intentionality (Sokolowski, 2000). Intentionality is a fundamental

understanding that consciousness is intertwined with our awareness of the world around us and

cannot exist without an object of our awareness (Sokolowski, 2000). This concept, championed

by Husserl and others, was a departure from the prevailing thinking of the early twentieth

century that carried forth ideologies from the enlightenment period. Philosophers like René

Descartes, John Locke, and Thomas Hobbes had previously popularized the notion that the mind

was independent from everything else around it in the world, and thus, could objectively observe

and investigate the world around it (D. W. Smith, 2006, Vagle, 2018). This thinking drove a

momentous scientific movement based on positivism and empiricism (Vagle, 2018). However,

the concept of intentionality, further expanded upon by phenomenologists like Martin Heidegger

and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, debated the cartesian notion that human consciousness was

uniquely divine and was encapsulated from the rest of the world (D. W. Smith, 2006). Husserl

stressed that human beings' awareness is always directed towards something, and consciousness

is inextricably intertwined with their perceptions *of* things, experiences, and phenomena.

The Intentionality of the Unconscious

To answer the research questions of this study, the researcher is concerned with exploring

counselors' perceptions of phenomena related to their experiences with implicit bias. One

challenge that must be addressed in the application of phenomenological philosophy to the

presented inquiry has to do with the notion of perception. Implicit biases and attitudes are

thought to be imperceptible; that is, they are unavailable to introspection (Greenwald & Binaji,

1995). Psychologists have described them as operating from the unconscious along with the

motivations for many other unpredictable behaviors (Greenwald & Binaji, 1995). In this study,

the aim is to learn more about students' experiences with unconscious attitudes which might at first seem impossible with phenomenological methods that are attuned to exploring subjective perceptions.

Nonetheless, rather than finding unconscious thoughts to be outside of the purview of phenomenology, French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty described the unconscious as the "Urgemeinshaftung of our intentional life;" that is, the parts of us that are in one another (Merleau-Ponty, 1968). He felt that it is the unconscious itself that connects us to each other in intentional constellations. Merleau-Ponty drew an comparison with human sexuality, offering that human beings still experience the effects of unconscious intentionality within our bodies without always being aware of it (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, 1982). While we are not always perceptive of our connectedness, or *Ineinander,* we are constantly aware of its impact (Merleau-Ponty, 1968).

Additionally, Romanyshyn (1977) further explains that perception of the unconscious feelings "belong neither to [oneself] nor to the other, but between then, just as the perceivable things belongs neither to the one who perceives, nor to what is perceived, but between them" (p. 218). In other words, Romanyshyn suggests that while a perception might not be conscious to an individual, it maintains intentionality with its surroundings, including the people and systems who might be directly impacted by it. This supposition points to intentional connections between unconscious thoughts, the perceptions of those thoughts, and the external consequences of unconscious biases. These external artifacts are relevant to the primary focus of the proposed study. As stated in Chapter Two, with respect to implicit biases, our goal as clinicians is to prevent unknown interactions that harm clients or hinder them from receiving the best treatment possible (Pedersen, 1987).

For the purposes of this study, the concept of intentionality is important for numerous reasons. One of these reasons relates to the intentional connection between the researcher and the study participants. Phenomenologists refer to *reduction* to describe the researcher's responsibility to account for their prejudices (Vagle, 2018). Nonetheless, participants' reactions to the researcher are a result of intentionality as well, and consciously or unconsciously impact their perception. As a tallish, younger, Black man with darker complexion, I must be aware of the connection between myself and the participants and the context that creates.

Interpretive Phenomenology

Historically, the movement from descriptive to interpretive phenomenology came with Heidegger, who through hermeneutics offered an argument for the importance of context (D. W. Smith, 2006). This dichotomy has endured since Heidegger's time, and now, contemporary researchers are offering alternative approaches to phenomenology that do away with this distinction (Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2020). Still, Heidegger's focus on the structures of interpretation and meaning making built on Husserl's descriptive phenomenology and brought attention to the impact social forces have on the processes of perceiving and experiencing (Van Manen, 2016). Contextual factors have an influence because descriptions can be mediated by expression (Van Manen, 2016). Jean-Paul Sartre (1956) highlights the role of context by describing how a change in mode of awareness results from the realization that one is being watched in their completion of a task, thus moving the actor from unreflective conscious experience to an experience framed by self-awareness. Thus, it is our contextualized interpretation of an experience that defines it.

Returning to the research question, which focuses on the experiences counseling students have had navigating their implicit biases during their training programs, the discussion shifts to

46

exploring the appropriateness of phenomenology. To explore all the experiences counselors

undergo in attempting to navigate their implicit biases, we acknowledge that this methodology

would: (a) attend to the mental processes of experience and perception; (b) account for the

interpretive processes individuals undergo when perceiving an event; (c) take into consideration

an individual's awareness of their own experience; (d) account for their interpretation of those

experiences and their meaning making; and (f), acknowledge their perception of self and others

through this process. While phenomenology was a suitable method and philosophy for exploring

these ideas, it was also important to consider selecting a phenomenological perspective that

would account for the contextual nature of the phenomenon in question, especially since the

study participants were temporally removed from their counseling training experiences. We also

needed a method that could rationalize changes in a counselor's intentionality resulting from

evolving contexts, particularly the context created by the sociocultural climate at the time of the

study. Thus, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was appropriate because it accepts

and emphasizes the role that the researcher plays in interpreting participants' experiences within

the participants individual context (J.A. Smith, 2009/2012).

Critics of IPA argue that it, like many other contemporary approaches to conducting

phenomenological research, moves away from Husserl's original position that an experience

should be examined by focusing on the specific thing and the subjective experience of it

(Husserl, 1927; J. A. Smith, 2009/2012). IPA, following after the Heideggerian tradition, gives

more weight to the influence of circumstantial factors and their effect on the experience of a

phenomenon. To account for this context, IPA researchers must engage with a hermeneutic

process to interpret the phenomenon itself which is contrary to Husserl's original directive that

47

we should 'go back to the things themselves' in order to describe a phenomenon purely and the ways in which it might transcend a particular context (Husserl, 1927).

However, an IPA approach to this study was advantageous because it accommodated the fluidity of phenomena and interpreted the participants' interpretation of those phenomena using context and the understanding that intentionality is dynamic (J.A. Smith, 2009/2012). In the context of this study, the participants' perceptions of their biases were expected to be subjective and dependent on the level of awareness of their owner, the interpretation their owner makes, and the surrounding context in which their observations are perceived or rewritten. J. A. Smith (2009/2012) identifies these simultaneous processes of interpretation as a dual hermeneutic, because the research participant is making meaning of their experience, and the researcher is making meaning of the participant's description.

In interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), the contextual interpretation of experiences is imbued with significance and meaning (J.A. Smith, 2009/2012). Those meanings relate to psychological, cognitive, and emotional domains and have existential consequences. This infers that the essence of an experience for an individual should be interpreted from the meaning that is attributed to it. Invariably, this meaning is heavily impacted by context, so to best understand the phenomenon of concern, it is important to examine the broader context in which we are studying it.

The Current Sociocultural Context

Following the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in the spring of 2020, the ensuing social climate demanded the consideration of context within a study focused on implicit attitudes. With worldwide protests and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement, renewed attention to racial injustice brought attention to social problems traditionally overlooked

in the United States (Richeson, 2020). The resulting focus on systemic racism and police

brutality, as well as an upcoming presidential election all renewed interest in conversations about

bias. Because study participants engaging in conversations about their experiences with race,

gender, and religious biases are highly likely to interpret their own experiences with bias within

the context of the broader social climate, it is important that the study design helps to

accommodate the dynamic nature of participant perceptions. Allison (2005) suggests:

> "Meaning can never be isolated or held in abstraction from its context, e.g., its linguistic,
> semiotic, or historical context. Each such context is itself a system of reference, a system
> of signifiers, whose function and reality point beyond the present."

Allison's words imply that any phenomenological study seeking to understand an individual's

perception of an experience with implicit biases must be considered within the context of history,

language, and the prevailing power structures. The current social context impacts the way that

study participants attribute meaning to their experiences as well, introducing variability in those

perceptions as a function of time.

With a renewed focus on the role implicit biases have played in upholding systems of

oppression, context must be taken into consideration when conducting a phenomenological study

that explores counseling students' personal experiences navigating implicit biases. This new

social context was relevant to the way that professional counselors remembered their training

experiences. Therefore, IPA was an appropriate method because it took a position between

hermeneutics of empathy and hermeneutics of suspicion. Smith (J. A. Smith, 2009) refers to this

center position as hermeneutics of questioning. In hermeneutics of empathy, the researcher

attempts to reconstruct the participants original experience from their descriptions from the

participant's perspective. In hermeneutics of suspicion, the researcher attempts to draw out

contextual meanings that will shed light on the phenomenon (Ricoeur, 1970). By adhering to hermeneutics of questioning, IPA acknowledges the importance of context within the participant's descriptions but also tracks how an individual's relationship to a lived experience might morph through different layers of interpretation. Vagle (2018) suggests that context not only affects the perception of a phenomenon but shapes and provokes the phenomenon itself. In this study, the context of the learning environment, the prevailing social forces (or zeitgeist), cultural background of the study participants, and motives for participating all have an impact on the phenomena.

Social Justice and Ethical Considerations

Despite having philosophical origins, phenomenology can be used to explore politically oriented problems, especially when coupled with social justice oriented conceptual frameworks (Vagle, 2018). At its foundation, this study is concerned with inequitable treatment that minoritized groups receive in mental healthcare (APA, 2017). Regarding counselor education, this study aims to help address systemic problems in training related to the cultural competence of treatment providers, stigma towards minoritized groups, and problems with trust in the healthcare system (APA, 2017). Further, Vagle (2018) argues that social justice-oriented research ought to not only attend to a social need, but also use methodologies and research paradigms that can elevate certain perspectives and infuse meaning into the findings (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis approach provided an opportunity for researchers to take a closer look at multiple contexts of human experiences and decentralize Eurocentric approaches to studying lived experiences (Tillman, 2002).

This study was conducted according to the ethical guidelines established by the American Counseling Association (ACA, 2014), and its protocol was submitted to the William and Mary

internal review board for human subjects certification. Due to the sensitive and personal nature of the phenomenon in this study, special attention was taken to respect the participants' autonomy and to uphold the principles of veracity and fidelity (Hays & Singh, 2011). Additional care was taken by the researcher to prioritize the relationships with study participants forming a rapport that exhibited respect and fairness. This involved careful explanation of the consent agreement and thorough description the parameters, purpose, and intent of the study while taking care to avoid any deception (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Good qualitative research practice involves authentically representing the participants' voices to ensure the credibility of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ethical considerations extend to my role as the researcher in this context. My identity as a professional counselor had to be sidelined in this study to allow the participants' voices to be elevated. This meant having interactions with participants to elicit their multiple and shifting perspectives rather than encouraging catharsis or personal growth. The researcher had to respect the boundaries of the participants and limit processing to a level that was only beneficial to the objective of understanding the participants' experience. Follow up interviews were conducted to capture any evolution in participant's perspectives. Also, the researcher's ethical duty included taking necessary steps to protect the participant's personal information and identity and minimize and eliminate their exposure to risk (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Again, it is important to acknowledge that a study about implicit biases must take extra steps to address the potential impact of the researcher's biases. This involves bringing attention to personal biases that might influence the methodology, axiology, ontology, epistemology utilized in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This consideration will be further discussed in the researcher as instrument section.

<center>**Procedure**</center>

Data collection in this study was conducted according to steps outlined by J. A. Smith (2009/2012). Phenomenological materials were analyzed, and the findings are reported in Chapter Four.

Research Questions and Protocol

In addition to addressing a need for more research on the implicit biases counselors hold, this study was born from my experiences (both as a student and a professional) that brought into question the degree to which clinicians are able to understand and bracket their personal values, beliefs, and assumptions when working with clients of color. In outlining the protocol for this study, the research questions are restated here:

1. What are White American counselors' lived experiences with navigating and addressing personal implicit biases?

2. What are White American counselors' experiences of learning about personal implicit bias in multicultural counseling training?

In this case, the phenomenon refers to counselors' experiences of navigating their implicit biases during and after their training programs. While ambiguous, the word 'navigating' is intended to capture a variety of experiences students encounter, including but not limited to, discovery of personal biases, experiences of dissonance, and ways that addressing biases was avoided or undertaken. Special attention was paid to the selection of criteria for participation, because allowing too much variation in the identified phenomenon could limit the dependability and transferability of the findings.

Qualitative materials for this study were gathered using semi-structured interviews focused on the participants' experiences with implicit bias during their master's counseling

<center>52</center>

training program. All interviews were conducted using Zoom video comferencing, but participants had the option of leaving their cameras off if it made them feel more comfortable. The interview format was kept open and flexible to allow for rich descriptions of various types of phenomena that might be related to the research question to enter the conversation. The interview schedule included a short introduction to the study including a pre-briefing, where mutually understood definitions for implicit bias and other relevant terms were established. The researcher asked open ended descriptive and narrative questions with prompts and probes following up participant responses. Follow-up interviews were conducted with all participants 5-10 days after the initial meeting to complete member checking and to gather any reflections that might have come following the first interview. As a condition of participation, participants were asked to provide written reflective materials produced during their master's program, either reflection journals or papers, that might help provide insight into their relationship with their implicit biases over time. Some participants chose to share other artifacts such as discussion board posts and written assignments that reflected their experiences with their implicit biases.

Participants and Recruitment

Reason & Rowan (1981) presented a perspective on human activity research that was focused on collaboration and emphasized doing research with people rather than on them. This idea came out of humanistic and constructionist paradigms that attempted to decentralize the researcher's perspective and honor multiple truths (J. A. Smith, 1994). Considering participants as co-researchers and co-analysts offers important perspective on social scientific inquiry that deconstructs power differentials and de-possesses the participant's data (Reason & Rowan, 1981; West-Olatungi et al., 2014). Because this study involved cross-cultural interaction during data collection, it was particularly important to model egalitarian values for future cross-cultural

53

studies, and to demonstrate an approach that counters a historical pattern of culturally insensitive research practices (West-Olatungi et al., 2014). Thus, an emphasis was placed on humanizing co-participants and treating their descriptions with sensitivity and reverence.

As previously described in Chapter Two, the potential for implicit bias to cause harm to clients through systemic processes is monumental. Hence, the representativeness of the sample was important to consider when constructing a study targeted at making social change in the lived world. As part of a purposeful selection of participants, specific criteria were considered to create a participant pool that could adequately answer the research question and provide meaningful feedback that will be relevant to larger problems within the field of counseling. A racially homogenous group of participants was favored for this study, because it was expected that variation in racial identity of participants would account for variation in their experiences in counselor training programs, particularly in the area of implicit bias. Because most counseling students are White/Caucasian (CACREP 2018), this was the racial group that was selected to comprise the participant pool. Substantive validation, the degree to which research produces results that make a significant contribution to the profession, requires that criteria for participation are carefully selected to provide a relevant perspective (Hays & Singh, 2011). To account for the range of multiple, varied, and partial contexts within a White counseling student's experience, the researcher recruited a purposive sample of individuals that was stratified over age groups and gender identities.

Knowing that intentionality shifts according to time and context, the researcher selected participants for this study who had completed their master's degrees between 2018 and 2019. This provided a group of participants who were not far removed from their training experience, and whose counseling training was completed before the events that unfolded in the spring of

2020 following the killing of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. Thus, their experiences learning about implicit bias during their master's training would not be influenced by the sociocultural context that ensued.

J. A. Smith (2009/2012) asserts that there is no prescribed right size for IPA studies, but the number of participants in the sample should depend on the depth of analysis planned by the researcher and the richness of the individual cases. In contrast with quantitative research, it is more favorable to collect information from only the number of participants who are needed to provide detailed information about the phenomenon rather than trying to achieve a specific number of participants or a specified sample size (Hays & Singh, 2011). To ensure that an adequate number of authentic personal accounts were recorded, the researcher planned to conduct 8-12 initial and follow up interviews. A total of eleven initial and eleven follow up interviews were completed. One individual did not meet the criteria for the study and thus ten participants were included in data analysis. The individual interview that was not included in data analysis was instrumental in testing and refining the interview schedule. Throughout the study, participant's identities were kept confidential, and their data was referenced using an alias of their choosing.

The inclusion criteria for the study required participants to be: (a) White or Caucasian; (b) graduates of a CACREP accredited counseling program; (c) one to two years removed from their graduation; and (d) able to share reflective journals or papers that address personal bias. Participants were purposefully recruited from a variety of sources including national counseling organizations, social media groups, and personal contacts. Additionally, participants were identified from varying parts of the country, graduating institution size, and community settings. Ultimately, most participants were recruited through the professional social media platform,

LinkedIn. Participants were invited to participate in the study via an invitation to connect over LinkedIn. After making a connection on the social media platform, participants were sent an official invitation letter via email and subsequently sent the consent form prior to the first interview. General demographic information for all participants can be found in the table below.

Table 1

Summary of Participants

Participant (Pseudonym)	Gender Identity	Age	State of Residence	Degree Focus
Aly	F	54	VA	Clinical Mental Health
Charley	F	33	OH	Clinical Mental Health
Holly	F	26	OR	Marriage and Family
Jessica	F	25	TX	Clinical Mental Health
John	M	26	MT	Marriage and Family
Lindsey	F	45	AL	Clinical Mental Health
Mary	F	26	VA	Clinical Mental Health
Robert	M	42	TX	Clinical Mental Health (Online)
Sally	F	40	UT	Clinical Mental Health (Online)
Will	M	27	IL	Clinical Mental Health

Trustworthiness/Credibility

Validity in qualitative research describes the accuracy and credibility of the findings of a study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, Hays & Singh, 2011). To increase the credibility of this study, several steps were taken. Primarily, the use of thick and rich description with substantial detail and context contributed to the vividness of the study and the meaningfulness of its findings

(Denzin, 2001). To accomplish this, the researcher dug for meaning beyond the basic facts, feelings, and observations presented during an interview (Hays & Singh, 2011). Additionally, IPA research attends to how context and intentionality shift over time, so a rich description provided details about how participants' relationships with their biases evolved as well. This is consistent with Denzin's (1989) instruction that a thick description should give context, provide meaning that helps to organize action, and traces the development and evolution of an event. Other trustworthiness strategies included the use of triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing.

Triangulation

Triangulation, which refers to analysis of data from multiple sources, was accomplished through the completion of a follow up interview, and a review of participants' reflective writing sample to understand changes, similarities, authenticity, and evolution of the identified phenomenon. During follow up interviews, participants were asked about their reaction to the first interview and probed to see if there were any other details or experiences that they wanted to share or amend from the first interview. The written artifacts that participants typically shared were journals, papers, or other assignments written during the time in their counseling training program. These documents shed light on the participants' interaction with their own biases during that time.

Member Checking

Creswell and Creswell (2018) identify member checking as another way to establish trustworthiness. In this study, the researcher provided key descriptions of relevant terms (e.g., the phrases "implicit bias" and "navigate") and clarified participants' responses throughout the interview. Participants were given space to ask questions to clarify their understanding of the

difference between an implicit and explicit bias. Prior to the collection any data, the researcher also completed practice interviews to better understand the nature of the phenomenon and verify the ability of the interview schedule to respond to the research question. Because the primary goal of this research was to capture responses to the lived phenomenon and not to form or apply existing theories, it was necessary to use creativity and flexibility in data collection methods (J. A. Smith 2009/2012). This meant that the researcher needed to maintain a heavy reliance on open-ended questions and to use an interview format that was flexible. The interview schedule contained options for follow up questions that would allow the interview to move in different directions as necessary but still maintain a general sequencing of questions. A copy of the semi-structured interview schedule can be found in Appendix C. During the follow up interview participants were given an opportunity to clarify or elaborate on their descriptions from the first interview. Participants also had final approval of transcripts from both interviews before data analysis begun.

Peer Debriefing

Finally, to challenge the assumptions and perspectives of the researcher, peer debriefing was used as a method to create an external check and balance throughout the study. Peer debriefing involved consultation with qualified experts who could critique or dispute my decision making, interpretations, or assumptions. This strategy was especially important, because it helped address my implicit biases as they might influence the design of the study, data collection, data analysis, and composition of the findings.

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Data Analysis

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IPA is an approach to understanding lived experience that attempts to understand the participant's experience, both from their frame of reference and from a secondary frame of

reference to gain first- and third-person perspectives. Successful interpretations are principally based within the text of phenomenological materials. While the researcher might draw out the meaning of the experience in data analysis, this is not done through the importation of other interpretations from outside of the text. IPA is geared towards learning about the participant and their experience to gain a clearer understanding of the phenomenon.

After all interviews were completed, they were transcribed and sent back to the participants for member checking. Initial and follow up interviews were compiled together along with the participants writing artifact to be analyzed as one single case in accordance with IPA's ideographic emphasis. Data analysis was completed according to the process for IPA described by Smith (2009/2012):

1. Reading and rereading: completing an initial reading of the first transcript jotting down general reactions.

2. Initial noting: writing preliminary descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual comments in the margin of the case transcript.

3. Development of emergent themes: reading the transcript and preliminary comments from step 2 and identifying emergent themes.

4. Searching for connections across emergent themes: within the case.

5. Moving to the next case: and repeating steps 1-4 for the rest of the participants.

6. Looking for patterns across cases.

Because of IPA's ideographic focus, analysis is first completed within a case to develop a personal understanding of the participant's experience, and then across cases to build on the understanding of the phenomenon. After themes were identified for each case, the researcher created a table to organize themes for all ten participants and developed superordinate themes

and subthemes. Because of the large sample of participants, larger patterns and connections among emergent themes were explored on a cross case basis rather than within cases (J. A. Smith, 2009/2012).

Researcher as Instrument

As mentioned previously, my interest in this study grew from concerns I had as a master's student, clinician, and teaching assistant regarding a trainee's ability graduate from a counseling program while still harboring significant personal biases. While heeding the common cautions that completing a counseling degree would require a substantial amount of personal growth and reflection, I still encountered personal challenges as a master's student, including a reevaluation of my personal values and facing questions about my identity. Matriculating at a predominantly White institution brought difficulties of its own, including struggles with imposter syndrome. Raised in a large, Christian, African/African American, middle class family, my awareness of my differentness hung over me in whatever I did, as did a fear of being found to have unpopular perspectives. As a racial minority I was constantly concerned that my world view could be missing something—perspectives of the mainstream—and that missing that thing would make me a less effective counselor. I also wrestled with the parts of myself that I felt could not conform to the curriculum, to the mainstream, or prevailing perspectives. It was at that time I recognized that I, along with every other human counselor in my program, had blind spots.

In addition to blind spots, I immediately became aware of the reality that I had personal preferences and tendencies. Acquiescing to Carl Rogers's base conditions was easy, because it aligned with my Christian worldview (as Carl Rogers himself grew up in a Christian home), but just the same, I knew that there had to be critical ideas that were not similarly aligned. For instance, I doubted a counselor's ability to leave their values "at the door" as I was being taught

to do at the time. I questioned whether a counselor could (and should) do this, and if I had, could it mean that I was turning my back on my beliefs? However, for me, this questioning highlighted the complexities associated with a counselor's ability to operate in an unbiased way. After seven years of clinical practice, I have come to understand the importance of not projecting value systems onto clients in a much more complex and nuanced way. I recognized that my blind spots and biases grew out of my specific upbringing and that the same is true for any counselor. The way that we bring those biases into the counseling space, both consciously and unconsciously, has a critical impact on the effectiveness of the ensuing therapy. Understanding this process is paramount.

Similarly, the way we bring our biases into the development, execution, and analysis of a phenomenological inquiry influences the usefulness of the research. In a phenomenological sense, the research participants and the researcher are tied together and to the rest of the world by threads of intentionality (Merleau-Ponty, 1945). Dahlberg (2006) argues that while reduction is important in research, it would be impossible to cut those threads. Nonetheless, she advises that to do phenomenological research, we much loosen those threads to separate ourselves from the phenomena and the meaning that surrounds us. How to best accomplish this task is at the heart of the debate between bracketing and bridling, a debate that highlights the complicated interplay of intention and bias.

My Bias, My Reflexivity

Originally described by Husserl, the original method for mitigating biases in phenomenological studies is the process of *epoche* or bracketing, which involves the suspension of judgement and previous understandings of the natural world (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This suspension in judgement is part of phenomenological reduction, and it is intended to help the

researcher to separate themself from the phenomena of study in order to understand the pure essence of it (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In contrast, the method of bridling is slightly different, in that while bracketing involves prohibiting past knowledge from being engaged (Giorgi, 2009), the process of bridling looks forward to limit the future influence of pre-understandings on the present (Dahlberg et al., 2008).

In phenomenological studies, bridling is considered a part of reflexive practice. Reflexive practice is defined as the self-reflections of the researcher throughout the completion of the study that describe how the researcher is positioned in relation to the topic of study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Hays & Singh, 2011). It should include documentation of the researcher's experiences or positionality with the specific phenomena as well as information about the experiences that have shaped the researcher's interpretation of the phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Vagle offers extensive descriptions of reflexivity and endorses reflexive practice as a method of understanding, "what frames [the researcher's] seeing" (2018, p. 153) while also continuing to acknowledge that the researcher's way of seeing is always changing.

Another way of practicing reflexivity involves reflecting on how a researcher positions herself of himself in relation to the phenomenon of study and considering the commitment that the researcher makes to question and evaluate that positionality (Macbeth, 2001). This practice includes reflexion on potential biases that the researcher holds. Throughout the study I became aware that my positionality was dynamic and contextual. Part of my reflexive practice involved considering my own experience with the phenomenon. In these reflections, I realized that I have noticed myself both avoiding and exploring my unknown biases in different instances. While I found neither to be very comfortable, it seemed that avoiding the knowledge of my biases put me

at risk of negligent and potentially maleficent practice, which I decided was definitely at odds with my values.

Van Manen (1997) states that our greatest hinderance at the outset of a phenomenological study is not what we do not know, but what we already do know. He states that our preunderstandings, assumptions, and existing knowledge predispose us to certain interpretations of phenomena prematurely. This precisely describes how biases can mislead us and cause us to be overly dependent on what we might have considered "common sense" (Van Manen, 1997, p 46). Researchers who bracket hold the belief that it is possible to separate themselves, their prior assumptions, and their experiences from their understanding of a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, considering the topic of study and the hidden nature of implicit biases, bridling was the preferred method in this study for keeping an account of my values, assumptions, beliefs, and positionality with the phenomenon. Because implicit biases are thought to live outside of an individual's conscious awareness (Greenwald & Binaji, 1995), making the assumption that the researcher had effectively suspended his judgements could potentially introduce other unknown biases. Therefore, careful monitoring and naming of biases, judgements, and assumptions through the act of bridling was preferred in this study.

Looking more broadly at how to engage in reflexive practice during this study, I decided to utilize a reflexive journal (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I used this journal to record my thoughts, decision making process, reactions, and questions throughout the study. Vagle (2018) recommends that reflexion additionally keeps track of:

1. Moments when we instinctively connect or disconnect with what we say or observe,

2. Our individual assumptions of normality,

3. The bottom-line beliefs, perspectives, or perceptions that we resist shedding,

4. And the moments in which we are shocked by what we observe.

Throughout the study, it was imperative for me to pay attention to the ways that my own personal biases and reactions might influence the collection, analysis, and report of the participant data. During data collection, I took steps to process my reactions to the interviews with peer debriefers. Members of my dissertation committee were able to ask me questions about my approach to the interviews and things that stood out to me. Through these conversations, I was given opportunities to identify how my personal beliefs and interests might have influenced the interviews. After each initial interview with a participant, I conducted member checking with the participant to ensure that their descriptions were not being mischaracterized or misunderstood. During the data analysis and writeup, I consulted with my committee to explore ways that my own biases could be influencing the noting and commenting processes. The dissertation committee was consulted following every step of data analysis including the initial readings, initial noting, descriptive commenting, development of emergent themes, and development of superordinate themes. This constant communication helped identify areas where my bias might interfere with the research process. At this juncture, I further explore my own positionality to this study and how my perspectives have helped shape its parameters.

My Positionality with the Phenomenon

Accepting the ACA's professional ethical code that could be circumstantially supersede my personal beliefs system was especially challenging for me. For several years I have been working with minoritized families, typically with lower incomes, and with adolescents who have been involved in the criminal justice system. After working with other mental health professionals who I had seen make judgements based on implicit attitudes and not what was clinically indicated, it was clear to me that counselors do in fact operate with biases not

consistent with the positions outlined in our profession's code of ethics. Specifically, it has been common to hear licensed professionals make comments about their inability to work with people who had committed certain types of crimes, such as sexual offenses against minors. I have also frequently heard licensed professionals describe children from minoritized ethnic groups as "unable" to grow in certain ways and have even seen clinicians attempting to normalize this thinking in therapy. These dedicated mental health professionals, while espousing egalitarian and altruistic values, would unquestionably affirm codes A.11.b and E.5.c. of the American Counseling Association (2014) code of ethics (which require professionals to refrain from imposing their values especially when they are discriminatory and to avoid pathologizing certain groups respectively). What is clear, is that all professional counselors, myself included, also condescend to another set of codes buried in our unconscious.

Concerns about the ways that I and all other counselors might undermine our values of socially justice drives this study. Initially I was concerned with finding ways to reduce bias, but I was met with the reality that little is known about the nature of the relationship counselors have with their implicit biases. To my knowledge, the only time that counselors are formally required to challenge our biases is during their master's degree program, and even then, this is done with limited accountability. In addressing my positionality with this study, I made the assumption that all counselors have at different times defaulted to unconscious values, attitudes, and judgements in making clinical decisions at times when their ethical code should have held them to a different standard. Further, when considering the complexity associated with bracketing one's values, little is known about if and how counselors choose to do this at different points in their career.

As a master's student of color, I recognized that many of my biases remained unchallenged because I was rarely comfortable offering my opinions that so frequently clashed

65

with mainstream perspectives. For those who were privileged to remain in their comfort zones throughout their training, willfully or unconsciously, I wondered if their experiences allowed their biases to be challenged or preserved? Moreover, I wondered how counselors respond to the personal challenges that they have with select portions of the code of ethics? Do we assume that all counselors in training comprehend and accept the entirety of the ACA code of ethics and the fullness of its implications? During my training experience, I faced several challenges as a Black man and felt pressure to keep my opinions to myself. I did not feel comfortable as one of a few minorities, publicly wrestling with the parts of the code that I did not fully understand or agree with. Only with more experience did I come to see how attending to multiple value systems could introduce bias into my clinical work without my awareness, and how this could be to the detriment of my clients. Given my work history with minoritized populations and my concerns about counselors' experiences bracketing their values, the overarching question behind this proposed study emerged: Are vulnerable populations (racial minorities, low-income families, LGBTQ+ individuals, persons with disorders or disabilities) being impacted by the prejudices and biases that counselors retain following their training programs?

In this study, I chose to use only White participants because they make up the majority of all counselors (CACREP, 2018; Pack-Brown, 1999). It is common that White pre-service counselors must confront their racial biases in the course of their training and address their position of privilege within our society (Ancis & Szymanski, 2001; Castillo et al., 2006; Hayes et al 2004). Although this study was not exclusively focused on racism and racial prejudice, racial bias holds a unique place in the historical context of studies on implicit bias (Greenwald & Binaji, 1995), our current understanding of multicultural counseling education (Sue et al., 1992), and the historical context of this country (Sue et al., 2016).

As a Black researcher, I have given a lot of thought to what it means to conduct this study with an all-White group of participants. I recognize that I have my own hesitations about exploring the experiences of another racial group, despite there being a precedent for doing this type of cross-cultural research (Van de Vijver et al., 1997). In particular, numerous Western research traditions have historically been based on investigations into non-Western cultures (Hays & Singh, 2011). I believe that my trepidation in part comes from fear that some readers will question the validity of my research or become angry that it could cast many White counselors in an unfavorable light. I recognize that talking about implicit biases can be embarrassing because of what they reveal about us. Nonetheless, Chapter Two of this dissertation describes the myriad ways that unconscious attitudes can harm the individuals we as counselors are trying to help. Regardless of the color of my skin, I recognize that this study *needs* to be done for the sake of vulnerable and stigmatized clients and for counselors like myself who are more concerned about doing what is in the best interest of their clients than about saving face. It is imperative to understand how counselors are managing their biases, and the first step in this process involves going back to their introduction to implicit bias during CACREP training and getting an understanding of their response to it.

Potential Limitations and Additional Considerations

While drawing on a strong foundation of phenomenological methods, there are still several considerations to weigh in this study. Many of these considerations stem from the nature of the subject matter. This study required participants to reflect on their engagement with unconscious biases, which meant that their perspectives might be limited only to those biases that have become available to their conscious awareness. More specifically, it meant that participants in the proposed study would likely only be able to recall and focus on the limited

67

number of experiences with implicit bias that they were well acquainted with. Recollections of experiences with biases that are now a part of the participant's conscious awareness still made helpful contributions to this study, because participants were able to reference their perceptions during times that their biases were still hidden.

In a related sense, persisting unconscious biases were inevitably a part of the study as well. While some personal implicit attitudes may not have been known to the researcher or participants, these attitudes still played a role in the gathering of phenomenological material. Romanyshyn (1977) argues that interactions with the unconscious are still valid subjects of phenomenological study, because the unconscious subjects interact with the individual's lifeworld despite the actor's unawareness, and thus, intentionality is upheld. The consequences of Romanyshyn's argument are at least two-fold for this study. Firstly, the researcher needed to consider how individual implicit attitudes might impact the interview process and the collection of phenomenological material. Second, it was possible that the interview process would be an extension of the participants' experience navigating their personal biases. Follow up interviews and additional member checking were utilized to observe these possibilities as they might potentially unfold.

A potential limitation of this study came from the cross-cultural nature of the interviews. Participants may have been hesitant to speak authentically about their biases with an individual of a different race. Conducting audio only interviews and gathering reflective writing may have helped mitigate this concern. It was also possible that participants would feel socially pressured to participate in this study, believing that doing so would represent a confrontation of their biases. Moreover, participants in a study conducted by a Black researcher might have been tempted to share their experiences in a way that was favorable or describe their experiences with

a social desirability bias that inclined them over reports self-growth. The researcher was careful

to try to help participants feel as comfortable as possible while participating in a study that

required such vulnerability on the part of the participants.

Finally, the scope of this study was limited due to the complexity of the topic and the

dearth of information on individual experiences of counselors navigating their implicit biases.

While it was assumed that individuals from different racial and ethnic backgrounds held different

biases and therefore must navigate them differently during the training process, it was unknown

how those processes might differ. The same could be said of individuals of different ages,

socioeconomic backgrounds, and differing levels of cognitive development. This preliminary

study offered insight into the experiences of a representative group of White counselors and lays

the foundation for numerous subsequent investigations.

Ethical Considerations

The ACA (2014) code of ethics identifies several considerations for counselors

conducting human subjects research. Section G of the code of ethics applies to research

practices. These codes were observed throughout the course of the study. The researcher

obtained informed consent from the participants after detailing the purpose and procedure of the

study as well as describing the benefits or challenges that might be associated with participation

in the study. Participants were instructed that they had the freedom to withdraw their consent at

any time. Additionally, identifying participant information such as names and cities were

redacted from their transcripts, and participants were referred to by a pseudonym of their

choosing. In accordance with institution policies, this project was submitted for review to the

William & Mary School of Education institutional review board and was found to comply with

ethical standards thereby exempting it from formal human subjects committee review.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the appropriateness of phenomenology as a method for exploring this research question and provided rational for IPA as an approach for studying the research question. The researcher also discussed his positionality to the study and the phenomenon, and described his plan for reflexion throughout the study. Chapter Three also detailed the procedure by which the study was completed, and the steps taken to analyze the data that it yielded.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

"I imagine that if you weren't willing to look at the parts of yourself that are shadow material, you know, our anger, our prejudices, or our desire to harm, our defensiveness or desire to keep ourselves safe, even if other people aren't…that stuff—right now, I think there's more putting pressure on that. And there's an invitation there to look at what it is you believe, what it is that you really believe, not just public persona belief, but what I really feel about all of this. And it's exhausting. If you try to not look, I think there's something spiritually that will continue to put pressure on us until we just fricking surrender and say, 'okay, what it is that's in me, that it is harmful?'" (Sally)

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine just how, if at all, students in counselor training programs are acknowledging their own implicit biases and working toward attitude change. A social constructivist theoretical framework was applied throughout the analysis of all phenomenological materials to understand participants experiences. Participants ways of making meaning were considered throughout the data analysis process. Interpretation of participants' descriptions was guided by the social constructivist assumption that their experiences retained a psychosocial component.

This chapter contains quotations and descriptions from all ten participants detailing their experiences navigating their implicit biases. Their accounts represent experiences before, during, and after their time in their CACREP program that related to their experiences navigating implicit biases. The findings of this study come from thematic analysis of phenomenological

71

materials provided by the participants during semi-structured interviews and from written reflections composed during their master's program. Themes were identified within cases initially, and then analyzed across cases to produce the superordinate themes discussed in this chapter.

Participants Descriptions

Participants completed two semi-structured interviews and submitted a writing sample to fulfil their participation in this study. Initial interviews lasted between 60-130 minutes, and follow up interviews typically lasted between 15-60 minutes. Follow up interviews were done as a form of member checking and to offer opportunities for participants to elaborate on or correct any information that was shared during the first interview. Participants submitted writing samples that were commonly class reflections or papers that contained some reference to their personal implicit biases or their struggles with them. All interviews were conducted over Zoom with either audio or audio and video.

Aly

Aly is a 54-year-old White female who lives in Virginia. She completed her master's degree in clinical mental health counseling and currently practices in a rural area. Aly described her cultural background as Scotch-Irish, especially with respect to the foods that her family ate and noted that she was very big into her family history. She said that the most important thing to know about her experience with implicit biases is that she works on them all the time to make herself a better counselor. She said that if she does not address them, it only hurts her as a human.

Charley

Charley is a 33-year-old White female who lives in Ohio. She completed her master's degree in clinical mental health counseling and currently practices in a suburban area. Charley indicated that while she is not currently religious, her religious and culturally Jewish upbringing played a significant role in her life. Charley said that the most important thing to know about her experience with implicit biases was that they were a work in progress. She said that she is always making new connections and reaching deeper levels of understanding.

Holly

Holly is a 26-year-old White female who lives in Oregon. She completed her master's degree in marriage and family counseling and currently practices in a suburban area. Holly shared that she was raised by two White parents, one Jewish and one Catholic. She said that while she was raised Catholic, she considers herself to be a White Jew. Holly shared that the most important thing to know about her experience with implicit biases was that she wished that she had been involved in conversations about biases earlier in life, because she thinks that then they would feel less shameful, and reflecting on them would be part of a more automatic process.

Jessica

Jessica is a 25-year-old White female who lives in Texas. She completed her master's degree in clinical mental health counseling and currently practices in an urban area. Jessica described her cultural background as half Hispanic because her mother is from Mexico. She shared that her father has roots in Texas and is of Germanic Descent. Holly said that she identifies as White, because she feels like the world treats her like she's White. Jessica said that the most important thing to know about her experience with implicit biases is that her experiences have not been as easy as they might have sounded during her interviews. She said

that any life change is hard, but changes that you make because you realize that you have been doing wrong are harder, especially when your wrong doing involves hurting other people. She feels that she needs to continue to practice self-examination.

John

John is a 26-year-old White male who lives in Montana. He completed his master's degree in marriage and family counseling and currently practices in a rural area. John describes his cultural background as dabbled, but not very immersed. He identified that Montana is not a very culturally diverse state, and while he has had plenty of interactions with people of other cultures, he has not been able to do so in a way that is really immersive. John said that the most important thing to know about his experience with implicit biases, is that even in the rural state of Montana, counselors are still thinking about, talking about, and challenging personal implicit biases.

Lindsey

Lindsey is a 45-year-old White female who lives in Alabama. She completed her master's degree in clinical mental health counseling and currently practices in a suburban area. Lindsey describes her cultural background as White, southern, middle-upper class, and religious to a degree. She described herself as pretty privileged and said that she usually has found herself among the dominant culture wherever she went. Lindsey said that the most important thing to know about her experience with implicit biases is that she has made a conscious personal effort to do better and be better. She feels that even if she had not matriculated into a counseling program, she would have still felt it necessary to work on her personal biases and would have followed through on doing so.

Mary

Mary is a 26-year-old White female who lives in Virginia. She completed her master's degree in clinical mental health counseling and currently practices in a suburban area. Mary describes her cultural background as American and shared that she is originally from Pennsylvania. Mary said that the most important thing to know about her experience with implicit biases is that she knows that she has them, and she feels like they need to be a bigger part of counselor training in general.

Robert

Robert is a 42-year-old White male who lives in Texas. He completed his master's degree online in clinical mental health counseling and currently practices in an urban area. Robert described his heritage as largely German and English. Despite growing up in a lower socioeconomic area, he feels like he has come from a pretty good amount of privilege. He shared that lately he is very focused on deconstructing what it means to be White. Robert said that the most important thing to know about his experience with implicit biases is that the better that he understands the work that goes with addressing implicit biases, the more he sees work to be done.

Sally

Sally is a 40-year-old White female who lives in Utah. She completed her master's degree online in clinical mental health counseling and currently practices in a suburban area. Sally described her cultural backgrounds as upper-middle class, White, female, and non-religious. Sally shared that the most important thing to know about her experience with implicit biases was that she recognizes that she has them, and that her work on them is not complete. She

said that for her, healing is a lifetime project, and there is never a point at which she gets to say that she's done and has figured it out.

Will

Will is a 27-year-old White male who lives in Illinois. He completed his master's degree in clinical mental health counseling and currently practices in a rural area. Will described his cultural background sharing that he grew up in a Catholic family that was moving into the upper middle class. He also shared that his identity as a gay man was one of the more salient pieces of his cultural identity. Will said that the most important thing to know about his experience with implicit biases was that it is possible to feel well-prepared to handle it. He shared that his experience had involved a lot of trial and error, but experiences that he had which normalized his biases instead of intensifying the shame were the most important things he encountered in graduate school.

<div align="center">

Themes

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Processes outlined by J. A. Smith (2009/2012) for interpretive phenomenological analysis were used to analyze transcripts from both interviews with all participants and the writing sample that they submitted. All data were analyzed together, because writing samples and interviews included recollections of participants experiences navigating their implicit biases. Writing samples provided a means to triangulate data and capture how participants' perspectives of their experiences might have changed over time.

Data analysis yielded five superordinate themes (or superthemes), each with two subthemes relating to specific types of experiences participants described. The five overarching superthemes, each related to participants' experiences navigating implicit biases, are as follows and are listed in Table 2 along with their corresponding subthemes: (a) Formal and Interpersonal

Learning Experiences; (b) Building on an Identity; (c) My "Bias is a Pain in the Ass"; (d) Warring with Dissonance; and (e), Working with Unresolved "Shadow Material." It is important to note that these themes are not presented chronologically and do not represent an order of experiences described by participants. The superordinate themes correspond more closely to a group of perceptions experienced by the participants rather that the sequence in which they experienced them. Table 3 shows each subtheme with a quote that represents experiences associated with it.

Table 2

Superordinate and Most Frequently Occurring Themes

Superordinate Theme	Subthemes	Top Themes	Participants
Formal and Interpersonal Learning	Structured Learning	Overall coverage in program	Aly, Charley, Holly, Jessica, Mary, Lindsey, Robert, Sally, Will
		In class experiences	Charley, Holly, Jessica, John, Mary, Lindsey, Sally, Will
		Learning opportunities	Aly, Jessica, John, Mary, Lindsey, Robert, Sally, Will
	Learning Through Dialogue	Conversations about bias	All participants
		Confrontations	Charley, Holly, Jessica, John, Lindsey, Robert, Will
		Learning from others	Holly, Jessica, John, Lindsey, Robert, Sally, Will
Building on an Identity	The White Identity/Experience	Privilege	Charley, Holly, Jessica, John, Mary, Lindsey, Robert, Sally, Will
		Bias origins	Aly, Holly, Jessica, John, Mary, Lindsey, Robert, Sally, Will
		Personal values	Aly, Jessica, John, Mary, Lindsey, Sally, Will
	Growth Mindset	Normalizing that we all have biases	Aly, Holly, Jessica, John, Lindsey, Will
		Openness	Aly, Jessica, Lindsey, Robert, Will
		Growth and Curiosity	Aly, Jessica, John, Mary, Will
"My Bias is a Pain in the Ass"	Quantum Shifts and Deepening Awareness: "I'm Becoming a Racist"	"Whoa" moments	Aly, Mary, Lindsey, Robert, Sally, Will
		Reflection and awareness	All participants
		Discovering bias	All participants
	Internal Conflict and "Claustrophobia in White Skin"	Discomfort	Charley, Holly, Jessica, John, Mary, Lindsey, Sally, Will
		Fear	Charley, Jessica, John, Mary, Lindsey, Robert, Sally, Will
		Shame and embarrassment	Charley, Holly, Jessica, John, Mary, Lindsey, Robert, Sally
Warring with Dissonance	Addressing Biases	Working on biases	All participants
		Motivators	Charley, Holly, Jessica, John, Mary, Lindsey, Robert, Sally
		Never finished with the work	Aly, Charley, Jessica, Robert, Sally
	Internal conflict	Judging biases	Charley, Holly, Jessica, John, Mary, Lindsey, Robert, Will
		Things that prevent working on biases	All participants
		Social perception	Aly, Charley, Holly, Jessica, John, Mary, Robert, Sally, Will
Working with Unresolved "Shadow Material"	Adjusted Altruism	Wanting to be a good counselor	Aly, Charley, Mary, Lindsey, Robert, Sally
		Adjusted professional self-concept	Holly, Jessica, John, Lindsey, Robert, Sally, Will
		Not knowing what to do	Charley, Holly, Lindsey, Robert, Will
	Flying the Plane While Building It	Needing tools	Holly, Mary, Lindsey, Will
		Personal bias in session	Aly, Charley, Holly, John, Mary, Lindsey, Will
		Keeping bias out of work	Holly, Jessica, John, Mary, Lindsey

Table 3

Participant Direct Quotations by Subtheme

Superordinate Theme	Subthemes	Direct Quotation
Formal and Interpersonal Learning	Structured Learning	I feel like there was a little bit of talk about implicit biases, but, um, I do think it was probably more lacking in the program. Um, you know, just to have one class, and have it not have it be incorporated into other classes, Um, I think it was a disservice. (Mary)
	Learning Through Dialogue	Some of the conversations that escalated where, I think intense is the best way that I can describe it. And I think they were hard for some students, um, but really helpful for others. I hope that it did change the, I guess the minds of the people that struggle to understand what privilege was and how it operated in our country. (Jessica)
Building on an Identity	The White Identity/Experience	…that helps me understand so much more how an experience like mine could have happened. How my attitudes were formed unconsciously by a whole White culture. That, I don't know why I didn't have lots of non-White people in, in spaces with me when I was little. (Sally)
	Growth Mindset	It's definitely made me reflect on like my experience and seeing in my training and where I am now…I guess I'm still learning and growing…I'm still not done growing as a counselor and definitely not done growing as a person. Um, and so I guess just that there are still things that I, I need to continue to work on. (Jessica)
"My Bias is a Pain in the Ass"	Quantum Shifts and Deepening Awareness: "I'm Becoming a Racist"	"What do you do when you have a couple who comes in where the wife takes a very traditional role? And the husband feels like it's very much his prerogative to have dominion over the household." Um, and I just felt my skin crawl and I was like, "Oh no." And then I'm like, "Oh shit, that's a problem." Um, yeah, I remember that exactly. (Lindsey)
	Internal Conflict and "Claustrophobia in White Skin"	I feel like a bad person. Can someone please tell me that it's okay to be this way? You know, like I can't get out of the skin, so what, what do I do? There's like, for me, there was a sense of claustrophobia and I don't know. (Holly)
Warring with Dissonance	Addressing Biases	I don't want to be so heated about anything…and that really like annoys and like sort of gets under my skin is like how anybody could believe that. And I don't want to feel that like, charged about it. (Charley)
	Internal conflict	One of my classmates worked in a prison working with sex offenders. And so, yeah, I had a real hard time with, you know, seeing the one side of it. It was very hard for me to be open and see the other side. (Aly)
Working with Unresolved "Shadow Material"	Adjusted Altruism	Even the best of us have implicit biases. And I think that's something that not a lot of people would want to talk about, but they do exist. (John)
	Flying the Plane While Building It	My gut reaction was, "I don't want to help you with this." I don't want to do that for you. And I had to take that into supervision as well, because I was like, I don't even know what is ethically appropriate here. Um, but I know how much of that experience was colored by my own experiences with that client's religious background.

Theme One: Formal and Interpersonal Learning

The first theme encompasses experiences that reflected participants' initial introductions to implicit bias as a construct. Largely, participants talked about first learning about implicit bias in two types of ways which led to the development of two subthemes: (a) structured learning and (b) learning through dialogue. In the first subtheme of structured learning, participants spoke to the degree to which they felt they had been trained on implicit biases which involved the different approaches that their instructors took, the integration of the topic throughout the program, building awareness during internship, and a need for more concrete instruction on managing biases. The second subtheme related to participants' experiences learning in unstructured or informal ways through pointed conversations that afforded them a new or different level of awareness. The participants' reflections about their engagement in this study also contributed to this subtheme. Consistent in experiences associated with both subthemes was an initial broadening of the participants' perspective to begin to include perspectives of others that were previously unknown. These experiences were markedly different from other experiences that built awareness, because they involved interpersonal learning and an interactional introduction to new information for the participant.

Subtheme One: Structured Learning

Five out of ten participants said that they felt like implicit bias was not covered adequately in their master's program. Overwhelmingly, the topic was addressed in multicultural or ethics courses with a few exceptions for program wide requirements and instructors bringing the topic into their discussions in other courses. Within their classes, participants described missed opportunities to have learned more. Sally described the treatment of implicit bias in her

program as "not all that effective" and reported that the topic received much more attention at her undergraduate institution. Referring to her time in graduate school she said:

> It felt kind of like a footnote… even for our counseling across cultures class, faculty didn't even show up. So, you know, it wasn't treated as something that was ultra-important so much as it was like a CACREP box. They needed to check it off. It needed to be included. Some sentences needed to be interspersed with our lessons here and there.

For several participants, such shallow engagement resulted in students feeling that there was still a lot of personal work to do to get to a place of cultural competence. Lindsey expressed her frustration:

> I was frustrated that I didn't feel like that was being paid attention to enough. Like there was a lot of teaching me about technical stuff, but not some of the practical things, like, how do you learn how to be culturally sensitive in a way that is meaningful and useful? How do you find these resources without, um, you know, stepping on minorities and asking them to do all the heavy lifting? I felt a little bit, like it was my job to go out and do work and figure it out, which I did, or at least I've tried to. I mean nobody's ever done with that work? But, that was because I made an effort to do it specifically because it was important to me. And I know that wasn't the case with a number of my classmates.

Will was also frustrated with how implicit biases were covered in his program and described aspects of his education that felt like they were threatening saying: "It was almost with a very fear-based perspective of like, 'this [will] be the ethical dilemma that ruins you' instead of a growth opportunity."

Another way that participants expressed the inadequacy of their training programs was related to the types of information that was covered in class. Mary criticized the applicability of information that was covered in the class and the textbook.

I don't know what I think about the program…but it's kind of—it's not always applicable to when you get into the field. So, the textbook stuff—but when you're actually in the field, it just doesn't always apply. So, I just wished there had been more of that real-world application [and] practice. And we got that in internship. But just, you know, how can I best work with people of different groups than me? How can I work with other races and other ages and, [people of different] socioeconomic status? Um, I don't know. I don't know how you do that in the program as a whole, but I just feel like [it was only discussed in] just the multicultural counseling class.

For several other participants, they also noted that it was during their internship that they started to become more aware of their personal biases and developed a truer understanding of the construct. For Robert, this was because the topic became more relevant as his own questions about bias began to surface:

I mean, I would say in my internship that's something that I think was raised a lot. I mean honestly, I was one of the people that raised it a lot. But it was something that I think we were all struggling to, well, not struggling [but] we were all working to kind of raise awareness around it and kind of making sure, "hey, if you're entering the field to be, you know, qualified, you have to be competent around implicit bias and seeing it happen," you know?

For Lindsey, the concept of implicit bias became a lot more significant as she began internship as well. She outlines how working with clients made the subject matter a little more real for her:

Honestly, all of this was theoretical until about two years ago when I started doing my

internship and everything else. And it was when I was thinking about it in abstract terms,

it seemed like it would be a lot harder. But then when I was faced with people sitting

across from me, it wasn't nearly as hard because it wasn't an abstraction. It was an actual

person who needed my help.

Overall, participants found the training process to be lacking with exception to cases

where a rare instructor was able to make a positive impact. Jessica described having a good

multicultural training program overall and felt like her multicultural class was really pushed by

the instructor. She described the experience of her multicultural class as "life-changing."

Similarly, Lindsey identified that for her it was also an experience with an instructor (of a

different class) that really pushed her to examine her biases. Internship was an experience that

seemed to solidify implicit bias as a legitimate construct, and something should be more deeply

understood.

Subtheme Two: Learning Through Dialogue

Complementing the structured learning experiences for participants were experiences

learning about implicit biases through focused conversations. All ten participants referenced this

aspect of their training and discussed the ways that dialogue allowed them to understand more

about themselves and the experiences of others. Conversations took a variety of forms ranging

from interactions with in-class guest speakers and class discussions to one-on-one conversations

with peers and faculty. Foremost, six participants spoke to the importance of having safe, non-

judgmental spaces to be able to have these vital exchanges. John shared:

And that's always the thing of, how do we grow and learn from these things?

Well, first and foremost, we have to talk about it. So, I've become aware of them

[from] just talking about them with other people and being able to talk about them

in a nonjudgmental space. Because I think that's the really big thing, you know, if

somebody feels judged, they're not going to talk about their implicit biases. So,

you have to create the right environment for that conversation as well. And, you

know, again, I really credit past supervisors and the instructor of this course that

did that.

John later put it plainly saying, "if you don't feel like you're in a safe space to talk about it

without being torn to shreds, you're probably not going to talk about it." Aly also

highlighted the role counseling could play in creating that safe environment saying,

"Having a safe place and a safe space myself with a professional when things are really

difficult to navigate through is important."

Other one-on-one interactions had significant impact for participants, several of

whom said that being interviewed for the study itself was helpful:

I viewed it as a really helpful experience because the questions helped me kind of

process in a way, and figure out like, what do I believe needs to happen in order

for someone to work on their implicit bias? And so, I don't know if I've ever like

laid out my thoughts like that before. And so, I found it really helpful to actually

process and reflect. And I kind of took that as a moment to do that. So, I walked

away from it feeling very refreshed in the ACA competencies and a lot of stuff

that I learned in my class. And so, for me, it was a really positive experience.

(Jessica)

In response to being interviewed, Lindsey said that it was nice to have somebody to talk

to about these kinds of things, because her partner is not usually interested in them. Holly

indicated that implicit bias was a topic that she had not talked about much since graduating in May 2019. Mary stated that even though the interview was "heavy," "difficult," and "took a lot out" of her, it made her "want to talk about [implicit biases] more in supervision".

Moreover, participants also discussed how they learned from being able to dialogue with people who shared different experiences from them. At times this happened during class discussions as described by Holly who said, "I think we had a couple of really important conversations as a whole cohort, where I felt like I was able to see, that was really where I started understanding." At other times, participants were able to learn from "comparing notes" in other contexts outside of class as Lindsey put it:

> I don't think that I really got a full experience of where I was carrying these loaded ideas about how the world works until I was hearing other perspectives on how the world could work or should work or had worked for other people. Um, because you know, there's like, you don't know what you don't know. And it took hearing that for me to become aware of what I didn't know. I was never aware of how seriously terrifying it is to get pulled over by a cop, if you are Black, until I was listening to friend's experiences about that. And, you know, we compared notes as to who got pulled over most and stuff like that. And I was like, kind of aware, but not fully. And I don't know that I'll ever be truly fully aware, but it definitely hit home in a more concrete way.

Some participants experienced some of these interactions more as confrontations than conversations. Holly said that her instructor "put a lot of us in our places" and confronted students on things that they "clearly aren't considering" when coming to class.

Robert described a colleague who "took [him] to task" for not realizing some of the cultural implications of what he was saying, and Lindsey said that one of her instructors was able to "call people out" and that it generally "went surprisingly well." However, other participants recalled being confronted on their blind spots during class in intensely emotional ways. Charley reflected on the aftermath that followed a class where she spoke up in a way that offended her peers:

> And then the next week we had to have a regroup because it was such a heated issue. And I didn't even realize that it was a heated issue. So that is all very triggering to me when I think back about that. Like, I want to cry because I felt so bad and dumb and like I had caused, uh, upset unintentionally…

Other participants referred to their experiences with their instructors and how much of an impact they had on the training experience. Some instructors were willing to push the students in having deep conversations as explained by John, who, about his multicultural counseling course instructor said, "She was just, she was good at having the difficult conversations, you know? She didn't sugar coat things and she, she told it how it was and, you know, looking back, I really appreciate that." His experience contrasts with Will's who described having an instructor that avoided certain conversations and did not allow for exploration. He described her as "a professor, who kind of shut down that conversation [on referrals] as well. 'No, there are black and white rules and you need to follow them,' –about things that I didn't see as being black and white." At the time of the interview, Will felt as though he understood that particular issue a little better, but when he was a student, he would have described getting shut down in this way:

That conversation in particular that I'm thinking of was very, um, it didn't help me

to understand—it didn't help me to understand the correct way to navigate some

of those situations. It instead put me on the defensive about some of those biases

and I felt like that wasn't helpful.

Overall, the various ways in which participants discoursed with others offered

them access to information that they found incredibly valuable. Robert summarizes this

well saying that "the interpersonal interactions that I had with my cohort were the most

meaningful."

Theme Two: Building on an Identity

All ten participants spoke about normalizing their implicit biases and how personal

growth opportunities were a part of their journey navigating their own implicit biases. As these

initial self-reflections began, most participants identified elements that fell into two categories

that formed the two subthemes for this superordinate theme. First, participants spoke about how

their individual identities had contributed to their experiences understanding biases, named here

as *The White Identity/Experience*. Second, nine out of ten participants took an approach to

learning about their biases in a way that allowed them to explore their experiences with a

somewhat positive disposition that was oriented towards growth, grouped here under *The*

Growth Mindset subtheme. Inward reflection was common in both of these types of experiences

and was a part of all ten participants' experiences.

Subtheme One: The White Identity Experience

When talking about their personal biases, most participants spoke about them in a way

that related to their individual background and the ways that their personal identity had affected

their perspective. A major focus was identifying how their biases originated and had been shaped

over time. Nine of the ten participants mentioned privilege as a part of their experience

indicating that it contributed to the development of biases and limited their ability to see other

perspectives. Several participants also spoke to the fact that their personal identity and values

played a role in how they understood their own biases.

Many participants referenced their childhood in describing how their biases have formed

over time. Factors such as growing up in a racially homogenous area or having a sheltered

experience were discussed, bringing clarification to their experience. While most participants

identified privilege as a part of their experience, having a limited exposure to other cultures

played a significant role as well. Lindsey and Sally both indicated that they had no non-White

exposure as children. In a cultural positionality paper Lindsey wrote:

> I remember that when I was growing up, my parents and grandparents did not have any
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> people of color that they would consider friends or even peers… I grew up surrounded by
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> people of the same race, so I was never forced to directly confront racism

Sally spoke about how having such a homogenous upbringing caused certain impressions to be

unconscious "sewn into" her:

> Hm. I think of my own experience. [tearfully] Um, just growing up in being around a lot
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> of middle to upper class White people. Uh, when I was growing up in school, it was
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> vastly White. [tearfully] And then the impressions that we had, or that I noticed [laughs]
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> that I didn't examine at the time, had to do with people that were not White as they were
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> portrayed in film and television or music. And I think that played a big part in how, when
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> I later went on to interact with a lot of people who weren't White—that played a part in
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> how I interacted with them and the assumptions that I made about them. Um, when I was
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> growing up, for instance, Black people were portrayed in film and television, honestly, in

a more of a criminal element, right? Music as well. Um, and you know, like I say, I think that informed later on in my life…

White privilege also played a role in the navigating of biases for many participants, as recognizing unexamined privilege was associated with guilt and embarrassment. Further painting a picture of how privilege had shaped her perspectives, Holly discussed her reaction as a White woman to Donald Trump's 2016 electoral victory without considering how his presidency might impact others, particularly women of color.

> Yeah. I do think that [pause] the two pieces, the two experiences I had in grad school that really stand out to me in terms of bias were, um, well the current president was elected at the very beginning of my program. And I think that really shifted some of the ways that I started to see myself and my biases in terms of a lack of awareness that I had—bringing other of my privileged identities to the forefront of my mind. Instead of, I think my initial reaction to him being elected was well, I'm a woman and this is how it's going to impact me. And I think we had a couple of really important conversations as a whole cohort, where I felt like I was able to see. That was really where I started understanding. It's really important for me to also consider the ways that this is not going to impact me, like as a White person. As a person who came from a middle-class family. Um, and just the assumptions that I make from not having those identities in the forefront of my mind.

Later, when describing this experience, she went on to say:

> And I think for me, a lot of that energy was expressed through sadness and fear… so I think I definitely shared thoughts about, "I'm really scared. I don't know what's going to happen. Things are really uncertain." And I think there were some pretty, um, I'm going to call them brave people in class who said, "you know, I hear you saying that you're

scared, but I really do want you to think about what that words means to other people in this room and that as a White woman, as a cis woman, that you'll be able to have access to things that I already—my access is limited." We had, um, a woman in our class who is a dreamer and she was basically just like, "can you imagine being me, and I'm not even crying right now." So, I think that for me, that was the first time where I was like, oh my God, I can't believe that I just like expressed that much emotionality.

While discussing the fear that he carries about possibly saying or doing something insensitive, Robert shared:

In the big scheme of all of the things we're looking at that are unfair in our society…it's not at all an unreasonable thing to be expected to take responsibility for. When I think about the incredible generational injustice that so many other people have to sit with. Right? It's, you know, I don't let myself get too bound up in how hard it is. Right? Because I'm still incredibly privileged in so many ways.

Lindsey demonstrated how privilege contributed to her having a limited perspective in her writing sample: "In my own personal life, I listen. I seek out other voices, because when it comes to something like privilege and oppression there are so many different perspectives that it would be impossible to hear them all." Nonetheless, she and others were committed to trying to find ways to use their privilege to help others who did not have it.

In addition to privilege, most participants reported that they had at one point worked to identify other sources of bias. Many biases could be traced back to things they might have been exposed to in childhood or various media sources. In her final paper in a class, Jessica wrote about how the media had fed her beliefs about Muslims:

I also see news stories about the murder of women adulterers and women who are victims

of assault as "honor killings." Even though I know this only affects a small percentage of

the Muslim population in very small areas of the world, I acknowledge that it still affects

my belief system. I have also watched documentaries and news reports that have

impacted my beliefs about this as well.

Others determined that some biases had been instilled by White culture or the surrounding

environment. Tearfully reflecting on the 2020 death of George Floyd, Mary spoke to the cultural

piece saying, "Like, you know, we all White people have these biases and they cause huge

problems and pain for other people. And, um, yeah, just, I just it's, um, it's part of the White

culture." From his remote rural location, John indicated that implicit biases have been "put into

[him] for a long time." He also reflected on the recent worldwide Black Lives Matter protests

and said:

Hey, this stuff still exists. And you know, it hasn't gone anywhere. And just as the spirit

of intolerance has carried through, we carry it with us as descendants from those

generations. And so that's what we need to be aware of while we don't try to be those

kinds of people. We still have that, that history and that knowledge and that memory that

perhaps forms those implicit biases.

Over half of the participants were also able to identify some type of traumatic or harmful

experience as a source or contributor to a specific bias that they currently held. Those negative

experiences included divorce, discrimination, abusive family members, witnessing violence, and

other undisclosed adverse experiences. In several cases, participants identified how the pain and

anger that they carried caused them to project negatively on others. Robert opened up about how

91

his own "baggage with anger gets conflated" with stereotypes and shared a specific instance in which he later realized that this blending had caused him to act in a biased way:

And ultimately, I think that was about whether or not I felt safe around her. Right. It was my shit. But for me to kind of tap into that larger kind of, um, meme of dismissing a woman of color in that way…either way—like setting aside her as an individual just still is just harmful, just harmful as hell. And it's not something that I want to be giving power to, you know?

Lindsey also shared a poignant experience and expressed sadness that being hurt in a specific way had caused her to develop a bias against a specific group of people:

Yep. Disappointed in myself, sad. Um, I felt—I feel sad. I felt—I feel—I still feel sad about that. Cause it's still something I struggle with, and I'm like, this is not something that was there when I was younger. I feel pretty confident about that. It's really one of those vulnerabilities of the heart, where if you're wounded enough and in the right places, stuff just subconsciously gets there, and it didn't have to be that way. And there's a lot of sadness about that.

Will offered another powerful description of how discrimination against him as a gay man caused him to develop a strong bias:

More so, when that happened to me, my reaction was, "this is because of Catholicism. This is because of Catholicism and/or Christianity. This is because of conservative politics. If not for *these things* [emphasized], this wouldn't have happened to me and [they] really bolstering some of those biases for me."

Finally, in discussing how their identities played a role in shaping their biases, eight participants talked about their personal values and the lens through which they see the world.

92

Personal values influenced how participants approached their self-work and were often expressed in ways that promoted equality and ascribed value to all human beings. Two participants had shifts in perspectives with respect to their biases as they embraced different sexual identities and the communities that came with them. Charley shared the influence of her environment and religious identity saying, "I think that because I grew up in a city where a religious minority was in the majority, I was always very tolerant of people who were different from me." In her paper, Jessica referenced her bias against Muslim people writing, "I think that in order to combat my beliefs that Islam and Muslim men oppress women, it may be useful to look at my own belief system and try to understand what role that plays in my life."

Subtheme Two: Growth Mindset

Most participants spoke about being able to initially learn about general implicit biases in a positive or normalizing way. Six of the ten participants spoke directly to the fact that all people have biases. Many participants began their journey of self-exploration with this normalizing mantra that was a standard and critical part of training. Talking about and accepting biases in this unspecific sense seemed to make it easier for participants to begin becoming more comfortable with their biases and thus allowed them to have positive feelings about the process of navigating them. Jessica spoke about how her professor made it easy to see how accepting that you have implicit bias was the beginning of being able to address it:

> The main pieces are connection and normalizing. And so for me, I think about what would be helpful, say, if students were to do shame work on their implicit biases, is first being able to admit to themselves that they have it… I guess being able to admit to yourself [and] share that with others. And I think to be, you know, to be told like "everyone has this", is very normalizing.

Lindsey discussed how her accepting bias as part of the human condition was diffusing and opened the door for further introspection saying:

> I think it's just something that everybody has. I try not to associate a lot of shame with it. It's more of a, "I need to be more aware and cautious" … I feel like the only way that I was able to change my mind about stuff was to be comfortable with the fact that I have biases. They don't make me a terrible person.

Having a positive and growth-oriented mindset allowed participants to approach the subject of implicit biases with curiosity and a focus on learning. This typically involved coming to a position of openness and framing this process as an opportunity for growth. When realizing that he was working with a client who he might hold several implicit biases towards, curiosity became a powerful tool for John:

> So, I think what I did immediately in the moment was to be mindful not to operate out of assumptions and just come to it from a place of curiosity and just a desire to understand. "Hey, as a person who identifies as bisexual, living in a Christian family, what is that like for you? What have your experiences been?" and just letting him fill in the blanks rather than me filling in the blanks for him based on my biases and my schemas.

Aly also talked about taking an exploratory disposition after meeting a client in internship who was Indian:

> We talked about it and I said, I'm not very familiar with your culture, as you know, you're still learning about mine. I said, so any information you can give me that will help me understand better, please do that. And she did. So, I learned a lot about her culture in the course of our time together.

And when working with a client who practiced Wicca, Aly continued:

I will be very open and honest with them. I said, other than knowing that it deals a lot

with things in nature, I don't know a whole lot about it. So, if you can explain to me

anything that you think would help me understand I'm open to it. I just, I said, this is

learning for you and for me… And I said, and you're my first client that's ever practiced

Wicca. So, you know, and since this is important to you…help me understand why it's

important to you

Aly identified this as a type of strategy that she used to avoid operating in a biased manner and

when asked about how she felt about her biases said, "It's all about personal growth." Lindsey

was also taught that "you have to be open to everyone and everyone's perspective."

A large part of growing for many participants involved incorporating things that they

learned from reading or from counseling theories. Sally describes how helpful the textbook was

for understanding different cultures:

Um, I do recall there was this book that we read that helped us understand the different,

considerations in counseling for a variety of different cultures and ethnicities. I found that

incredibly helpful because it was just shit I didn't know—that I had no idea and I would

have walked right into, you know, possibly harming people or not understanding how

their behaviors meant something totally different from their standpoint. Or perhaps, you

know, the difference between community values versus individual values.

Jessica invoked a number of theories from counseling to describe how she understood the reality

of having and changing biases, comparing change to "the Prochaska stages of change" her clients

go through and said:

I think the whole point of this is learning how to undo the bias and that is some really

hard work because…if something has been ingrained in someone, unlearning things is

really, really difficult. And I almost liken it to the people that I work with, like trying to

make really difficult changes in their lives—like things that they want to change and how

that feels so hard because… I think our brains are just so stubborn. And so I think

reflecting on that, it makes me realize that, change is slow and, and not always overnight.

There's not going to be, one moment of self-reflection or action that is like, "Ooh, poof

it's gone!"

Will also felt like he leaned on what he had learned in other counseling classes to help him deal

with reactions or missteps that he became aware of in session:

But then it almost, it almost served as like an encourager to pay like closer attention…I

redirected myself in a direction of, "okay, stop being embarrassed that you did that, you

made a mistake. But if you don't listen right now, you're gonna continue making those

mistakes." So almost like it just happened to be a kind of opportunity where I was able to

take that action item of just actively listening.

Lindsey found humanist theory to be closely aligned with her personal beliefs and, thus, was able

to use the tenets of humanism to help her maintain a growth mindset when working with

challenging clients.

I think it came when we were starting to try to understand what our theoretical

orientations were and I realized how much I lean towards the person centered humanistic,

existentialist type of approach. And I was, you know, basically going, you can't say that

you're like that [person-centered] if you don't make an effort to truly humanize each

person. Like I'm a big believer in attempting for unconditional positive regard. And I got

to learn how to do that for everybody. And so as I've tried to pay attention to that, like

what my personal values are, what my theoretical orientation is.

For these participants, being able to have a growth mindset helped them to think about their bias as something that they could work on and develop from. In this way, they were able to avoid being bogged down by the shame that might come with realizing and accepting a bias. By framing their understanding in the context of growth, curiosity, openness, and learning, participants were able to see working on their biases as a part of becoming a better counselor. Aly discussed doing some of this individual work saying, "We have to do a lot of self-reflection in this profession so that we give all of our clients the best possible chance of getting the best care that they can get."

Theme Three: My "Bias is a Pain in the Ass" (Robert)

Participants also spoke about how they began to explore their implicit biases in personal ways. This involved identifying their specific biases and the processes that went into discovering and accepting them, as well as the emotional reactions that came with this process. These experiences seemed to mark the end of the positive attitudes noted in theme two, and a movement to a deeper understanding of the gravity of the problem of implicit bias. This movement involved understanding personal biases in a contextual way and forming a specific understanding of how they would become a problem in interpersonal and clinical interactions. With this changing perspective about their own biases brought two major ideas that are subthemes to this superordinate theme: (a) quantum shifts to a deeper awareness of specific biases and their meanings, and (b) intense emotions and internal conflict.

Subtheme One: Quantum Shifts and Deepening Awareness: "I'm becoming a racist."

For most participants, deepening their understanding of their biases involved moments of inward exploration. Often, this process was triggered by some interaction or realization that shocked or surprised them. When initial awareness was followed by further introspection, a new

level of awareness was reached that brought attention to the specific nature of the implicit bias. Seven participants reported having "whoa" (Mary) moments where they were shocked or surprised to learn about a specific implicit bias that they held. Sally discussed two pivotal moments in her life that demonstrated a quantum shift in perspective and precipitated a number of major life changes:

> But the fact for me, that it became a racial assumption really started to bother me around age, like 20—in my early twenties. I was like, I'm becoming fucked up. Like I'm, I'm not, you know, I'm starting to assume things about people and, um, and it scared me.

Sally went on to describe her reflections during that time:

> I was like, I'm becoming a racist. Like, I'm, like the way I'm seeing people, the way I'm talking to people is, this is me. Like, I'm fucked up. It's not even these people. This is me. And what I'm carrying around.

And finally, while describing a specific incident with a Black man she shared, "We had words and I—I said something that was just straight up racist to him. [tearful]… I don't know. It was like, I didn't recognize myself. It almost felt like I left my body." Sally later talked about how her actions were incongruent with the values she held, and that this signified to her that she had personal work to do. Mary was the only one in the sample who talked about how a positively associated bias could have a negative result. She talked about a moment when she realized that she had made a bad judgement that could have put another person in danger:

> Implicit bias can lead, you know, obviously lead people astray. Like, I totally made the wrong move in that moment. I think it was that like, "I need to check myself and think about this and realize the impact that [implicit bias] can have".

Jessica mentioned a of major shift in perspective that happened after she took an implicit bias test through Harvard's Project Implicit. This discovery was especially surprising for her because she was sure in an explicit sense that she was completely accepting of her gay older brother's lifestyle:

> It wasn't until I, honestly until I did that study that I realized the implicit bias about sexuality. Like I said, [it] really surprised me. And like the only way that I would have uncovered that I had that, is if I did that study and took part in the experiment.

Jessica also spoke about how uncovering a bias in class caused a physical reaction within herself that further brought attention to the presence of the specific bias:

> And so, I think that's kinda how I uncovered that implicit bias. When I was listening to them, I felt it, like, physically. And so that kind of told me that I have an implicit bias because sometimes, with the implicit bias, you're like suppressing it or pushing it down because you don't want to feel uncomfortable. I feel like your body holds that tension and your body knows how you feel. And so listening to how you feel in your stomach or if you're like, if your leg is bouncing up and down, sometimes that can really speak into, you know, what emotion or how we're feeling at a given moment.

A total five participants discussed becoming aware of a bias due to reactions that they noticed in their body or though noticing strong emotions. Will identified that when he is experiencing a reaction that his "body is quicker than [his] thoughts" and that he's learned to notice his "muscles tighten up" and his "breathing gets a little shallower". Lindsey remembered her instructor helping students to identify clients with whom they might feel discomfort in working with and the physical sensation she got from doing that exercise:

99

"Well, what do you do when you have a couple who comes in where the wife takes a very traditional role? And the husband feels like it's very much his prerogative to have dominion over the household?" Um, and I just felt my skin crawl and I was like, oh no. And then I'm like, Oh shit, that's a problem. Um, yeah, I remember that exactly.

In addition to these shocking and surprising types of experiences, a deeper level of awareness also came through a variety of other experiences that included engaging with classmates, increasing exposure to different people and perspectives, and deep reflection. When referring to these types of opportunities for further reflection following the discovery of a bias, Sally offered, "And there's an invitation there to look at what it is you believe—what it is that you really believe, not just public persona belief, but what I really feel about all of this." After discovering her anti-gay bias, reflection became a big part of Jessica's expanding awareness:

I think there was a lot of self-reflection and just a genuine curiosity of where we learn everything. When we're born, we don't have these biases just yet. So it's like kind of like a genuine curiosity of where I learned them and reflecting on my experiences and, trying to think of what was I exposed to that like made me learn this preference for straight people, or this assumption that it's better to be straight even though, I didn't want to sit with that. But it's like, I kind of had to in order to practice that self-inquiry and that self-examination of like, well, where did that come from? What did I, you know—where did I pick that up?

For others, reflection allowed them to build a deeper awareness of not just their own, but of other people's world views. Holly reflected on her experience driving home after a class in which she had been confronted:

We had the class once a week on Wednesdays, in the evening, like until 9:00 PM. And I

lived about 50 minutes away from school. So, after that I would drive home by myself

and it was just a lot of thinking and mulling things over in my head. And then I think just

a lot of circular thinking of, "well, why am I just thinking about this for the first time?"

And then, "well, I am thinking about it, so I just need to do that." And, and then

confusion and, um, yeah, just a lot of intense emotions and not really knowing how to

process them or who to process them with.

In a journal reflection, John wrote:

When I began this counseling program over a year ago, I strongly underestimated the

amount of cultural awareness that would be required of me. Looking back on it now, my

hypothetical picture of counseling always involved working with people who were

similar to me in cultural background, socioeconomic status, and race. As I reflect back on

this, I do feel some amount of shame that I viewed my path as a counselor through such

narrow lens.

For participants, this deepening awareness of general and personal implicit biases often

accompanied further recognition and acknowledgement of bias. Jessica shared that for her the

process involved taking that "first step of just admitting to self" that she had the bias.

Subtheme Two: Internal Conflict and "Claustrophobia in White skin" (Holly)

As participants experienced a deepening of awareness related to discovery and

acceptance of their biases, they often simultaneously experienced discomfort from the awareness

of how their implicit biases could harm others. In that discomfort came several negative

emotions including, shame, embarrassment, helplessness, and fear. Additionally, seven

participants referred to how accepting their biases came with knowledge of the reality that they

had contributed to the pain and oppression of others. This growing awareness, combined with self-preserving thoughts, created an internal conflict that six participants spoke about.

Internal conflict was frequently initiated by negative emotions, as eight participants said that they experienced shame or embarrassment in relationship to their biases. Sally verbalized her feelings plainly: "How do I feel about my personal biases? How do I feel about them? The, the emotions that come up, honestly? Just dead ass honest. Dead ass honest. It's like fear and shame." Along those same lines, Robert described the discomfort he feels about his biases and knows that despite his efforts to address them, they can still cause problems for him saying: "I feel like I adopted a dog with an abuse history and it's pretty tame now, but every once in a while… [laughs] I never feel fully safe with it." In addition to Robert, seven other participants talked about how fear was a part of their experience with their implicit bias. Some common fears involved fear of offending a client, fear of not being effective, fear of facing gatekeeping, fear of being racist, fear of losing a friendship, fear of being attacked for their bias, fear of unknown biases, fear of political incorrectness, and fear of not being a good person. Three participants spoke to how these fears could create a sense of helplessness. Holly felt considerable shame and helplessness after she was confronted in her multicultural class:

> I think the multicultural class was a lot more about ourselves, not necessarily explicitly saying you're a bad person but I think that's how I felt. And I think that's what the whole idea of White guilt or privileged guilt is, is talking about. I feel like a bad person. Can someone please tell me that it's okay to be this way? You know, like I can't get out of this skin, so what do I do? There's like, for me, there was a sense of claustrophobia and I don't know.

For Charley, her shame about her bias caused her not to talk about them for a while. She also spoke to the potential for her biases to cause harm. This exchange followed after she spoke about a moment when she stereotyped one of her Syrian clients as terrorist:

Okenna: Do you remember what it was that you were fearful of in that moment?

Charley: I think so. I, I shudder to want to verbalize it, but for the purposes of this, um… like, um, I was scared of, of, of being harmed in a variety of ways. But I think, I mean, I hate saying this, the first thought, obviously, that it was like terrorism. No reason to feel that way and, I don't think I've actually ever told anybody this because it's like that shameful, so…[trails off]

Okenna: Sure. What's it like reflecting on it now?

Charley: It feels scary.

Okenna: Hearing yourself say it? Yeah.

Charley: It feels very sad. It makes me sad. And I thought in that moment also, it takes a lot of strength and it takes—you have to be in a certain place to make yourself that vulnerable to seek help. And I would never want anyone to feel like they're being looked at. Everybody coming in for a mental health assessment should be looked at in the same way. So, I don't like it.

Okenna: How have you thought about that experience? How often have you thought about that experience?

Charley: Um, Probably not often. Like, I mean, I think I've probably thought about it a handful of times when I'm overcompensating… Sorry. So, I haven't thought about it much. I honestly—the interview, this just jogged that memory.

It was apparent during this exchange how uncomfortable Charley felt about her reaction to this client and even retelling it during the interview. Multiple participants felt that sitting with this type of discomfort was necessary for working through their biases or could remember having to sit with it at some point. During the Charley's initial interview, when asked about what it took to address her biases, she said, "I mean, initially at least being aware of them. To sort of like—engaging with them or like sitting with discomfort." Additionally, most participants were able to identify how their individual biases contributed to systemic oppression. Robert talked about his regrets concerning a former classmate who was a Black woman:

> I also know that she felt an incredible amount of pain because of all the microaggressions that she faced all the time, you know? And I know that I contributed to that and I just, I mean, shame is not even quite the right word for that because that's something that's like, that's bigger than any one act. I mean, that legacy is part of the identity that I was born into, you know? And it's not something I get to set down, but looking at times when I have lapsed into that, you know, consciously or not, it's just, it's hard, you know. It's a tough thing.

Similarly, Sally became very emotional talking about her fears of harming another person as part of the dominating culture:

> There's a fear. Um, I think, you know, for me, there's a fear that like, that I may harm people. [pause, tearful] I'm just taking a second… Um, yeah, I, I think there's a fear for me. Let's put it this way, that if I've got a client who comes to see me and they are not White, that I will through ignorance, through unconscious belief, that I will say something, that I will do something, that I will not be as effective, and that I'll harm that person, because of unconscious, impressions that have, I wanna say [that have] been

104

sewn into me as a person who is White with a White experience in my life, and then I'll

harm people. And then for me, um, yeah, there's shame. Give me just a sec… [long

pause, crying] just, um, like being part of a murderous culture.

Lindsey summarized many of these sentiments well when speaking to the harm implicit biases

could cause and saying, "you have to start understanding that the people that you're biased

against, are people."

Theme Four: Warring with Dissonance

As new counselors, all participants saw the importance in addressing biases that could be

potentially harmful to their clients. In doing this self-changing work, all participants were also

able to identify factors or obstacles that complicated their experiences trying to prevent biases

from entering their work. These hurdles escalated internal conflict and dissonance for

participants as they attempted to make decisions that were a part of addressing their biases. As a

result, two subthemes emerged: (a) addressing biases, and (b) hierarchy of biases.

Subtheme One: Addressing Biases

All ten participants discussed what it meant for them to address their biases. This

included conversations about what motivated them to address their biases, steps they took to

mitigate or manage their biases, and how they at times might have failed to live up to their own

expectations.

The most identified motivators for addressing bias involved a desire to not contribute to

the suffering of other people. Participants said that they felt empathy for individuals who they

saw mistreated in the news or came to a fuller understanding of the trauma experienced by

different groups. Reflecting on a powerful documentary she watched in her multicultural

counseling class, Jessica offered these words:

I still remember how I felt watching it and how it's kind of something that you can't unsee or you can't un-feel as a person. Because I think coming from a White experience, you can hear that something is painful, but to actually like see it and to hear the pain in someone's voice is just a very different experience than reading it in a book.

Sally shared that because of the suffering she had endured in her own life, it was hard for her to see anyone go through painful experiences, especially at her hand:

It's seeing other people's suffering that for me is gonna set me off. So, not that we want to see anybody suffering, but seeing the impact that bias is having on the micro to the macro scale and how it harms people; that's going to make me want to move. That's gonna make me want to do something. If people are getting harmed, that's going to be different for everybody. That's going to bother people on different degrees perhaps. But for me it really bothers me…

Participants also spoke about being motivated to address their personal bias if they had some connection to individuals who might be oppressed. Mary referenced her Black friends; Lindsey referenced her transgender daughter and other members of the LGBTQ+ community, and Charley referenced her connection with oppression as a Jewish woman.

Actively working on biases looked different for most participants, but there were still some commonalities in their approaches to mitigating biases. Eight participants mentioned acquiring information as a way of decreasing the effect of their biases. They described this as happening through continuing education, interactions with others, or reading and researching during their free time. Some shared that they felt it was necessary to commit to a plan for addressing biases directly. Several individuals identified social media as a useful tool for bringing things to their attention that they would have not otherwise come across:

I [notice] social media and people who I'm connected with on social media who tend to

be more bold in posting. Again, kind of like those…sort of those truths that I think are

immediately just sort of hard to take in. But then, I'm sort of like, okay, I think it helps

me be more aware of my automatic thoughts and judgments. (Holly)

For others, working on their implicit attitudes also looked like utilizing the shame that they felt

about their biases as a catalyst for addressing it. Charley often tried to overcorrect when she

noticed a bias within herself:

I think I've probably thought about it a handful of times when I'm overcompensating, like

this is a learning experience. "Uh, remember how gross you felt that time when you had

those thoughts?" Um, so like, I've thought about it in like a, I guess in response to shame,

I have been quick to be like, "well, I'm going to just find a solution to this and I'm going

to overcompensate and I'm going to correct the shit out of that."

Finally, participants spoke about what working on bias might look like in the long run. While for

some people, questions arose regarding their ability to one day be able to fully resolve a bias,

five people referred to bias work as being ongoing. Robert summarized this saying:

I think that's kind of part of the thing that any White person who really wants to do well

around, you know, their awareness with this needs to accept that we never get to be done.

We're never done. And so just kind of sitting with that and, um, yeah, understanding that

I never get to be done, but am I in a position to do anything helpful?

Subtheme Two: Hierarchy of Biases

In contrast with the notion that work addressing biases was never complete, most

participants were able to identify specific periods where they neglected to address a bias that

they had been previously identified. Additionally, participants discussed a wide range of internal

107

factors and social pressures that hindered them from being able to address their biases adequately. Further, six participants referred to some sort of internal conflict in their process of addressing their biases. These conflicts seemed to consist of a process of contemplating what might be involved in attenuating a bias and assessing if the bias held any value. Holly described having a litmus test for assessing the appropriateness of assumptions that she made based on where information had come from. Later, she was confronted in that practice:

> And I think the difficult thing about the class that I was in, is in some ways it felt like
>
> someone looked at my litmus test and said, what have you been doing? And who says
>
> that you get to decide the litmus test? And so that was sort of an unraveling of, "I've been
>
> using this as a ruler or a measuring stick or a litmus test my whole life. And now I feel
>
> like it's completely broken."

Overall, eight participants had evaluative processes that helped them determine the appropriateness or usefulness of a bias. Some biases were determined to be more harmful, justifiable, or comfortable than others. Typically, biases associated with racism were deemed more shameful than biases towards Christians, President Trump's supporters, or racists. Social context contributed greatly to determining the appropriateness of a bias. Jessica explained:

> I feel like in my social group, it's a lot more acceptable to not really agree with certain
>
> traditional or conservative male beliefs—White male beliefs versus, I felt like it wasn't
>
> very inclusive of me to have a negative reaction to something that someone that was a
>
> Muslim was saying, because I felt like that wasn't as inclusive. And I was like, well, I
>
> shouldn't be feeling this way. I know that's just like the culture… That was a lot more—
>
> that was harder for me to uncover and to face and to sit with, because I didn't feel like
>
> that was as acceptable of a bias to have if that makes sense.

Specifically, when referring to a biased reaction she had towards people who were Southern

Baptist, Mary offered:

> I definitely would spend more time mulling over my biases related to race as opposed to
>
> religion, just because they're so much more salient and I would say just, important. So I
>
> think I spend more time with those.

In a similar way, Charley shared, "there are biases that I'm more okay with…like I'm not as

concerned, I guess, about offending people who believe in Q Anon…which I guess I shouldn't

feel that way in general." Robert echoed similar sentiments saying:

> I feel like the whole being dismissive of the Q Anon, Trumper thing is honestly, it's a
>
> kind of dehumanization that I'm relatively comfortable with. Cause I'm like, "these
>
> people are, dangerous and harmful and I don't feel the need to work real hard to
>
> understand their perspective as much as I do to limit the harm they're doing to other
>
> people, you know?" Which is maybe not perfect, maybe not great of me—maybe a
>
> perfect person would be able to do both. I just feel like I've been in enough situations
>
> where it's like, "look, y'all, I don't need to understand your perspective. I just need you to
>
> stop doing harm."

Outside of politics, two participants acknowledged that they felt that biases towards clients with

Borderline Personality Disorder aided them in their practice.

Ultimately, the assessments of these biases contributed to decisions participants made

about whether to address them. Will, who discussed his challenges working with people he

thought might hate him for his gay identity, commented that it was easier to be complacent with

socially acceptable biases and described his process for evaluating them:

There's an evaluative piece…some questions about, "is this hurting a client? Is this hurting me? Is this hurting, a friend or a family member?" And I guess one of those questions that I inevitably answer at some point is, "is this worth addressing?" …sometimes that answer comes in the form of like, no, this isn't worth addressing, you should double down on something else. But you know, there must be points that I'm not necessarily as consciously accounting for where I am evaluating that situation and saying, "okay, this is something that it is time to work on," for this reason or that. And maybe that [reason] is to get along better with my friends or my family members at the root of it. Maybe there is some selfish, "here's some benefit that I can gain from it outside of just my clients." But I feel like somewhere in that equation, I have to make a call on whether or not it's worth addressing because yeah, I, I do in some cases choose not to address it.

For Will, doubling down on something else referred to adhering to perspectives that he felt were an important part of his sexual identity formation.

Like Will, all participants were able to identify a wide variety of things that prevented them from addressing their biases or made it easier for them not to. Commonly, not addressing bias was linked to not having the energy required to address biases, a perception that the bias served a purpose, defensive or rationalizing reactions, or fear that acknowledging their bias made them a bad person. Six participants admitted to avoiding addressing a bias at some point. Jessica described the temptation to avoid thinking about something that she knew would be difficult to work through:

And so, yeah, I think just like comparing and contrasting the two [biases], that one was more uncomfortable for me to sit with because I had this reaction that I was a bad person, or not inclusive or not understanding of cultural differences. And that I think is a mental

and an emotional block to working through that. Because with that, I think it's a lot more

dangerous because it's tempting just push that down and say, no, I don't want to think

about that. I don't want to be, or feel like a bad person. And so, I think those types of

biases are more dangerous.

Five participants said that they felt some sort of reluctance to work rid themselves of a bias

because it might be something that kept them safe or because it might be justifiable. Charley

indicated that she does not "ever want to be confused" about her opposition to white nationalist

groups. Holly admitted that she sometimes goes along with her biases to stay safe when she feels

physically uncomfortable saying, "as a small woman, like I think it's safer for me to assume that,

a man at night, walking towards me, could hurt me." During her follow up interview, she also

stated that she "hate[s] this logic line actually, because…it's, often weaponized in conversations

by people who defend police brutality."

Trying to rationalize personal biases was common among participants, as were feelings

of defensiveness and not wanting to be a bad person. When having a conversation about

privilege in her class, Holly remembered responding to a confrontation with resistance saying:

"There definitely was I think a flash of anger of 'why am I not allowed to be scared?' I don't

understand why it needs to be a competition." Robert found that his biases "encouraged [him] to

make sense of something…in a way that might be knee jerk" and noticed that he initially took an

intellectual approach to examining his biases that allowed him to stay somewhat disconnected

from them. Later, in a reflection he wrote, "prejudice expressed itself for me this semester in the

ways I rationalized my resistance." Mary and Holly both corroborated the notion that

externalizing biases made them more tolerable. Mary offered, "It's easier to talk about

stereotypes in general. I feel like it takes some of the responsibility off myself. It's easier to just talk about it in the general sense."

Another issue that complicated the way that participants addressed their biases was the social pressure that was associated with the process. Eight participants referred to the implicit biases that they saw in their colleagues at one point during the study. Robert described some of his classmates as, "just kind of checking the boxes." Aly said that she, "knew a lot of people that are super biased," and Jessica said that in class she remembered feeling "embarrassed for the students that just didn't get it." Perceiving bias in others or being perceived to be a biased person was a big part of participants experiences.

Six participants expressed concern about using "the proper terms or words." Charley shared an experience in her graduate program where she used a term that triggered many of her classmates and started a discussion that ended the class. She indicated that during her initial interview, she felt like she was "overly aware of everything" that she was saying and did not want to "sound like dumb or politically incorrect." Holly also expressed that she was "really feeling careful with [her] words" during the interview. Robert talked about the challenges that could come with saying the wrong thing in certain contexts:

> I feel like I see so many instances out in the world of people who were good allies, were like, "Oh, you know, he's one of the good ones," and then they go and say, or do something just—you know, where it's … [sighs] …but I also… I know that my friends have had experiences of being profoundly let down by White people or men that they trusted, who gain their trust one way or the other, and then later fucked up. And so, I just always worry about hurting them and losing, losing my friendships with them and being hurt myself.

For participants, impression management was not just limited to concerns about using "new terminology," as Mary put it, but it also had to do exhibiting biases and looking like a bad person, particularly in environments where they were being evaluated as a student. Mary described the fear that she felt when it came to speaking up in class:

> I didn't want to be on anyone's radar for, I don't know, just like asking the wrong questions, like, "Oh my gosh, they're going see and think I'm a totally inept counselor. I should've gotten this skill by now or I should know how to do this or use this theory or whatever."

Holly also commented on the performative nature of the learning environment and how she missed out on an opportunity to demonstrate her awareness after one of her classmates committed a microaggression against another:

> If I were to say something, would it come across as performative? Would I be acting as an ally? Would it come across like I didn't think that person could stand up for themselves? And so, I just remember, I didn't say anything. And I think that was a really distinct moment. And then we did have a class discussion about it, and there was a lot of crying and I felt very angry with myself for not saying something. And I remember thinking if I would have said something, I could have shown the other people in the room that I did recognize that as wrong. And it wasn't enough to just know in my mind that I had my initial gut reaction to it.

Other participants also spoke about the challenges that came with talking about, and in some cases, demonstrating their biases in mixed spaces. By contrast, John spoke about how not having to worry about how his classmates perceived him aided his learning process:

I don't need to make a great impression by coming in and being like, "I'm an ally. And I do all these things, and I don't have an implicit biases." We knew each other as people and we knew each other as good people. And, I think that definitely helped to defer that conversation.

Finally, participants reported experiencing internal struggles that required them to find ways to reconcile a thoughtful recognition of their implicit biases with their explicit values and internal desire to see themselves as a good person. Jessica described bargaining with herself to continue to view herself as a good person as her biases came to light:

I think what came next was kind of like this denial or this resistance to the idea that it was true. Like, no, not me. And that makes sense. Like if something makes you feel uncomfortable, you don't want to feel it if you don't have to. And so you can just kind of push it away. And I think that was kind of the temptation to say "no, not me", or like, maybe thoughts of, "okay, well even if it is true, I'm still a good person and it doesn't mean anything bad about me." And so [there was] kind of like this resistance and then almost like bargaining with myself about like how I'm still a good person.

During her follow up interview, Jessica later shared that recognizing her implicit biases makes her feel ashamed. This was significant for her because she felt that "when we feel ashamed, we don't change." Robert talked about his internal conflicts surrounding having to embrace 'both/and' rather than 'either/or' thinking when it came to balancing his beliefs about working on his biases and taking care of himself and his family:

Like this idea that allies don't get to take breaks, right? Then if an ally disengages from a conversation or doesn't engage every opportunity that they have to fight the good fight and raise awareness, then you're leaning into your privilege and basically, its dereliction

of duty. Right? And [sighs] that's a really compelling idea to me… And then I also found

that particularly moderating this group where lots and lots of opportunities have

presented themselves… but then also just getting to a point where just recognizing that,

with my parenting or my marriage or any of that kind of stuff where I just needed to have

the emotional energy to work with those things and, meet my responsibilities there that I

couldn't always do that. You know, I couldn't [or] I would get burned out as well.

Concerns about the amount of emotional energy it required to engage in conversations about bias

were shared between several participants. John also talked about an internal conflict in a

reflection writing, "I am becoming more aware of the fact that my cultural story has instilled in

me biases that make it difficult to truly connect to clients and peers alike with unconditional

positive regard."

Finally, seven participants identified times where they for some reason did not push

themselves to do the work on a bias that they had identified. Typically, their lack of movement

could be attributed to challenges indicated above relating to avoiding of bias, rationalizing their

bias, being fearful of being perceived as ignorant or racist, or dealing with some other sort of

internal conflict. Charley summarized her ambivalence about being able to adequately address

these problems saying:

The real work to do with implicit bias I think comes from the stuff that we don't want to

talk about because it's shameful…and nobody wants to readily identify themselves as like

having—because you don't want to look like a bad person. Or even if you don't believe

these things, you don't want to say, well, I harbor these feelings about, you know, X, Y,

and Z. So how do you sort of address your own implicit bias, (a) if you're not aware of

them, but (b), if they're so shameful that you, they don't even come to the surface?

Theme Five: Working with Unresolved "Shadow Material" (Sally)

All participants in the study were new counselors who were at least 12 months removed from graduation from their master's program at the time of the interview. All had been actively seeing clients and were able to reflect on their training experiences through the lens of practicing clinicians. As they reflected on their experiences navigating implicit biases, this professional experience shaded their recollections, particularly as it related to their assessment of how effective their training program had been and areas where they still felt that their implicit biases were still unresolved. Participants' attitudes around moving into the professional arena seemed to generally have two components that correspond to two subthemes. The first was an altered sense of altruism that reflected having to adjust their expectations of what they could accomplish as a counselor. The second related to the professional precautions that they would have to take to try to prevent their biases from impacting their work with clients. In this sense, participants were both continuing to do work on their unresolved biases and doing clinical work while possessing these unresolved issues.

Subtheme One: Adjusted Altruism

At least one year removed from the culmination of their master's counseling programs, five participants expressed some feeling that they still were not sure what to do about one or several of their biases. Numerous participants spoke of second guessing themselves or having some awareness of a bias, but having no discernable direction on how to resolve it. This was exactly Will's experience:

> I feel very aware of what those biases are for me. I feel like I got plenty of space to get
>
> awareness. But oftentimes I do find myself, when confronted with those biases, that I
>
> have no idea what to do with it. And not to say like I totally freeze and do nothing, but I

116

sure do question afterwards, "was that, was that the right call?" …surely, I lean back on

some of those basic skills and what have you to get through the situation. But it sure is an

area that I feel less confident about after the fact.

Charley also spoke about not knowing what to do about biases that came up in her current

sessions. Although she experienced an impactful confrontation during her multicultural

counseling course, she remembered being shocked by the experience more than she remembered

what to do about that bias in the future:

I vaguely remember talking about it with my individual therapist, but I don't remember

what came of it because I think what I was talking about was just how shocking and… it

all was. But I think I made some—I think after the second class that we had that sort of

talked through it, I think consciously or subconsciously, I thought I need to think before I

speak, uh, choose my words more carefully. Understand. And also at the same time, I

don't, I don't want to be like second guessing every single word I say. So I guess back to

that sort of, I don't know what to do with this. I think that I encounter bias like in my

everyday work a lot and I still sort of don't know what to do with some of it.

Participants also spoke about challenges that might come from working with clients who

were different or similar to them in ways that might provoke a bias, especially in situations

where large portions of their caseload might be from a demographic that is particularly triggering

for them. Participants continued to express uncertainty about how to manage their biases in these

situations as well. Holly questioned if she was capable of being helpful in these situations where

there were racial or cultural differences with her clients:

[That] could be a very frustrating and unhelpful experience for my client because I'm a

lot more internal and self-conscious about what I'm saying and careful, which just doesn't

117

make for as a productive or enjoyable experience for my client. And so I of feel like… if

I'm dealing with my own processes and, and uncertainty, how can I be helpful to other

people?

Lindsey also discussed her difficulties working with a clientele that challenged her because of

some the implicit biases that she held. She shared that learning about the biases surprised her,

and she did not expect this clientele to be such a large part of her caseload:

I still don't know exactly what to do about it…It was much more of a hit me out of left

field kind of feeling. And since then, that's the one that stymies me a little and I get a

little bit more, self-conscious like, just self-aware about it. If I'm dealing with someone

who's like that…basically I'm a lot more self-critical about like, "okay, are you being

fair? Is that reasonable? Like, remember we have to treat each person like their own

person and don't get annoyed. Don't get fed up when they're acting like something that

you have come to associate. Cause that's not fair. You have to treat them as their own

person" …I'm currently aware of it. I don't know. I don't know how to get rid of it

completely.

John had similar concerns and questions related to his work with couples. Whereas going

through his own parents' divorce had inspired him to do work with couples and families, he

questioned:

"I going to be biased? Is this going to be—is this going to be hard for me?" And so

recognizing that was actually in certain cases, certain situations… the case kind of

affirmed that for me [his motivations], but then also just disheartening in that it's, you

know, clearly this still has some sort of meaning to me that could negatively impact my

work with clients.

Participants also experienced uncertainty about how to navigate personal biases when it was clear that they held a different worldview or value system from the clients. Participants' anxieties complicated their altruistic desires to be able to work with clients from all different backgrounds. Mary described the challenge of working to be able accommodate with a diverse clientele while also taking risks:

> I think there's this pressure to, like, you've got to be able to work with, um, a variety of people and I don't want to scare them away. Like I said, I want to be a good, helpful clinician, so there's that trying to be helpful. But knowing there that the bias is there, and I don't want it to mess me up.

Seven participants discussed a perception of themselves that included their biases as integral. Often, this was a sobering description that included their potential to do harm and a shift in perception of themselves as a counselor. In a reflective journal Jessica wrote: "I also have a lot of introspection to do surrounding my own personal biases. I'm finding that I'm not as confident in my ability to be a great counselor to everyone." Sally was open about her personal journey and about her ability to "carry around toxicity" from her past. She was also candid about how she has had to grow and shared: "So, yeah, certainly I want to see myself as a good person. I know that part of this part of the path to wellness is realizing that I'm not a good person." Similarly, Robert described a new ability to see his own shortcomings. In his final paper, he described the semester in his multicultural class as "a serendipitous re-introduction to my own resistance and latent prejudice" and quoted bell hooks saying that he took the opportunity to "examine both the potential oppressor, and the potential victim within." John plainly renounced the 'nice counselor syndrome' saying: "Even the best of us have implicit biases. And I think that's something that

not a lot of people would want to talk about, but they do exist." During the follow up interview he continued:

> And just because we're counselors doesn't mean we're all of a sudden these great people that are, you know, uh, bias free…it means we're human, but it means that that's also not an excuse and that we need to be aware of our imperfections. And that those things can impact the way that we present with clients. If we don't do the work, if we don't talk about them, if we're not aware of them and consciously aware of them rather than the unconscious piece… because as, I mean, I'm sure you know in working with clients, stuff happens on the unconscious level that can be damaging. And sometimes that's the reason why clients come to see us and it can be for counselors, it could be a similar way of, "Hey, I noticed I'm not getting along with my clients well" or "Hey, I noticed this client, , told me that they didn't feel comfortable with me" or whatever, and then recognizing, "Oh, it might actually be because of an implicit bias."

Subtheme Two: Flying the Plane While Building It

Although they were forced to recognize their professional limitations due to their biases, most participants still pushed to do the best work that they could as therapists by striving to prevent their biases from impacting their work. Seven participants spoke about their potential to harm others, and this served as an extra motivator to keep their biases out of their clinical work. Unfortunately, some participants indicated that they did not feel like they had the necessary tools to adequately address their personal biases. Participants shared that they would have liked more training on how to interact with people from diverse backgrounds. Holly suggested that it would be helpful to learn tools for navigating personal biases in session similarly to how skills are taught for dealing with countertransference, but in her program "it was definitely more of

bringing awareness rather than specific tools to change". Several other participants complained about messages they were sent in during their training that instructed them to work on their biases, but that "there was never any here's how you do the work" (Will).

With few tools for mitigating their biases, most participants entered the professional field with goals of keeping their biases out of their work and not harming their clients. With the help of others, Will was able to identify a bias that he knew could impact his clients saying: "This bias certainly exists for me. I don't want it to get in the way of my clients' progress." Jessica also found it important to assure that she is "never placing [her] beliefs onto clients". Still, despite their best efforts, seven participants spoke to being triggered or recognizing their personal biases springing up in session. Mary recalled being frustrated that she made assumptions about her client. John reported making a slew of assumptions based on a client's disclosure and remembered scrambling to try to get them under control:

> And I recognize that the snap judgment that I have would be a similar thing. I would have an implicit bias to be like, "if that person's Christian, I bet they hate gay people." Or, "if that person's Christian, I bet they only like other White Christians." And I was forced to confront that one when I was working with this client, because obviously he was in a Christian family that didn't necessarily approve of his sexual orientation. And so, I felt—I really felt for him in that, but then I also felt this like, kind of implicit anger towards his parents that I had to obviously keep in check because he loved his parents and he wasn't in there because he hated his parents. He was in there just because he was having a hard time sorting things out. And so that's really a vivid one that I can remember that put things into perspective. And it really tied two things together of recognizing that it's my frame of reference for religion combined with sexual orientation. That is a big source of

121

bias for me personally. And so that's one that I especially try to be mindful of if I have clients that come in and say they're Christian, I can't immediately think, okay, well this person's sexist or racist.

In a similar way, Will discussed how his gay identity complicated his interactions with conservative clients and created reactions that he had to attend to in session:

I feel like that's a big part for me personally and…having the experience where one intersection of my identity is marginalized, then gets me very—it does make me feel very like, well, "I don't like you" when…[trails off] And it is that knee-jerk reaction that happens. And, thankfully I'm aware of it and I can address it as I need to, but, when I have that client that starts talking to me about how great Trump is, and, starts talking to me about, the Catholic view on, on, on sexuality, and I run into that dissonance in session where it's, "I really don't like what you are saying right now." But I am in a position to care for you right now and I have to tuck that away for myself at the moment which is uncomfortable for me.

Will and a few participants identified supervision as a place that they could go and get feedback on how they were handling their biases.

Summary

In this chapter the researcher presented five superordinate themes that emerged from participants' responses to the research questions. These themes were formulated from a thematic analysis of interview transcripts and written reflections from participants' master's counseling program. The next chapter will synthesize these results and offer further discussion on how they compare and contrast with our current understanding of implicit biases in counseling and

counselor education. Implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research are described in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses how the study's findings relate back to other counseling literature and research, counseling practice, and counselor education. The findings of this study are synthesized to reveal greater meaning and establish a context through which they might best be situated in our current understanding of multicultural counseling training and implicit bias. This includes relating these findings to what is known about the developmental processes of counselors in training and what they might need for continued growth in this area.

This chapter also contains discussion about the sociocultural and political context in which this study was conducted and how it might have influenced the findings. Implications are offered for practitioners, supervisors, and counselor educators. The chapter will also discuss the potential limitations of this study and explore areas for future research. Finally, the researcher's reflections on the study are provided.

Purpose of this study

This study set out to develop a deeper understanding of how new counselors navigate their implicit biases, understanding that biases can negatively impact professional work with clients. The following research question was asked: What are White American counselors' lived experiences with navigating and addressing person implicit biases? Understanding that a person's experiences navigating their implicit biases could be extremely varied and span many different life phases, a secondary and more narrow research question was added to focus and anchor the study: What are White American counselors' experiences of learning about personal implicit bias in multicultural counseling training? As discussed in Chapter Two, a significant gap

exists in counseling literature discussing or exploring counselors' experiences with their implicit biases. Most studies on implicit bias in therapy have been conducted by psychologists and counseling psychologists, and almost none of the of the current research has been conducted by counselor educators. This study attempts to lay the foundation for future studies that require a deeper understanding of counselors' experiences with implicit bias in order to answer questions about efficacy of training and cross-cultural counseling.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this study are discussed in relation to the current understanding of implicit bias in counselor education research and other related literature. Due to the dearth of research on implicit biases in counseling journals, connecting the findings of this study to extant research must be done in a way that is slightly more abstract, drawing attention to tendencies or themes found across the multicultural counseling body of literature. This study sheds light on the unique experiences and needs of new counselors and can be contextualized within the larger bodies of literature associated with counselor training, multicultural counseling competence, and implicit bias. Connections to and differences from existing knowledge will be drawn with consideration for the implications of this research.

Contributions to Counselor Education

This study stands apart from much of the other implicit bias research that quantitatively tests relationships between implicit attitudes and other constructs. Due to the questionable reliability of popular implicit bias measures, the findings of these quantitative studies must be considered with caution. Despite frequently yielding small effect sizes, the studies can still offer general insights into the nature of implicit bias comparing it with known constructs such as multicultural competence and empathy. In contrast, this study provides valuable insights into the

125

intrapersonal phenomenological experiences of counselors. These findings add value to the current understanding of the nuances of the complex psychological and experiential processes that contribute to the formation, discovery, and attenuation of implicit attitudes.

This study offers a deeper understanding of counselors' experiences with their own implicit biases on a personal level. Specifically, it gives insight into the participants' orientation to their implicit biases. An individual's orientation to their implicit bias is perhaps one of the most important concepts to emerge from this study, because it gives clues to that person's attitudes and commitment to eliminating their biases. Based on participant's descriptions, orientation to implicit biases consisted of, but was not limited to the following: awareness of implicit bias, willingness to address implicit bias, understanding of the role and impact of implicit bias, normalization/acceptation of implicit bias, and feelings about implicit bias. Most notably, this study reveals that a counselor's attitudes towards their implicit biases can be variable and largely dependent on their individual circumstance, experiences, and values.

Most literature on implicit bias in counseling is focused on understanding and attenuating biases. This study offers another look at counselor's experiences of their biases that brings complexity to our understanding of the process of navigating personal biases. The multicultural counseling competencies indicate that biases should be addressed and eliminated, but new counselors appear to experience significant internal conflict and dissonance when trying to accomplish this. This study highlights the way in which a counselor's ability to address a bias is subject to their personal openness and commitment to making attitudinal changes. Specifically, participants' responses reflected an orientation towards their biases that was typically dependent on their own personal value systems and the cognitive obstacles they faced in moving towards mitigating their biases. This personal appraisal caused participants' attitudes towards their

126

implicit biases to be prejudiced according to their own personal set of factors leading to a ranking or hierarchy of biases.

Hierarchy of Biases

Participants in this study identified myriad ways that they might decide to address a particular bias. Their decisions might be influenced by shame, personal values, discomfort, social perception, emotional fatigue, and a variety of other factors. To this point, counseling literature has not taken these elements into consideration in its understanding of implicit bias. This study revealed that White counselors go through complicated processes that involve avoidance, resistance, and rationalizing when determining if a bias is worth confronting.

The findings of this study imply that new counselors are more or less likely to address some biases over others. In this way, biases could be perceived in a hierarchical sense, in that depending on a number of contextual and personal factors, certain biases are perceived as being worse than others. Axt et al. (2014) found similar hierarchical patterns in implicit evaluations of race, religion, and age. In their study, Axt and colleagues found that there were ranked preferences for Whites vs. Blacks vs. Asians vs. Hispanics. In the present study, the hierarchy of biases represents a stratified likelihood of addressing a bias and not the strength of the bias itself. For example, participants comfortably discussed biases that they held against clients who might be implicated in some sort of wrongdoing. Participants also reported being less bothered by biases that they felt were socially acceptable such as those related to their political beliefs, especially when they knew other people who also held those biases. Furthermore, and somewhat disconcertingly, participants said that they felt more inclined to address a bias if they knew that it was hurting someone or that a client was fulfilling a stereotype because of trauma in their past. This is consistent with research that has linked empathy to motivation to address bias (Burke et

127

al., 2015; Teachman et al., 2003; Whitford & Emerson 2019) but demonstrates how biases can persist in situations where a counselor does not feel and emotional impetus to try to change it.

Incremental Development

Throughout this study, participants were asked to describe their experiences with their implicit biases. Participants' responses provided a reflection of their orientation to their own implicit biases at different points in their lives or training. Often, participants' descriptions echoed their current or previous ability to manage the challenges associated with accepting their biases as a part of themselves and understanding those biases as a component of their identity. Similarly, participants' responses shed light on the developmental challenges they faced related to their identity as members of the dominant culture and their cognitive ability to reconcile their perception of themselves as good people with the reality that they held potentially harmful biases. Participants' perceptions of themselves and their biases at different points in their lives alluded to their experience of developmental challenges consistent with those described in established cognitive development theories.

Participants' orientation towards their biases at different times corresponded well with particular stages within developmental models with regard to the cognitive challenges and perspectives they took at different points throughout their experiences navigating implicit bias. Two such models encapsulate participants' descriptions particularly well: Perry's (1970) Intellectual Developmental Theory, and Helm's (1995) White Racial Identity Development model. While the participant sample was limited in its ability to demonstrate all stages of both models in participant descriptions, elements of both models were distinctly reflected in participants' accounts of their experiences. Their current evaluations of themselves navigating

implicit bias offered a snapshot into their developmental process, and their stories chronicled developmental changes over time.

Perry's cognitive developmental scheme.

William Perry's (1970) developmental scheme (or model) posits that students learn by moving through a series of positions (or stages) of dualism, multiplicity, contextual relativism, and commitment within relativism. The findings of this study fit this developmental framework, particularly in that Perry's scheme highlights: (a) an individual's process of coping with uncertainty with respect to new information (i.e., learning about unconscious biases), and (b) meaning making processes related to discoveries of the self (Moore, 2001). Each of these stages are discussed with respect to their relevance to this study.

Participants' descriptions corresponded to the perspectives of a person in the *dualism* stage during times when they discussed their biases in black and white terms. Many participants described times where they could only see their biases as bad and had ideals about getting to a place of having no biases or learning how to eliminate them completely. These dualistic perspectives correspond to the second and third themes found in the current study, *Building on an Identity* and *"My Bias is a Pain in the Ass"* that dealt with shame. Participants feared that their biases made them a bad person who hurt others. Within these themes, participants described watershed realizations of biases that often stopped them in their tracks. Their understanding of their biases fit a good/bad dichotomy in those moments and frequently led to knee-jerk reactions to try to correct the behavior focusing idealistically on growth (theme 2), because they did not want to be bad people (theme 3).

More commonly, participants demonstrated characteristics of Perry's *multiplicity* stage when they were able to see that their biases were bad, but also that those bad biases did not make

them inherently bad people. As demonstrated in the *Warring with Dissonance* subtheme, participants seemed to presume that there was a third option beyond just being good or bad on account of their biases, but they could not completely understand what that option was. The fourth theme, *Warring with Dissonance*, also captures elements of Perry's *multiplicity* stage and was associated with navigating the obstacles that prevented work on biases and managing the uncertainty associated with being a good person despite having bad biases.

Similarly, participants descriptions in the *Internal Conflict* subtheme corresponded well with Perry's *contextual relativism* stage, as participants' descriptions in this subtheme reflected an understanding that biases served different purposes in different circumstances. Participants indicated that they had, at times, willfully chosen not to work on certain biases for personal reasons reflecting a perception of relativism withing context. A key distinguisher in this stage of Perry's scheme is the conscious awareness of the individual as the maker of meaning (Moore, 2004), and this corresponds to participants who felt that their biases were justified in certain situations.

To a lesser degree, participants embodied Perry's *commitment within relativism* stage when they described empathic personal commitments to resolving their biases rather than just identifying that addressing their biases was the right thing to do intellectually. This was evidenced in the *Working with Unresolved "Shadow Material"* theme, where participants had come to accept a deep need for skills to manage and decrease biases and had created an adjusted sense of what it meant to be a good counselor. The fifth theme also corresponds to the *commitment within relativism* stage, in that participants' decisions around addressing biases stemmed from moral commitments to their ethical identity in the face of what they might have felt were legitimate rationales to not address a bias (Moore, 2001).

Helms' White (Dominant Culture) Identity Development

Participants' descriptions also seemed to fit the racial development patterns described by Janet Helms (1995). Helms' theory of racial identity suggests that all members of socioracial groups experience developmental processes that are correlated to several statuses (*contact, disintegration, reintegration, pseudo independence, immersion/emersion, and autonomy*). Several of the White racial ego statuses were exemplified by participants' descriptions in this study. Each of these statuses is discussed with respect to their relevance in this study.

Participants referenced experiences that would be associated with the *contact* status during reflections on their upbringing and childhood. Helms indicates that the contact status is characterized by a satisfaction with the status quo and an obliviousness to issues of race. Several participants in this study identified having had very homogenous upbringings which contributed to an ethnocentric worldview and the conception of new biases. Participants also described having significant privilege during those times and a singular awareness of one worldview.

Helms proposed that if offered an opportunity to examine their privilege, some individuals might begin to develop an awareness of racial problems and move into the *disintegration* status, typified by feelings of guilt and shame about their Whiteness. Participants in this study spoke extensively about the guilt and shame that they experienced at the realization of other people's perspectives and experiences. Helms also suggested that upon realizing their privilege, individuals in this status might also possess a "naïve enthusiasm for the 'exotic'" (p. 594) with a growing consciousness of their oppressive culture. Participants described these types of attitudes verbatim in the *Growth* and *Learning Through Dialogue* subthemes that were characterized by statements of wanting to learn other peoples' experiences and having an openness and curiosity to learning everything that they can. When confronted internally about

131

their bias or privilege, several participants also defaulted to the position that they would use their guilt or privilege to try to help others.

Elements of the *reintegration* status were also seen in participants' descriptions in the *Warring with Dissonance* theme. In the reintegration status, individuals move back towards an idealization of their own racial group, often at the expense of other racial groups. Participants in this study retreated into "blame the victim" attitudes that are hallmarks of this status, when they described ways that their biases might serve a purpose or contain useful information. Participants also discussed how their other identities, such as being a Jewish person, a parent, a gay man, or as a petite woman, were salient to them in ways that hindered them from addressing their biases at time.

Multiple participants discussed how they were able to intellectualize their biases or connect to them in a non-specific or abstract sense. These descriptions are consistent with the perspectives of someone in the *pseudoindependence* status of Helms' theory, in which individuals develop an awareness of the experiences of others and begin to perceive them as valid (Helms, 1995). People in this status also begin to accept their identity as a part of an oppressive group. Participants in this study spoke to this status in the "*My Bias is a Pain in the Ass*" theme as they discussed their realizations that they had been complicit in oppressive systems. Participants also spoke to how damaging and avoidant it was to be able to discuss their biases externally and intellectually rather than personally and emotionally.

A few participants were able to speak to the *immersion/emersion* status which relates to cognitive and emotional restructuring (Helms, 1995). In this status, individuals often try to redefine what it means to be White for themselves and develop a more personalized understanding of racism. The descriptions that related to this position were typically found

within the *Quantum Shifts and Deepening Awareness: "I'm Becoming a Racist"* and the *Addressing Biases* subthemes. In these subthemes participants often mentioned having to do personal work on themselves in attempting to create what Helms describes as a "non-oppressive dominant culture identity" (p. 594). In the *Adjusted Altruism* subtheme, some participants described their current inability to do this prior to this point in their lives.

Perhaps because of participants' recognition that they had significant personal work left to do on their biases, fewer participants shared accounts or perspectives that were representative of Helms' *autonomy* status in which individuals begin to make an informed commitment to avoiding participating in racial oppression. In the autonomy status, individuals begin to forfeit the privileges that they are afforded by a racist system. Many participants indicated that they felt that their work was never complete and that addressing their biases would be a lifelong process. In some cases, participants spoke about trying to use their privilege for the benefit of those without it. Rarely did participants refer to having specific appreciations for different cultures or express a plan to work to create a more anti-racist society as it related to their biases. While participants did express a desire to practice in a way that uplifted all people, it seems that they were still figuring out how to do this as evidenced by their comments associated with the *Flying the Plane While Building It* subtheme.

The findings of this study provide further insight on the ways in which cognitive developmental challenges are associated with navigating personal biases. Participants accounts brought attention to the way in which, during times that they were in a particular developmental status or stage, they acknowledged their biases and the impact of them in different ways. For example, participants' approach towards addressing their biases varied at different points throughout their lives and in ways that were consistent with Perry's and Helms's models of

133

cognitive and racial identity development. A connection between cognitive developmental level and orientation to personal implicit bias might inform how educators prepare counselors in training to address their personal biases. The findings of this study suggest that students at different developmental stages or statuses will have differing ability to address their personal biases and will need different amounts of support in order to grow.

Experiences Learning About Implicit Bias in Multicultural Counseling Training

Participants' realization of their own unfinished work on their personal biases brings into question the adequacy and effectiveness of their implicit bias training. Each participant spoke about their experiences learning about implicit biases in their respective CACREP accredited programs, but consistently were able to identify places that they felt that the training did not meet their individual needs. In this section, a broader perspective is taken to describe how this study sheds light on the ways in which current training practices may be failing to address students' needs with respect to navigating their personal implicit biases.

Participants experiences learning about implicit bias can be thought of in two ways. First, with respect to the process of learning about implicit bias generally, and secondly, with attention to a student's individual biases that will encumber them in specific ways as they try to engage in culturally sensitive practice. Therefore, this inquiry into counselors' experiences learning about implicit bias explored both intellectual acquiescence to the belief that implicit biases exist in all humans, and also participants' encounters with the specific implicit biases that they possess. Both types of experiences are discussed here in a broader conversation about how competency and accreditation standards have shaped students' experiences learning about implicit biases.

Current Training Practices

The ACA code of ethics requires that counselor educators actively infuse multicultural competency into their student preparation (ACA, 2005, 2014). As such, many studies have attempted to track and measure multicultural competence in counseling students. In Chapter Two the researcher expounded that the common objectives of multicultural competence training are to increase knowledge, skills, and awareness. However, the original competencies proposed by Sue et al. (1992) also called for counselors to "work to eliminate biases, prejudices, and discriminatory practices" (p. 483).

Common approaches to multicultural training have been well documented in counseling literature. Priester et al. (2008) completed a review of syllabi of multicultural counseling courses and found that course content is most often focused on information about specific populations. Participants in the present study similarly indicated that most of their class content revolved around learning information about different cultures. In their review of syllabi, Priester and colleagues also found that there was relatively infrequent attention given to the development of multicultural skills, and only a small percentage of syllabi included instruction on implementing and applying social justice advocacy. This corresponds to the experiences of the participants of the present study, who reported that they did not have adequate skills to engage with different populations or manage their own biases.

This study confirmed that there seems to be a problem with the effectiveness with which the multicultural competencies are being implemented as they might apply to personal biases. It is likely that issues relating to implicit bias are not being addressed substantially, as evidenced by the number of participants in this study who indicated that personal implicit biases were barely

addressed, if at all. Most participants in this study expressed some level of dissatisfaction with the extent to which implicit biases were covered in their program.

Participants in this study described a range of experiences learning about implicit biases as a construct and learning about their own personal biases. Participants' descriptions of their training experiences illustrated a heavy focus on building self-awareness in their respective programs. A heavy programmatic focus on personal awareness is consistent with the requirement of cultural self-awareness described in the multicultural and social justice counseling competencies (Ratts et al., 2016) and was represented in the subthemes, *Structured Learning, Learning Through Dialogue, Growth Mindset,* and *Quantum Shifts and Deepening Awareness: "I'm becoming a Racist."*

Despite the considerable amount of attention paid to building awareness in their training as described by this study's participants, literature on implicit bias suggests that an individual's awareness of biases does not necessarily imply that those biases will be addressed by that person (Bohner & Dickel, 2011; DiAngelo, 2018). This study extends the findings of Castillo et al. (2007) who were able to demonstrate that multicultural training could have an impact on students' multicultural competence and create a short-term reduction in implicit bias. Ivers et al. (2021) found a small effect size for correlations between increases in multicultural counseling awareness and knowledge, and implicit bias. In the present study, awareness was a part of participants' experiences addressing their bias, but still required a motivator to ultimately bring them to the place of challenging the bias. Furthermore, participants in this study described experiencing dissonance and resistance upon becoming aware of their personal biases. In some cases, these obstacles prevented them from doing necessary self-work to resolve their biases. Based on responses from participants, opportunities to engage in this kind of self-work can be

rare, particularly in programs where implicit biases are barely discussed. Participants described often being left to wrestle with their biases on their own with no information on how to change them.

Internal Psychological Growth

The findings of this study bring attention to a need for counseling programs to address the psychological components involved in reducing and eliminating biases. The mandate to attend to and work to eliminate biases is contained under the skills section of the multicultural counseling competencies but may not be receiving its due attention. Programs that inundate their students with cultural information in hopes of building their awareness are likely not attending to the psychological needs of their students. This study highlights the fact that changing implicit biases may require significant psychological work and support. On the basis of this study's findings, it is not clear if students are being given adequate opportunities and support to do this work in their programs. Several participants indicated that they were just told to work on their biases, without being told how to do so.

Challenges with reliable measurement of implicit bias have also created obstacles in documenting effective practices in bias reduction. Yet, some studies may offer insight into how students might be able to address their biases on a personal level. Two studies in counseling literature have explored the use of mindfulness and meditative practices in reducing bias (Burgess et al., 2017; Ivers et al., 2021). Ivers and colleagues found that individuals who scored lower on measures of mindfulness (i.e., indicating their ability to notice internal and external sensory experiences), scored higher on measures of implicit White bias. Similarly, in this study students described internal and external sensory experiences as a part of their process for becoming aware of and beginning to address personal biases. Participants used words such as

137

"visceral", "scanning", "skin crawling", "tension", and "physical sensation" when describing coming to an awareness of their implicit biases. In this study, strong internal visceral reactions seemed to aid in building an awareness of internal sensory experiences. Taken together, these findings might suggest that individuals who are more aware of their internal sensory experiences (i.e. more mindful) might be well positioned to develop an awareness of their biases and thus more capable of addressing them. Meditative practices could provide a way of heightening the awareness required to acknowledge implicit biases.

Additionally, participants in this study reported that they sought out materials that might help them increase their multicultural awareness and potentially elucidate areas where they might hold bias. Participants indicated that they had been able to increase their awareness through reading, conversations with people who were different from them, and taking in new cultural information, which in some instances, lead to a discovery of a personal bias. Ivers et al. (2021) found a weak inverse relationship between multicultural awareness scores and implicit bias ratings. This was consistent with the experiences of the participants in this study who felt in some cases they were able to attenuate their biases by building their multicultural awareness through reading and conversation. Overall, most participants did not find increasing their awareness to be a sufficient strategy to completely eliminate their biases to the extent that they could feel completely comfortable working with individuals of any background. So, while a focus on cultural information was useful in raising awareness, participants felt like they still lacked the skills to address their biases or doubted their ability to engage in cross cultural interactions in a way that was not biased.

Finally, some studies have identified empathy as a potential factor in reducing implicit biases (Burke et al., 2015; Teachman et al., 2003; Whitford & Emerson 2019). Accordingly,

participants of the current study indicated that they experienced empathic shifts in perspective after learning about the extent of the suffering of others or the potential harm that they could cause by practicing in a biased way. Teachman et al. specifically found that empathy was less intricately linked to a reduction in implicit anti-fat bias when participants were given information that obesity was linked to decision making. This was similar to comments offered by this study's participants who indicated that they felt less inclined to address biases towards people whose identity was a matter of their own decision making (e.g., political affiliation, religion, etc.) and not genetics (e.g., race, disability, etc.). The findings in both cases point to the fact that contextual information often influences the decision to express empathy, which is thought to play a role in reducing implicit biases (Burke et al., 2015; Whitford & Emerson 2019). In this study, participants implicated empathy in as a significant factor in their decisions to address their biases. Often, participants' empathy was based on the suffering of another individual and the unique oppression they faced. This situation-based empathy is noteworthy because it implies that harmful biases can still persist in any situation where the counselor fails to be able to empathize with the client's experience. Thus, it may be the case that a students' ability identify a rationale for empathy determines the extent to which empathy can aid bias reduction.

Experiences Navigating Implicit Bias

Several findings in this study have not been found in counseling or implicit bias literature to this point as far as the researcher is aware. Novel findings from this study center around the ways in which counseling students battle with and judge their biases and how they adjust their expectations about being a counselor. Previous approaches to understanding implicit bias in counseling literature have often focused on understanding the origins of biases and identifying what might mitigate them (Boysen, 2009). For participants in this study, navigating personal

139

biases involved addressing several contextual factors relating to their upbringings, personal

identities, and social pressures, suggesting a complex interplay of various motivators. This study

provides insight into how a constellation of different elements might influence how a counselor

might choose to address their implicit biases and the degree to which they are able to do so.

In several instances, participants discussed implicit biases that they attributed to their

upbringing and its relative homogeneity. Several individuals spoke about how their biases had

been formed by the Whiteness that surrounded them as children. Pedersen (1987) describes these

types of biases as stemming from cultural encapsulation. Many participants also said that they

felt like they had been complicit in or contributed to systemic oppression as a result of their

monocultural upbringing. Some identified themselves as being a part of a system of white

supremacy and contemplated the ways that their unconscious biases might have played a role.

This study also illustrated specifically how counseling students could respond adversely

to learning about their personal biases. Some researchers have suggested that anti-bias education

programs may even have detrimental effects if they increase bias awareness without also

providing skills for managing the accompanying anxiety (Bohner & Dickel, 2011). This notion

was supported in the present study. Participants indicated that the intense shame that came from

an awareness of their bias could cause them to avoid thinking about it all together or withdraw to

all White spaces where their biases were not as reactive with their environment. Additionally,

participants described how confrontational approaches to raising awareness of implicit biases

were not always effective because of the shame, fear, and attempts at self-preservation that often

resulted from being blindsided. These findings suggest that an individual's psychological

defenses can moderate the effectiveness of an intervention aimed at reducing bias. Thus,

attempts to increase the awareness of an individual's personal biases should be carried out with

consideration for the type of cognitive support a student might require to prevent them from rejecting new information.

Boysen (2010) offered that counselor trainees might seek to quickly resolve the discomfort that comes with the discovery of their personal biases. This was also found to be the case for some of the participants. The present study extends Boysen's research by identifying some of the mechanisms by which students try to quickly resolve their discomfort. In the subtheme *Growth Mindset*, participants sought out positive ways that they could address their biases by indirectly by focusing on growth or openness. In these instances, participants described dispositions that were similar to the multicultural orientation described by Davis et al. (2018). To avoid acting in a way that was biased, participants often indicated that they tried to engage with their clients in ways that might demonstrate, openness, supportive interactions, and respect for the client's background—characteristics typically associated with cultural humility (Feronda et al., 2016; Hook et al., 2013). Nonetheless, participants were not able to describe how they might ensure that a multicultural orientation, undergirded by cultural humility, would not be undermined by their unconscious biases. In fact, the question remains whether a counselor might claim to adopt the values of a multicultural orientation while bypassing the negative feelings that would come with a deeper realization of their biases.

Aversive racism theory asserts that White people often sustain strong convictions regarding fairness, justice, and racial equality while still experiencing uneasiness, discomfort, and fear when around Blacks (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). This theory points to the reality that a multicultural orientation might not be sufficient to attenuate implicit biases. While many participants discussed their adoption of characteristics like openness and being egoless associated with a multicultural orientation (Feronda et al., 2016), they were also able to identify

141

challenges they had working with members of certain communities, indicating the persistent presence of their latent biases. Boysen (2009) also offered that explicit biases in counselors are rare. However, in contrast with that claim, participants in this study easily expressed difficulties in working with various types of clients. In descriptions within the *Adjusted Altruism* subtheme, participants reported that they had come to realize that they might not be as effective working with all clients due to their own personal dispositions. This finding offers a much more complex understanding of how counselors might understand their professional identity as it relates to their personal biases. While many counselors might want to be as helpful as possible and aspire to working with people from all backgrounds, they may quietly possess more sedate thoughts about their ability to work with every client that they encounter.

Working with Unresolved "Shadow Material"

As they entered the workforce, participants described continuing to wrestle with their implicit biases and being challenged by the reality that they might still be obscured. Optimism about starting a new career was often tempered by the fear of practicing with implicit biases looming. This study reveals that addressing biases is not always straightforward and can be confusing for new counselors. Participants indicated that while starting their current jobs, they had to both continue to address (or not address) the challenging thoughts associated with their personal biases (that one participant described as "shadow material") while also working with their clients to the best of their ability. Overlooked in implicit bias and counseling research is the reality that counselors often practice without all of the tools they feel they need. In the subtheme *Flying the Plane While Building It*, participants discussed how they are expected to keep their biases from harming their clients in session, but they must often do so without needed skills— only equipped with the tools of caution and avoidance.

Counselor educators should consider the implications of dispatching new counselors into the field while they feel unprepared to manage their implicit biases. This study reveals that more attention is needed to ensure that counselors have the appropriate tools they need to address any and every bias as they begin their practicum to ensure that our professional ethic of nonmaleficence is upheld. It may not be possible to eliminate all biases, but new counselors should have the resources they feel they need to work on their biases to the best of their ability.

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Current Sociocultural Context

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In the aftermath of the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in the spring of 2020, national attention shifted to matters of police violence and social justice. While isolated due to the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of Americans witnessed a White man kill a Black man on video from the solace of their homes. The ensuing conversations about this tragedy reached the participants of this study as many of them continued seeing clients virtually from their homes. Six of the study's ten participants brought up these and other killings and the national unrest that followed them. During interviews, many participants talked about how they found themselves having new conversations about racism and reflecting on ways that they might harbor biases. For many of them, these reflections were powerful and unavoidable, and in some cases offered insight that otherwise would have not been possible without such a nationwide shift in focus to racism.

In the context of this study on implicit bias, it is impossible to determine how participants might have spoken about their biases had the events of 2020 never happened. This prevailing sociocultural context most certainly influenced the findings of this study, and several participants indicated that through the conversations that followed the killings of Floyd and Taylor they became more aware of different biases that they held personally. Multiple participants also

indicated that they had reflected on their biases more recently because of the current social climate and the frequent opportunities they had to engage in discussion about social justice.

As discussed in Chapter Four, participants shared that in other contexts, these types of dialogues were instrumental in altering perspectives and increasing awareness of personal and implicit biases. Many said that learning about the experiences of others caused them to feel more empathy, and thus, to feel motivated to address their personal biases. Given what participants shared during their interviews, it is reasonable to assume that the conversations they had following the deaths of Floyd and Taylor likely had a similar effect. What this means for the study is that this group of participants was likely able to engage in these phenomenological interviews about biases with a greater amount of awareness and commitment to improvement. Many participants said that they felt it was important to participate in this study because of its relevance to what was going on in the world.

Moreover, because of the current social climate, the researcher might infer that participants were more willing and capable of divulging more information to a Black researcher than they might have been if there was less national attention on racism and social justice. Sawyer and Gampa (2018) found that during the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement which began in 2013, implicit attitudes held by Whites became increasingly less pro-White/anti-Black during periods of high BLM activity. Similarly, the recent resurgence of the BLM protests likely contributed to a decrease in anti-Black attitudes that may have affected the way that participants engaged with the researcher. Sawyer and Gampa's findings also suggest that because of recent BLM activity, participants' implicit biases were likely attenuated during the latest protests. This suggests that not only were participants more likely to be open with a Black researcher during this time, but that their orientation to the biases that they discussed in the study had likely

144

evolved since the beginning of the most recent BLM protests. Therefore, the findings of this study must be contextualized within these factors.

<div align="center">**Implications**</div>

The findings of this study demonstrate that not only do White counseling students leave their training programs with pertinent implicit biases, but that they wrestle with them throughout internship and into their careers. While the presence of bias is often accepted as an inevitability, the field of counseling needs to consider what cost theses biases bring to the populations we serve, and how marginalized groups stand to be disproportionately impacted by the biases of White counselors. The current findings have implications for social justice, clinical practice, supervision, and training.

Social Justice Implications

Vagle (2018) asserts that phenomenological research should promote social justice, and this study sought to do just that. By exploring how counselors' biases can impact the mental health treatment that minoritized and stigmatized populations receive, this study attempted to find ways of lessening the grip of systemic biases that are perpetuated by the implicit biases of individual therapists. To understand how implicit biases might impact clients indirectly, it is necessary to build an intimate understanding of how counselors experience their biases rather than maintain the assumption that all students will naturally address them adequately if given the tools.

Conducting investigations into counselors' experiences with their bias should not imply that new counselors do not want to address their implicit biases; all participants in the study found the importance of doing just that. However, this study demonstrates that it is inappropriate to assume that the altruism of new counselors is sufficient to motivate them to address implicit

<div align="center">145</div>

biases unequivocally. Relying on the good will of students ignores the psychological obstacles and cognitive dissonance they might face. Ignoring these psychological obstacles is likely to promote stagnation, confusion, avoidance, and complacence. The work of addressing bias is complex and difficult, and failing to guide new counselors through this process can have significant consequences for the clients that they go on to work with.

Only one participant discussed the influence of an implicit bias that signified positive feelings towards a person or group; however, most discussed how their White identity prolonged and perpetuated their unawareness of the biases they held. It is important to recognize how positive associations can form harmful biases as well—particularly biases that affirm Whiteness and white supremacist beliefs.

Implications for Counselors

The findings of this study concur that all counselors experience implicit biases as they begin their careers. While for many this trueism is repeated all throughout training, this study reveals that there are a variety of different ways that counselors might respond to that information. Counselors must work to uphold the ethical standards outlined by the ACA Code of Ethics (2014) that requires "Counselors recognize historical and social prejudices in the misdiagnosis and pathologizing of certain individuals and groups and strive to become aware of and address such biases in themselves or others" (p. 11).

Counselors must also listen to invitations to address their bias, especially those that they might experience on a physiological level and be prepared to sit with discomfort. Some situations might require counselors to seek out opportunities to illuminate unconscious material that might influence their clinical practice. Counselors should expect to experience thoughts and feelings that discourage them from working on their biases and proactively incorporate plans for

146

addressing them after feelings of discomfort have subsided. Counselors should also identify safe

spaces and individuals with whom they can have candid and uncomfortable conversations about

their biases. If they fear reprisal from their supervisor for holding their bias, they should seek out

other social justice minded professionals who are able to advocate for the wellbeing of the

clients.

Implications for Supervisors

All participants in this study discussed the importance and relevance of being able to

learn from others through conversation. For many of them, having a safe place to engage in one-

on-one conversations was instrumental in their ability to examine and reflect more deeply about

their biases. Moreover, fear of being shamed for having their biases was identified as a being

prohibitive to self-reflection. In fact, participants also identified fear of reprisal when it came to

potentially revealing their biases in class or supervision. Hahn (2001) has identified four

potential responses for supervisees who are experiencing shame: avoidance, withdrawal,

attacking others, and attacking themselves. Participants indicated that supervisors play a major

role in creating an environment in supervision that is conducive to a supervisee's self-exploration

and self-confrontation. Alonso and Rutan (1988) suggest that supervisors can create this kind of

environment and reduce supervisees' shame by being open about their own mistakes and

offering information on how to manage situations in which supervisees might feel

embarrassment about their performance.

Additionally, participants strongly expressed a need for more tools that would help them

better understand how to reduce their biases. Participants reported not knowing "how to be"

when working with clients who held different identities with them and even actively avoided

talking about topics that they felt uncomfortable with. This potentially stems from a supervisees'

need to feel and appear competent as described by Bordin (1983). Participants who indicated that they lacked the tools to address their biases, described being hypervigilant and distracted in therapy, often attending more to their internal processes more than to the client's presenting concerns. This is especially significant, because supervisee performance shares an inverse relationship with their anxiety levels (Friedlander et al., 1986). Supervision models can provide some insight into how to work with supervisees experiencing uncertainty. For example, the IDM model of supervision indicates that beginning (or level 1) supervisees need considerable structure, positive feedback, and facilitative interventions (Stoltenberg, McNeill, & Delworth, 1998).

Implications for Counselor Educators

Based on the findings of this study, counselor educators appear to be in a double bind as it relates to multicultural training on implicit biases. Their students present them with a paradox in that participants in this study: (a) acknowledged that overly generalized or intellectualized presentations on implicit bias did not create the type of emotional discomfort that typically inspired self-reflection, and (b) emphasized a desire for less shame and guilt-based teaching practices that create emotional discomfort and tend to cause students to fear their biases rather than want to explore and understand them. Participants favored instruction that normalized biases but invited reflection and valued dissonance as part of a learning opportunity. Some research suggests that shame can be useful in motivating a desire for self-change (Lickel et al., 2014); however, several participants in this study found it to be more debilitating and a cause for avoiding their biases. Still, participants insisted that an emotionally intensive approach to learning about their biases was necessary for them to develop the motivation to change them.

To address the double bind, it might be helpful for counselor educators to integrate cognitive developmental theory into their multicultural training on implicit bias. In this study, participants' descriptions of their feelings about their biases coincided with distinct stages of cognitive developmental, and racial identity development models. By paying attention to the developmental needs of students, counselor educators can effectively tailor training activities to address students' resistance to accepting new information about their biases.

Students require a level of support commensurate with the developmental challenges that they experience in their current stage or status (Sprinthall et al., 2001). This suggests that in order to adequately address personal biases, a more personalized training experience is needed to fit the student's individual needs. This is also consistent with the findings of this study that found that participants were able to do more personal growth when they had opportunities to candidly talk about their biases in much smaller groups of people. Therefore, instructors might opt to engage with students more directly, perhaps substituting class time for more deliberate personalized contact when training focuses on the student's cognitive and racial development.

Finally, counselor educators might also consider utilizing pedagogies that decentralize White experiences and perspectives. Participants' discussions from the *Building on and Identity* theme indicate that one common approach to addressing bias involves attempting to add new information to existing schemas rather than dismantling them. Specifically, some participants reported trying to reconcile the baggage of their White identity with their belief that they were a good person who never intentionally did anything hateful to people of other backgrounds. This internal conflict manifested in participants disclosures of the ways in which their biases perpetuated stereotypical views of marginalized groups. Participants described experiencing denial, dissonance, or avoidance as new information conflicted with their previously held beliefs.

149

To help contextualize the experiences of White students, counselor educators must use teaching practices that help students recognize the role of their Whiteness (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and its ability to obscure biases.

Potential Limitations

Several potential limitations for this study were discussed in Chapter Three. Aspects of the study such as the cross-cultural nature of the phenomenological interviews and the sociocultural context in which they were completed must be considered when evaluating the findings of this study. Additionally, this study, while trying to develop a deeper understanding of unconscious material, was only able to access participants' conscious understanding and awareness of their implicit biases, thereby limiting the depth with which the interviewer could probe.

Because participants also had the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time, the researcher was hesitant to make them feel too uncomfortable during interviews. Given the findings of this study, this voluntary withdrawal option was likely a limiting factor to the study because participants reported that in their moments of discomfort, they were actually able to become more aware of their biases. While some participants did disclose feeling discomfort during the initial interview, the researcher still exercised caution in knowingly pursuing topics that would result in extreme participant discomfort due to concern that discomfort might provoke a participant to withdraw from the study. Additionally, there was a noticeable absence of reported anti-Black bias in participants' disclosures that would be expected given the prevalent patterns seen in implicit bias research (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006). Participants may have been hesitant to endorse any type of anti-Black bias for fear of potentially offending the Black interviewer.

Another potential limitation of the study was related to the method of triangulation that used. While participants' written artifacts yielded a wealth of phenomenological material for some participants, for others, the artifacts offered little reflection or insight into the evolution of their implicit biases. The writing samples did provide clarity on the participants' orientation towards their biases over time. The researcher opted to avoid making deductions about biases that the participants did not explicitly write about to reduce the chances of making biased inferences during the data reduction process.

Lastly, the researcher's own biases created an intentionality with those of the participants. The researcher had to work hard through study design, implementation, data analysis, and write-up to bridle their reactions to other participant's biases. It became apparent during the study that cultural context played a significant role in how participants discussed their biases. Participants likely felt more comfortable sharing biases for which they and the researcher were assumed to share the same sociocultural context (e.g., identifying as American; general unpopularity of President Trump; sex offenders). The researcher had to be cognizant of his reactions to the participants' assumptions about his identity.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study lays the groundwork for a variety of other explorations seeking to create a better understanding of how the background of the counselor might influence their clinical practice. Specifically, in cross cultural encounters where a White clinician engages with non-White clients, more information is needed to understand how biases impact the formation and nature of the therapeutic relationship, treatment, and outcomes.

The most relevant follow up studies will likely involve exploring what experiences led to the greatest reduction in bias for counselors. Due to the current finding that navigating implicit

151

biases for counselors is closely related to developmental processes, future studies might further explore this connection. Information about this relationship might inform interventions aimed at reducing implicit bias and identifying ways to incorporate Deliberate Psychological Education (Sprinthall, 1994) in bias reduction efforts.

Another interesting notion that was raised during this study was that of the professional/personal bias dichotomy. A few participants discussed their efforts to keep personal boundaries out of their professional interactions. As such, some of these personal biases were probably not challenged to the degree that biases perceived to be associated with professional work were challenged. Participants also discussed the question of if such a dichotomy truly exists or if it is another mechanism for preserving information that biases hold. Future studies should explore counselors' perceptions of this personal/professional dichotomy and pursue quantitative experiments to test clinician's effectiveness in keeping these two domains separate.

Other investigations might also look to develop a better understanding of the ways in which implicit biases are specifically harmful as they may relate to counselors' committing microaggressions and other prejudiced behaviors. This type of research might also look more closely at what specific biases are most frequently held by White counselors, as this study was designed to explore counselors' experiences with their biases and not specifically the nature of those biases.

Follow up studies should also be completed to understand the experiences of minoritized people and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) counseling students as they navigate their implicit biases during multicultural counseling training. Professional counselors who may have experienced discrimination in some way might address their biases differently based on their worldviews. BIPOC are presumed to experience different racial identity

152

development processes and statuses, and therefore might also navigate their biases differently than White counselors over time. Based on the findings of this study and the congruence of bias navigating patterns with racial identity developmental stages, it seems that experiences of discrimination, vulnerability, and oppression might influence how people with disabilities, BIPOC, and LGBTQ+ counselors address their personal biases.

Another type of research project might also involve the development of a tool or checklist that clinicians can use to examine the degree to which they have "worked" on their biases. Because participants said that they were able to identify their biases by just thinking about groups of people they might be challenged in working with, a checklist might be a helpful tool in helping counselors in training preemptively identify some of these problem areas. Additionally, future studies might explore students' reactions to confrontation. Participants identified how confrontation could have a significant impact on their experiences with their biases, but it was not clear in these findings if those confrontations produced the desired results. Therefore, more exploration is needed into the effectiveness of more direct versus gentle approaches to confronting biases.

Given the new knowledge gained in this study of the significance of the roles that dissonance and social factors play in students experiences navigating their implicit biases, further inquiries might continue to explore the role of dissonance and the degree to which it is resolved. Additionally, this study was based on counselors who had approximately one year of experience working in the field. This sample was selected because it was speculated that they would more easily be able to access information about their implicit bias training compared to clinicians who had been practicing for several years. As Ivers et al. (2021) found that higher levels of bias were associated with older participants, it would be beneficial to learn about the experiences of older

153

clinicians with more experience. This study was constructed under the assumption that students

are specifically tasked with learning about implicit biases during their training programs as

mandated by CACREP and the ACA code of ethics through the multicultural counseling

competencies. Following their formal training, counselors are not constrained to continue

exploring their personal biases in such a structured and monitored way. While all counselors are

expected to comply with the ACA code of ethics and continue to seek supervision throughout

their careers, further research might explore the degree to which veteran counselors are exploring

and addressing their implicit biases.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to develop a better understanding of White counselors'

experiences navigating their implicit biases. Previously, counseling literature could not ascertain

if students in counselor training programs were acknowledging their biases and working towards

attitude change. The findings of this study make it clear how complex a process this is and

indicate that students have little support to navigate the psychological challenges that come with

trying to address personal biases. Most multicultural counseling training focuses on building

multicultural competence and is not always prescriptive in how to help students manage the

cognitive dissonance that can dominate their experiences navigating their implicit biases. In fact,

the multicultural counseling competencies can put pressure on counselors to try to appear

unbiased before they have had the opportunity to do any serious personal work. In the absence of

guidance and clear instruction on addressing their biases, counselors are likely to interpret their

biases for themselves and risk retaining attitudes that could be potentially harmful to their future

clients. Ultimately, many clinicians begin their careers before they are able to resolve the

tremendous psychological task of unlearning years of biases formation. Cognitive developmental

frameworks might offer a set of tools for interpreting the needs of counselors in these stuck moments and helping them find a way to move forward. More research is needed to identify the best ways to support White counselors in training as they wrestle with shame, their White racial identity, experiences of trauma, and all the many factors that influence the way that they attend to their unconscious biases.

EPILOGUE

My interest in implicit bias goes back years, as does my interest in the motivators of human behavior. It has been incredibly challenging to contextualize this topic. Recognizing my own biases, I know that I must be simultaneously committed to keeping them out of my professional work and to forgiving myself for being human. Perhaps the reality is that not all biases are created equal. In a conversation about counseling, and working with people at their most vulnerable states, the necessity for mitigating bias skyrocket. Having worked with so many children from marginalized groups, I am dismayed by the notion that they could be even further oppressed by systemic biases when they place their trust in their therapist's hands.

Studying and writing about something so ethereal as implicit bias has been quite a challenge. I have spent a fair amount of time questioning what biases I might be myself pouring out into this document. In that discomfort, I identified with the feelings of my co-researchers in this study, for whom I have such a profound sense of gratitude for being willing to lay bare their vulnerabilities to a stranger. It can feel both humbling and debilitating to know that you carry around this shadow material with you in everything that you do. In that humility I offer this study as a representation of who I am at this point in my journey. My strengths. My curiosities. My confusions. My inadequacies. My realizations of just how big the unseen world is. I take humility with me into my future investigations along with an empowered respect and passion for knowledge.

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Appendix A: Invitation Letter

Dear counselor,

You are being invited to participate in a research study designed to understand how counselors might have explored their own implicit biases during their training programs. Researchers suggest that counselors, along with many other professionals such as educators, judges, and physicians, do commonly hold unintentional biases that can impact their work. While it is assumed that all people naturally have implicit biases, counselor educators know little about how students respond to learning about their biases and what that experience is like for them. This research study is being conducted to better understand counselors' individual experiences with implicit biases and how they responded to those experiences on a personal level. Your participation will make an important contribution in furthering our current understanding of what is needed in implicit bias training within our master's degree programs.

For this study, the researcher is focused on the experiences of White and Caucasian graduates of CACREP accredited counseling programs due to their majority status within the field. If you completed your master's degree at any time during 2019, you are eligible to contribute to this research. Involvement in this study includes participating in an initial 60-minute Zoom or telephone interview discussing your experiences, and revisiting some of your reflective writings from your time in your masters counseling program. Interviews will be conducted in the months of November and December. A brief follow-up call will also be scheduled approximately one week after the initial interview to review important details. All information or material you provide will be kept confidential and used solely for the purposes of this research.

THIS PROJECT WAS FOUND TO COMPLY WITH APPROPRIATE ETHICAL STANDARDS AND WAS EXEMPTED FROM THE NEED FOR FORMAL REVIEW BY THE W&M PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3966) ON 2020-10-19 AND EXPIRES ON 2021-10-19.

You are required to notify Dr. Ward, chair of the EDIRC, at 757-221-2358 (EDIRC-L@wm.edu) and Dr. Jennifer Stevens, Chair of the PHSC at 757-221-3862 (jastev@wm.edu) if any issues arise during this study.

If you are interested in participating in the study or would like more information, please feel free to contact the researcher at oegwu@email.wm.edu with any questions or concerns.

I hope that you will consider contributing to this important research.

Kind regards,

Okenna Egwu

Appendix B: Consent Form

You have been invited to participate in a study designed to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of counselors during their training programs. The study entitled, *An Exploration of Counselor's Lived Experiences Navigating their Implicit Biases During Counselor Training,* focuses on counselor's understanding of their implicit biases. This investigation is being conducted by Okenna Egwu, a doctoral candidate at William & Mary in the Counselor Education and Supervision program, with supervision from Dr. Rip McAdams.

The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of how counselors deal with their personal implicit biases as they complete their formal training. Understanding specific experiences of counselors will help to inform training strategies regarding what works best in helping students navigate the difficult challenges associated with learning about and addressing their implicit biases.

Involvement in this study will include participation in a 75-minute interview about your experiences with implicit biases and your sharing of a written reflection composed during your master's training program (a journal, paper, or assignment) that highlights your understanding of or reactions to personal biases at the time. You will also be asked to complete a brief, 20-minute, follow-up interview to review any other relevant experiences and confirm the accuracy of the information gathered by the researcher. Interviews will be conducted over the telephone and recorded for accuracy by the researcher. Interviews will be conducted by Okenna Egwu (the researcher) who is a professional clinical counselor licensed in the state of Illinois.

Your identity will be kept confidential throughout the study. You will be asked to select a pseudonym for yourself at the beginning of your participation to be used throughout the study to refer to your experiences. Identifiable information will be redacted from all transcripts and written texts to protect the identity of the participants. Sensitive materials will be stored on an encrypted and password protected drive.

Your participation in the research is voluntary. If you agree to participate, you have the option to withdraw from the study at any time and to have your information and responses expunged from the research record. Knowing that you are contributing to our deeper understanding of the impact of implicit biases on counselors is the primary benefit of participation in this study; there is no other incentive for participation, and there is no penalty for non-participation. If you are interested in receiving a report of the findings of the study, you may request them by emailing Okenna Egwu directly at the email address below.

There are no known risks associated with participation in this study. You will be simply asked to respond to interview questions about your experiences with implicit biases and to provide a written reflection composed during your master's program.

If you have any questions regarding this study, you can contact me, Okenna Egwu, by email (oegwu@email.wm.edu).

You may report dissatisfaction with any aspect of this study to Dr. Tom Ward, Ph.D., the Chair of the Protection of Human Subjects Committee by telephone (757-221-2783) or email (tjward@wm.edu).

Thank you for considering participating in this study!

I confirm that I am at least 18 years of age and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the College of William and Mary, School of Education Institutional Review Board (IRB). If any issues arise or if I have concerns about my rights as a research participant, I agree to contact Dr. Tom Ward, chair of the EDIRC, at 757-221-2358 (EDIRC-L@wm.edu) and Dr. Jennifer Stevens, Chair of the PHSC at 757-221-3862 (jastev@wm.edu)

By completing the interview, I am agreeing to participate in the above described research study.

Please keep this letter for your records.

A. Introduction (10 min)
- A little bit about the study
  - Understanding implicit biases, how they work, and how to truly change them.
  - What we don't see too much in literature is the personal processes people go through when navigating their biases---that has got to be a unique and nuanced process for everyone and the idea is that if we understand people's processes better, we can find better ways to work with students in mitigating their biases.
- Thank you for agreeing to participate. Implicit bias is a tricky subject and one that I think can be challenging to talk about.
- I want to take a minute to remind you that everything that we talk about is confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this research.
- Throughout this interview I will be taking notes for my own organization but to ensure that your information is accurately captured, I would like to also record our interview. (Start recording)
- Ask for a pseudonym
- Review consent
  - Completion of the interview is considered your consent to use your information. You are free to end the interview at any time if you choose to.

So we'll get started with few demographic questions and then move into some questions about your experiences learning about biases and go from there. How does that sound?

1. **Where are you from?**
2. **How do you identify racially?**
3. **What is your gender identity and age?**
4. **How would you describe your [cultural] background?**
5. **Can you tell me a little bit about how you decided to participate in this study?**
6. **What was your concentration in your program and what year did you graduate?**

B. Understanding implicit bias (20 min)

So for the purpose of this study, when we refer to implicit biases, we're referring to those unconscious biases that we all have—our natural tendencies to make associations between things in ways that create a preference or attitude. The idea of these being implicit preferences just means that we don't tend to be aware of these associations and that they can be automatic. An example would be something like the halo effect where we tend to attribute positive characteristics to people we already hold a positive view of. Specifically, the halo effect suggests that we tend to rate people who are more attractive as being kinder, happier, and have better character. So in a hiring situation, an employer might have an implicit bias for a more attractive applicant and unconsciously assume that they are nicer and have a better work ethic. Implicit biases can be related to race, age, political affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, or physical ability, etc.

7. **Can you tell me about your experiences learning about implicit bias [in your master's program]?**
    a. What were you taught about implicit biases in your counseling program?
    b. What was your implicit bias training like (effectiveness)?
    c. How do you understand implicit biases [now]?
    d. How if at all were implicit biases addressed in classes/advising/supervision/internship?
8. **When you reflect on your experience [in your program] learning about implicit bias, what resonates or has meaning for you?**
    a. What did you notice during your training?
    b. What made the most impact?
    c. Describe your reactions to learning about implicit biases in general.

C. **Navigating implicit biases (30 min)**
9. **How do you feel about your biases?**
    a. How have/did you become aware of your personal implicit biases [confrontation]?
    b. What is it like acknowledging personal biases?
    c. What is your personal response to having biases?
10. **Can you think of an example where you were aware of a personal implicit bias and describe it to me? (always try to capture two or three descriptions)**
    a. What was that like for you?
    b. What were you aware of at that time?
    c. What else were you aware of?
    d. **Can you think of a second time?**
    e. What were your emotional reactions?
    f. What did you do after learning about your biases?
11. **The MCCs require counselors to address their personal biases. Can you describe what this meant for you?**
    a. Can you describe your process for addressing your biases?
        i. Can you think about a specific example and describe it to me?
    b. Turning point? (becoming aware of biases to choosing to work on them?)
    c. What influenced how you addressed your biases [motivations]?
        i. Anything during your program?
        ii. What challenges have you faced as it relates to addressing your biases? (Is there anything that gets in the way of you challenging your biases?)
        iii. Did you ever experience dissonance related to your implicit biases? If so, how has the notion of dissonance connected to your experience?
12. **How often do you think about your implicit biases?**
13. **What should we do to improve implicit bias training in masters programs?**
14. **What have I not asked about that you would like me to know about your experiences with personal implicit biases?**
15. **What is the most important thing to know about your experience with your implicit biases?**

Sometimes after having time to think more about the conversation, participants might find that they have more to add or maybe have new realizations. If it's okay with you, I'd like to schedule a short follow up interview in a week or so to check back in with you and see if you had any other thoughts or insights about this information. I might have one or two follow up questions at that time, but I imagine that call should last around 20 minutes. Can we do that now?

   D. Follow-up interview (20 min)
   - Check in
   - Review highlights from last meeting
   - Remind confidentiality
   - Ask to record again
   - Anything you would like to add to that summary

   16. How did you find our initial interview experience?
       a. How comfortable were you with this discussion?
   17. Is there anything that you would like to add to what you described during the first interview?
       a. Was there any information in the previous interview that you would like to revisit?
   18. Have you had any further reflections (about your experience/understanding of implicit biases) following our time together?
   19. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix D: Reflexive Journal Excerpts

12.29.2020

There are two levels of unawareness with personal biases. You might not know what they are in name and thus unaware of when they are expressed. Additionally, you might know what they are in name/attitude, but be completely unaware of when they are expressed. i.e. you may know what your specific IB is, but might not be in control to reduce it. I might go back through my interviews with [] and try to pay attention to all of the times where she seems to be trying to appear to be someone who isn't very biased. She admits that education is a life long process, but there is a difference between education and doing personal work. She presents herself as being pretty developed, and I feel like I made the mistake of calling her that… she doesn't seem to feel like she has lots and lots of things to work on still.

12.30.2020

It felt very comfortable to talk with []. I left the conversations with a mixture of feelings. I initially felt good about our conversation whereas I felt like he gave me a lot of things to think about, and his perspective seemed to be one of someone who genuinely wanted to be an ally and believed in social justice. After thinking further, it did seem like he might have talked superficially about his own biases, intellectualizing the concepts a little more than talking about his own experiences. He even mentioned that he could have a habit of doing that but it didn't seem like he was doing it on purpose. Sometimes, it can be challenging for people to relate back to the experience and choose to focus on ideas because they are adjacent, and safer.

01.11.21

Again, in this study I feel like I have to be continuously aware of the preferences I might develop towards the coresearchers or any way that I might have demonstrated any type of partiality towards them. With [] I question if I might have been giving him the benefit of the doubt when talking about his personal biases, perhaps because of his vocabulary of anti-racist terminology or the impression he left during our previous meeting as a person committed to social justice. I realize that in the moment of the conversation, it can be challenging to dig deeper and push the participants to talk about their specific biases because I am walking a tight rope of trying not to offend them or be too judgmental the way that I might have been with []. I also run the risk of not pushing hard enough, and eliciting the true experience.

01.18.21

Meeting with [] was awesome. She talked very transparently about her personal struggles in a way that laid bare the personal journey that she was on. It was a very emotional interview for her but for her she was able to see a direct connection between her life experiences and a need to work on her person al biases, particularly as a counselor. Her descriptions make me really ponder the degree or extent to which people can challenge themselves given their developmental level and life experiences

[] had some interesting insights. She seemed to be wresting with some of her understandings of her own bias, and seemed to be in somewhat of a state of helplessness, feeling like overcoming her bias was something that she wanted to do, but didn't really understand how to do that. She

described intersectionality in a weird way but touched on her identity as a White woman and even her experience with her own White womans tears. A lot to follow up with her on, especially how Trump's presidency, the storming of the capital, and BLM protests all impacted the way that she addressed her biases.

01.19.21
[] later in an email used the phrase "inherent bias" in reference to the topic of our conversation the day before. I wonder if I should have considered more using other words for implicit bias in this study to attempt to catch other types of terms people may have been more accustomed to hearing in reference to this topic.

01.28.21
I also realize that at first glance everyone has described negative implicit biases. This goes against the assumption of them as an inherently neutral thing that we all have to deal with. Everyone has thought of their IB as not just a bad thing, but also a thing that has negative outcomes.

Following up with [], its clear that she is still processing many things related to her understanding of her biases. Some things she hasn't thought of in a long time and somethings she appears to be processing outloud. It is also interesting to see her level of comfort expressing political beliefs, there must be some level of acceptance that we must vote for the same party.

02.02.2021
In preparation to meet with [], I was thinking about apriori codes and things that I had already noticed from the interviews. Some of them go like: wanting to appear altruistic, doing things because the profession ethically requires it, fear of wanting to hurt people, following expectations.

02.04.2021
Recognizing that my approach to this study, understanding of the material and even the questions I chose to ask were limited by my lens. There are questions that I probably should've asked that I didn't know to based on my starting knowledge base.

02.27.21
…this means regularly going back to the audio file to get a better understanding of the way a participant said something, whether there was intonation or distinction that might influence my own biases towards what they were saying or represent a bias in what they were saying.

03.04.21
Throughout commenting, I tried to do the participants justice by imagining that they were looking over my shoulder while I was writing. Not so that I would try to paint them in a good light, but to make sure that I was representing their statements accurately

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Education

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)   2021
Counselor Education and Supervision
William & Mary (CACREP Accredited)

Master of Arts   2012
Human Development Counseling: Clinical Mental Health
Bradley University (CACREP Accredited)

Bachelor of Science   2009
Physics
Bradley University

Licensure & Certifications

Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (Illinois)

National Certified Counselor

Certified Correctional Health Professional

Professional Experience

Staff Therapist   2019
Colonial Behavioral Health, Williamsburg, VA

Clinical Mental Health Counselor
Northwestern University at Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center   2015-2018
Isaac Ray Center at Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center
Chicago, IL

Staff Therapist   2017
Columbia College Chicago, Chicago, IL

Youth Therapist
Human Service Center   2012-2015
Peoria, IL

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Trainer/Consultant   2010-2015
Resource Management Services, Peoria, IL