AN EXAMINATION OF BIAS INCIDENT RESPONSE AT POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

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A Dissertation

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The purpose of this general inductive study was to understand how senior student affairs officers (SSAOs) have managed the response to bias on college campuses. The literature is clear about the negative effects of bias on targeted populations; however, there is a large gap in the literature when it comes to how bias incidents are managed. The goal of this study was to gain a deeper understanding about the processes SSAOs used to manage bias incidents, as well as what they learned from their experiences.

Participants in this study were selected via purposeful sampling. A senior student affairs officer (SSAO) was defined as having at least one of the following criteria: responsibility for policy formation or vision planning for a division of student affairs, responsibility for resource allocation within a division of student affairs, or a wide scope of functional areas and/or large number of employees whom they supervise. Nine participants were interviewed and represented a variety of institutional types, geographic locations, and social identities.

Six broad themes emerged from the data: (1) bias response; (2) outcomes; (3) response considerations; (4) challenges to bias incident response; (5) preparation for bias incident response; and (6) post-response reflection. Ten implications for SSAOs are presented as a result of the findings. First, SSAOs should develop formal bias reporting systems, as well as formal bias response plans. Second, SSAOs should form a bias response team. Third, SSAOs should consider all of the available options when determining what responses to implement. Fourth, SSAOs have competing considerations and must consider all of these quickly and make the best
decision possible. Fifth, SSAOs must understand the organizational environment in which they are operating. Sixth, SSAOs must familiarize themselves with the social media culture. Seventh, graduate preparation programs need to include a specific, required element of the curriculum that focuses on teaching students about bias incident management on college campuses. Eighth, postsecondary institutions and professional associations alike need to offer continuing education about bias incident management. Ninth, SSAOs who manage bias incidents must make it a priority to engage in post-incident reflection. And finally, tenth, professionals need to critically examine the methods for responding to bias, in order to ensure that they are designed in such a way that will address the oppressive structures that exist in institutions of higher education.
Dedicated to Megan, the love of my life, for always believing in me and supporting me.

And to my loving parents, for always pushing me to succeed.
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Envision that you are at American University in Washington, D.C., and you walk into a building and see a poster of a confederate flag with “Huzzah for Dixie” written on it and cotton branches attached (Gluckman, 2017). Picture walking across Oberlin College, a small private liberal arts campus in Ohio, and seeing someone dressed in a Ku Klux Klan outfit near the Afrikan Heritage House (“Bias incident,” 2013). Maybe you attend the University of Oklahoma and join a fraternity only to hear other members singing racist chants and songs (Kingkade, 2015). Or rather, maybe you are sitting in the library at UCLA and overhear a student filming a tirade about Asian students on campus (Associated Press, 2011). Unfortunately, one does not have to imagine these incidents; they are all examples of bias incidents that have actually occurred on college and university campuses across the United States. There are countless more bias incidents occurring on college and university campuses everyday, thus raising questions about how higher education professionals are responding to them.

Bias Incidents at Postsecondary Institutions

Throughout this study, bias incidents were defined as, “acts of bigotry, harassment, or intimidation that can reasonably be concluded to be directed at an individual or group based on the individual's or group's actual or perceived age, color, creed, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity/presentation, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status or any combination of these factors” (Chappell-Williams, 2007, p. 36). Bias incidents are acts or speech rooted in hate and ignorance but are not always criminal in nature, as they do not have to involve people committing acts of physical violence or property damage (Wessler & Moss, 2001). They may differ from hate crimes, which are defined by the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as, “a criminal offense against a person or property
motivated in whole or in part by an offender’s bias against a race, religion, disability, ethnic origin or sexual orientation” (FBI, 2015). The 1998 beating and murder of Matthew Shepard, a gay college student at the University of Wyoming, was one such hate crime. Two men kidnapped and robbed Shepard, tied him to a fence, brutally beat him, and left him to die, because of his sexual orientation (Brooke, 1998). This incident was a hate crime since the killers targeted Shepard because he was gay. It was also a bias incident because it was an act of bigotry, harassment, and intimidation due to Shepard’s sexual orientation. In short, a hate crime is typically also a bias incident; however a bias incident may or may not rise to the level of a hate crime.

Many postsecondary institutions across the United States have reported bias incidents. These have included such incidents as parties at which students wore blackface; uttered slurs and epithets based on sexual orientation, religion, and race; and drew swastikas on a wall in a residence hall (Thompson, 2014). Often, the incidents portrayed by the media disrupt a campus on a large scale; however, incidents of microaggression can also be bias incidents (Minikel-Lacocque, 2013). Higher education administrators have made progress in their work to respond to and prevent bias incidents on campuses, as evidenced by the incorporation of social responsibility and social justice into curricula and non-academic events on campuses around the United States (Reason, 2013). In spite of this, bias incidents persist and continue to affect students, staff, and the community.

It is also important to discuss microaggressions. Microaggressions are common occurrences that are brief in nature and display hostile, derogatory, or negative insults and perceptions toward a target person or group based on their race, gender, sexual orientation, or religion (Sue, et al., 2007). These actions may be intentional or unintentional, although typically
the perpetrators of the microaggressions are unaware that they have participated in an action that
demeans the recipient of their communication (Sue, 2010b). Utilizing this definition of
microaggressions while keeping in mind the aforementioned definition of a bias incident means
that many microaggressions constitute a type of bias incident, however not all bias incidents are
considered a microaggression because not all bias incidents occur on an interpersonal level. One
note of caution: this does not mean that all microaggressions are going to rise to the attention of
college and university administrators’ or meet their definition of a bias incident. Rather, it often
depends on whether or not the microaggression draws enough attention via media and word of
mouth for administrators to become aware of them and address them. It is also important to note
that bias incidents of racism and homophobia, including those that constitute microaggressions,
can have a negative impact on those targeted, potentially causing depression, anxiety,
resentment, and even hopelessness (Choi, Paul, Ayala, Boylan, & Gregorich, 2013; Nadal,
Griffin, Wong, Hamit, & Rasmus, 2014; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). The deep, and often
wide, impact of these situations requires a response from administrators that is both prudent and
consistent with their legal obligations, although if they do not learn of the incident, it is difficult
for an appropriate response to occur.

Many colleges and universities have, for some time, held that hate speech or incidents of
bias are counter to the academic environment and have thus codified their prohibition of this type
of speech by students (Labaree, 1994). However, there have been challenges to these
prohibitions by means of the legal system, either directly by cases that stem from higher
education, or indirectly by cases that do not come from higher education but have legal
implications for restriction of speech. Below, I briefly discuss three cases that have affected the
regulation of speech. A full exploration of legal issues affecting speech regulation exists in
Chapter II. In the case of *Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire* (1942), the court ruled that the prohibition of certain speech was permissible if the targeted individuals took the speech as “‘fighting words’—those by which their very utterance inflict injury or tend to incite an immediate breach of the peace” (p. 572). Further, in *Cohen v. California* (1971), the court held that states could not prohibit offensive or expletive speech unless a reasonable person or group of people considered the speech as a “direct and personal insult,” which means that the speech was not directed toward any single individual, but rather was a public expression of speech (p. 20). A third case, *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* (1969), stated that in order for school officials to have a valid argument in censoring student speech, they must be able to prove the speech or activity would cause an actual, substantial disruption to the academic environment, meaning that the learning of other students would be impeded in some meaningful way. This means any university policy prohibiting some type of speech or expression by students must be, “narrowly tailored and allow for ample means of communication” (Patterson, 1998, p. 114) in order for regulation to be valid. Ultimately, the courts have communicated to college and university administrators that they are to respect freedom of speech and engage in educational conversations with students rather than impose restrictions on hate speech through a discipline process. This can help to provide insight for administrators when addressing bias incidents that consist of speech rather than actions.

Responses to bias incidents at an institution of higher education come in several different forms and have a variety of intended outcomes. Schlosser and Sedlacek (2001) recommended administrators evaluate the incident and determine the context within which it occurred, conduct fact finding to gather information about the incident, and then formulate and implement a response to the incident. One possible way to follow this advice is by using a critical incident
response team. This team could include a variety of constituents in order to examine the issue from multiple perspectives and create the most inclusive, well-rounded response possible. Other campuses, however, have in place a code of conduct that governs how they respond to such incidents. Administrators must keep in mind the potential options for responding to bias incidents and the possible ramifications of their chosen response as they address bias incidents on college and university campuses.

**Crisis Response Framework**

One can define a crisis in a multitude of ways based on their perspective, attitude, and present circumstances. Harper, Paterson, and Zdziarski (2006) defined a crisis on college and university campuses as “an event, often sudden or unexpected, that disrupts the normal operations of the institution or its educational mission and threatens the wellbeing of personnel, property, financial resources, and/or reputation of the institution” (p. 5). If we examine this definition, a bias incident can, but does not always, rise to the level of a crisis. A bias incident at a postsecondary institution may cause a small disturbance that is contained to one aspect of the institution, may be a more serious disturbance that disrupts the entire institution, or may be a large-scale disturbance that affects the institution and the community outside of the institution. It is important to note that it is unlikely a bias incident would rise to the level of a disaster, defined by Harper et al. (2006) as “an unexpected event that disrupts normal operations of not only the institution, but the surrounding community as well” (p. 5). Disasters are typically more indicative of a natural disaster or large-scale tragedy such as a hazardous materials spill; however, one exception may be a large act of violence that results from hatred toward a group of individuals.
In this study, I used crisis response as a theoretical framework through which the results of the study can be viewed. Theoretical frameworks, sometimes referred to as conceptual frameworks, are ways that a study can be viewed to help make sense of the research that was conducted and as a way to analyze the results (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). Given that I have found no research about how bias incidents are managed on college and university campuses, analyzing the interviews in terms of crisis response helped to make better sense of the participants’ experiences that they relayed to me.

**Statement of Problem**

For quite some time, students who attend institutions of higher education have experienced issues of incivility and demeaning behavior on an interpersonal level. Often, these incidents of incivility are classified as bias incidents. Examples include fraternity members at The University of Oklahoma who chanted racist sayings and songs while at university sponsored events or nooses being hung on trees in the middle of campus at Oberlin College (Gilroy, 2008; Kingkade, 2015; Thorne, 2014). At times, members of a specific population are targeted and harassed or threatened, thus leading these issues to rise to the level of a bias incident.

Unfortunately, these types of behaviors are not new to college and university campuses. There is a long history of bias incidents occurring on campus, targeting individuals based on their gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, and other non-dominant identities (Berrill, 1990). These incidents are often very high stakes, because they are antithetical to intended outcomes of the college experience.

One of the primary, intended outcomes of the college experience is the growth and development of the students (Mayhew et al., 2016). In order for students to have a higher likelihood of achieving this desired growth and development, they need to have a sense of
community that is inclusive of them and others around them (Brazzell & Reisser, 1999).

Inclusive policies, such as partner benefits, affirmative action policies for hiring and admissions decisions, and a preferred name/pronoun policy for students are indicators of a college or university striving to build an inclusive community. Another example is a postsecondary institution that has resources such as identity centers and faculty/staff who are committed to fostering an inclusive environment. Incidents of bias on campus can disrupt this sense of community and, therefore, require some type of response and intervention from administrators (Schlosser & Sedlacek, 2001). Although this type of response often falls to those working within student affairs, researchers have not studied the process these administrators use when responding to bias incidents. Further, there have been no studies about what administrators learn from the events themselves in order to implement adequate prevention measures. In this study, I examined how senior student affairs officers (SSAOs) responded to bias incidents on a college or university campus and what they learned from these situations.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this general inductive study was to understand how SSAOs have managed institutional response to bias incidents on their campus. By gaining an understanding of administrators’ approaches to managing bias incidents, a collective knowledge was generated that may help other student affairs professionals if and when they are required to respond to bias incidents. The knowledge constructed may also assist faculty in graduate preparation programs as they design curricula around the topics of equity and inclusion and crisis response. There is a wealth of literature on the topics of management and crisis response, and indeed some literature is present on the specific topic of bias incidents and the impact they have on target populations. However, there is a large gap in the literature surrounding the actual management of bias
incident response at postsecondary institutions by SSAOs. This study focused primarily on the actions SSAOs took when responding to bias incidents, as well as what they learned throughout the response process.

**Research Questions**

Four primary research questions guided this general inductive study:

1. How did senior student affairs officers manage the institutional response to a bias incident that occurred within the student population?
2. How were senior student affairs officers prepared to respond to a bias incident that occurred within the student population?
3. What did senior student affairs officers learn about responding to bias incidents that occurred within the student population?
4. What recommendations do senior student affairs officers have for training professionals in student affairs to manage bias incident response?

**Significance of Study**

The significance of this study is rooted in the present day reality of student affairs and the requirement of professionals to address and respond to bias incidents in their campus community. These bias incidents pose challenges to administrators in how to respond, as well as how to prevent future occurrences (Wessler & Moss, 2001). A primary rationale for the need to address bias incidents is the impact these actions can have on targeted student populations and the entire campus community. Incidents that stem from hate, bias, and ignorance can negatively affect the feeling of an inclusive community on campus, which Brazzell and Reisser (1999) described as a key to student development, retention, and learning. Bias incidents in the 21st century not only require a physical response on campus, they also require administrators to be
aware of and respond to any issues that arise via social media. In recent cases, such as the escalation of racial tensions in 2015 at the University of Missouri, information spread on social media within hours of protests beginning, thus becoming a trending topic on Twitter, raising a collective awareness of the issues at hand, and ultimately leading to the resignation of the president and chancellor (Izadi, 2015a). Although social media can be beneficial by raising awareness of incidents that might otherwise not receive attention, this awareness can also lead to more individuals, particularly students, experiencing more negative effects of the bias incident. I found no research on the topic of social media as it relates to bias incidents. This study may create a foundation upon which other researchers can build.

**Research Design Overview**

In this study, I examined how SSAOs managed their institution’s response to a bias incident on campus using a qualitative approach. Specifically, I wanted to learn about the unique experiences of each individual administrator and subsequently attempt to draw some conclusions about the collective experience of responding to bias incidents. This research utilized the general inductive approach as detailed by Thomas (2006). Further, it was grounded in a social constructivist paradigm, described by Creswell (2013) as a belief that all people can create knowledge because humans are social beings, and each individual interprets social interactions in a uniquely, meaningful way.

**Summary**

Bias incidents are a reality at postsecondary institutions and affect the students we serve. As such, student affairs administrators must respond swiftly and intelligently to these incidents. However, there is a gap in the literature that demonstrates how administrators have responded to such incidents, and what lessons they learned from doing so.
This dissertation consists of five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the study, presenting the research questions and the rationale for conducting the study. In the second chapter, I review the literature related to bias incidents, their impact on targeted populations, strategies for response, and how the law limits those responses. In the third chapter, I discuss the methodology for the study. In chapter four, I present an analysis of the data collected and provide major findings from the research. In the fifth chapter, I present the significance of the findings, limitations of the study, implications for practice, and directions for future scholarly work.
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this general inductive study was to better understand how SSAOs managed bias incidents that occur at postsecondary institutions. In order to provide a context for the study, a review of the literature was conducted. In this review, I discuss bias incidents, specifically examining their history and management on college and university campuses. I also examine the literature surrounding crisis response, both on and off campus. Lastly, I review important legal cases that center on incidents of bias at higher education institutions. The review of bias incidents is intended to provide background for the reader as well as a justification for the need of the study. The examination of crisis response literature is meant to provide a conceptual framework, within which the study took place. Lastly, the legal cases provide additional background information as they often dictate what path SSAOs may take in the management of a bias incident.

Bias Incidents at Postsecondary Institutions

Anytime there are a large number of diverse individuals with differing backgrounds and perspectives living, working, and learning in close proximity to one another, there are likely to be differences of opinion. Unfortunately, these differences of opinion can often turn ugly and the conversation can become uncivil and result in individuals exhibiting demeaning behavior toward one another (Gilroy, 2008). If this demeaning behavior is targeted at people who are members of a specific population that is considered a marginalized group, then the behavior may rise to the level of a bias incident. A bias incident is defined as the following:

An act of bigotry, harassment or intimidation that can reasonably be concluded to be directed at an individual or group based on that individual's or group's actual or perceived age, color, creed, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity/presentation, marital status,
national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status or any combination of these factors (Chappell-Williams, 2007, p. 36).

On college and university campuses, these incidents often target individual students, faculty, or staff due membership in one or more of the above stated populations (Berrill, 1990; Chappell-Williams, 2007). Bias incidents typically involve some type of speech or action directed at a person or group of people, and can range from using a racial slur, to writing derogatory language on a wall, to threatening violence against an individual or group because of one or more demographic characteristics. Additionally, if the bias incident includes a “criminal offense against a person or property,” the additional designation of a hate crime is considered (FBI, 2015). For the purposes of this study, the focus will be on incidents of bias, and not consider whether an act rises to the level of a hate crime.

Some individuals may view bias incidents as a matter of political correctness or freedom of speech as protected by the First Amendment. Different people can view political correctness in different ways, but Collins (1992) described it as avoiding the use of language that is considered offensive, even if it exists in common vernacular. From the time many prospective students arrive on campus for a tour until the time they graduate, they are exposed to messages about social justice and political correctness (Thorne, 2014). Prior to the advent of social media, journalistic media, in the form of news coverage, was the primary way bias incidents became widespread public knowledge. News outlets could choose how to portray the information being presented, which influenced whether readers viewed the speech or incident in question as one that should be allowed due to freedom of speech or regulated in the interest of fair treatment of others (Miller & Andsager, 1997). One study found that the idea of political correctness became more of an issue at institutions of higher education as a result of newspapers attempting to
sensationalize what was otherwise very dull coverage of academic matters in order to benefit from the fears of White, middle class Americans (Collins, 1992). Collins (1992) made the argument that the media tries to portray political correctness as a left wing conspiracy, working to turn all college students into liberal versions of their former selves. When Collins actually examined the articles that were being published, he found that very few of them contained actual statistics about the reality of diversity on college campuses, and that anyone who actually visited a college campus could see that there was still an overabundance of oppression and bias against minoritized groups. However, as a result of media exaggeration, college and university administrators felt they were forced to take more seriously reports of bias incidents and hate speech on their campuses (Collins, 1992). Some believe that administrators only choose to respond to such incidents in order to appear to be doing the right thing, rather than actually wanting to address such serious issues.

**Reports of Bias Incidents at Postsecondary Institutions**

Bias incidents are not new phenomena at postsecondary institutions, but reports of bias incidents have increased in recent years. It is unclear whether or not the actual number of bias incidents on college and university campuses increased, or whether just reporting has increased. However, the Southern Poverty Law Center (2016) recently released a report stating there were nearly 900 reported incidents of bias on college campuses in the ten days after President Trump’s election, suggesting that the regularity with which bias incidents occur is increasing. Bias incidents occur at many different types of institutions and have affected both public and private institutions, with large and small student populations, in all areas of the country. Below, I discuss several bias incidents that have been reported in the media, involving racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, bias against veteran students, and even falsified reports of bias incidents.
This discussion is meant to provide an overview of the types of bias incidents that have occurred on college campuses, so as to provide a background context for the study.

**Incidents of racial bias.** Incidents of racism are one of the most common examples of bias on a college campus. In 2011, a White student at the University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA), a large, public, research intensive institution of approximately 42,000 students, filmed herself ranting about Asian students in the campus library (University of California, Los Angeles, n.d.). The three-minute tirade mocked Asian students’ language, cultural systems, and the recent tsunami disaster in Japan. The university responded by condemning her speech, but regarded it as a First Amendment right, therefore chose not to pursue disciplinary action against her. The student eventually apologized publicly and withdrew from UCLA (Associated Press, 2011). Although the university in this case did not formally adjudicate the student or remove her from campus, they did speak out publicly against the student’s actions, prompting the student to apologize and leave campus of her own accord.

In 2013, there was a report of a person wearing a Ku Klux Klan (KKK) robe and hood near the Afrikan Heritage House at Oberlin College, a small, private, liberal arts college in Oberlin, Ohio, with an enrollment of approximately 3,000 (Oberlin College, n.d.). Oberlin has long been considered one of the most progressive institutions in the United States as it was the first to enroll and award bachelor’s degrees to women co-educationally and one of the first to enroll and graduate African American students (Oberlin College, n.d.). The report of the person in the KKK costume came after two months of racially charged vandalism appearing on flyers and campus walls (Thorne, 2014). When campus administrators learned of this incident, they decided to cancel classes and events for a day as they held a “day of solidarity” for all students to show support for those impacted by this event. Ultimately, the person wearing the KKK outfit
was never found, therefore it is uncertain whether this person was a student or a member of the community at-large (“Bias incident,” 2013). Two students admitted to the recent vandalism on campus, resulting in suspension through the student conduct process, although they claimed the vandalism was a joke (Thorne, 2014). This situation demonstrates a case in which a university may choose to pursue charges under the student code of conduct for a violation that occurs in tandem with the bias incident, in this case vandalism, as a way to address the overarching behavior.

In 2015, a racist incident occurred at The University of Oklahoma, a public, research-intensive university of over 30,000 students, located in Norman, Oklahoma (The University of Oklahoma, n.d.). A video was uncovered of members of Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE) performing a racist chant on a bus that included the phrase, “There will never be a n*****1 in SAE” (Kingkade, 2015, p. 1). After the video was released, the individual students leading the chant were expelled from the institution for creating a hostile learning environment, the fraternity’s house was closed, and the chapter was suspended, all by order of the president of the university. It was later discovered the chant was learned by the members at a national SAE conference and was then taught to local members. This incident demonstrates a case in which systemic racism in society permeated a campus environment by means of a fraternal organization. It also demonstrates a different type of resolution because the president chose to take a stand and use his power to take action without following the traditional conduct process. It should be noted that it is unclear from media coverage whether or not adequate due process was given to the students and the chapter; therefore it is possible this case could enter litigation in the future, but this has not yet occurred.

1 Note: Slurs in quotes are presented exactly as published or spoken.
It should also be noted that bias incidents based on race are not always, or even often, of the magnitude of those previously discussed. The vast majority of racist incidents are usually between a pair or small group of individuals, often are not reported, and do not gain the media attention as those previously. They often consist of what are known as microaggressions, defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, negative…slights and insults to the target person or group” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273). One study used focus groups to examine the experiences of Black, male, resident assistants at postsecondary institutions and found these men experienced microaggressions almost daily, as recalled by them during the interviews. These resident assistants told the researchers of instances in which they felt stereotyped as incompetent because their White colleagues and supervisors would express surprise when they “demonstrated mastery and effectiveness in their roles and spoke eloquently” (Harper et al., 2011, p. 188). They also felt that others, both residents on their floor and colleagues, stereotyped them as aggressive, simply because they were wearing clothing perceived to be worn by gang members or speaking up in staff meetings. These resident assistants also felt as though they were held to a higher standard than their White colleagues, intimating that they had to work harder at their jobs than their colleagues to even gain minimal recognition by their supervisors. They also felt insulted on a regular basis because of their race; one resident assistant demonstrated this by describing an interaction with a student with whom he had built a congenial relationship and the student saying to him, “What’s up my nigga?” (Harper et al., 2011, p. 188). The resident assistant then called him out and the student apologized, simply saying that he was speaking in the ways he had heard Black people speak in hip-hop music (Harper et al., 2011). This study serves as a stark reminder of the constant bias,
racial and otherwise, which occurs daily on college and university campuses, even if it goes unreported.

**Incidents of anti-Semitic bias.** In recent years, there have also been incidents of anti-Semitism, defined as “prejudice and hostility toward Jews on the basis of their ethno-cultural and/or religious group membership” (Jaspal, 2013, p. 231). It should be noted that anti-Semitism is different from anti-Zionism. Zionism however is a political belief that Jews should have a nation-state in the country of Israel, therefore anti-Zionism is “opposition to the state of Israel, rather than to Jews as a religious group” (Jaspal, 2013, p. 233). It is important to recognize that anti-Zionism is often a pure political statement, however there are instances in which the lines between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism can become blurred, especially if anti-Zionist movements include anti-Semitic elements such as exploiting stereotypes of and defaming Jewish people or threatening Jewish individuals or the religion as a whole (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2006). The University of California Board of Regents recently passed a statement condemning all forms of anti-Semitism, including those that stem from anti-Zionist behavior (Watanabe, 2016). The board did consider a stronger, blanket condemnation of anti-Zionism as discriminatory in nature, but declined to support that statement, choosing instead to differentiate between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism, while acknowledging that anti-Zionism can lead to anti-Semitism.

In 2002, San Francisco State University was the epicenter for a variety of anti-Semitic events, many of which began as simply anti-Zionist. San Francisco State University is a four-year public institution that is part of the California State University system and enrolls approximately 30,000 students (San Francisco State University, n.d.). In April of 2002, flyers supporting a pro-Palestinian rally showed a picture of a dead baby and suggested that Jewish
people killed and ate babies for sport, a medieval anti-Semitic defamation (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2006). Additionally, in May of the same year, a group of Jewish students was holding a peaceful sit in when pro-Palestinian students surrounded them. The pro-Palestinian students began shouting death threats at the Jewish students which included “Get out or we will kill you,” “Hitler did not finish the job,” “Die racist pigs,” and others (Marcus, 2007; Tobin, Weinberg, & Ferer, 2009; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2006). The president of the institution responded by strongly condemning the flyer and the actions of the pro-Palestinian students, saying that the materials and the action were not a political statement, but rather had become a form of hate speech. Even though the flyer was considered hate speech by many, neither university administrators nor the police chose to file formal charges against any individual student, rather choosing to fight speech with speech (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2006). This is an example of how free speech and political statements can begin to cross the line and become a bias incident. It is also yet another example of how administrators at a college or university can speak out publicly against the behavior to try to educate students, faculty, and staff about the values of the institution.

There have also been several incidents at the University of California, Irvine (UC Irvine), which is a four-year public research university that is part of the University of California system and enrolls approximately 31,000 students (University of California, Irvine, n.d.). Over the last 16 years, there have been incidents of Jewish students on campus being told to go back where they came from, having comments such as “slaughter the Jews” and “fucking Jews” directed at them, having rocks thrown at them, being surrounded by groups of students who were yelling death threats, and witnessing anti-Semitic vandalism on campus (Marcus, 2007; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2006). The administrators at UC Irvine have been relatively docile
in their response, as they have not issued formal statements about these actions or taken any actions against the alleged perpetrators (Marcus, 2007). This is an example of how university administrators may choose not to address incidents of bias, which can demonstrate a lack of support for the students and community toward whom these incidents occur.

**Incidents of bias based on sexual orientation.** Another type of bias that exists on college and university campuses is that of homophobia or bias based on sexual orientation. Homophobia can be defined as an “extreme hatred and fear” of gay men and lesbians (Pharr, 1997, p. 16). Homophobic bias can manifest in multiple ways on a college campus.

In 2002, at Morehouse College, a four-year, private, historically Black college for men in Atlanta with an enrollment of approximately 2,400 students, a student was severely beaten with a baseball bat for peering into a shower in which another student was bathing (Monroe, 2009). It was discovered later that the victim was simply trying to see if his roommate was in the shower, but was having trouble seeing due to not wearing his prescription glasses. The perpetrator assumed the man was gay and yelled “Faggot, you’re gay, gay. . . . I hate these Morehouse faggots” while beating him, ultimately fracturing his skull (Monroe, 2009). College administrators removed the perpetrator from Morehouse, and the criminal system subsequently sentenced him to 10 years in prison; however, campus administrators did little to create a culture of inclusion for gay students after this event occurred (Monroe, 2009). This example demonstrates that simply removing a student who perpetuates bias from campus may not go far enough to remedy the issue; rather, administrators need to take a hard look at the systems in place that allowed these issues to arise at all and work to challenge and break down the structures of oppression.
Another incident occurred at Middlebury College, a four-year, private, liberal arts college in Vermont, which enrolls approximately 2,500 students (Middlebury College, n.d. a.). In this situation, a letter was taped to a lesbian student’s residence hall door that called her “a carpet-munching dyke,” told her to “burn in hell,” and threatened physical violence, including rape, against her. The initial response from administrators was simply an email to the campus community describing the incident vaguely and reminding students of the anti-discrimination policy at the college (Linder et al., 2013). More than a month after the incident, the college administrators did announce plans to bolster support for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans*, and Queer (LGBTQ) community at the institution. The plans included conducting an assessment through a campus pride organization to better understand students’ perceptions of the campus climate toward members of the LGBTQ community. The administrators also planned to implement a Safe Zone program (training of faculty, staff, and students to aid in understanding of LGBTQ issues and ways in which they can support members of those populations). Further, the hope was to implement a name and pronoun policy whereby students can declare their names and pronouns to be used in official campus documents. Lastly, the administrators wanted to establish a peer-mentoring program for LGBTQ students, in a hope to assist them as they transition to academic and campus life (Reinhardt, 2013). After reviewing Middlebury’s website, it appears that campus administrators did follow through with the majority of these plans (Middlebury College, n.d. b). This case demonstrates a situation in which administrators at a postsecondary institution not only addressed a bias incident by publicly condemning such behavior, but also took steps to address the systemic issues that had led to the incident occurring initially.
Incidents of bias against veteran students. In recent years, campus administrators have begun to focus on the ever-increasing veteran student population on campuses. It is widely recognized by college and university administrators that veteran students represent a unique subgroup of students and that existing policies and practices need to be modified to meet their needs (Vacchi, 2012). As a minority population on postsecondary campuses, they also represent a group that can be subjected to hate or bias from other students. Although there have not been a large number of incidents that have gained media attention, one incident did come to the attention of the media recently.

In April 2015, members of the Zeta Beta Tau fraternity at the University of Florida, a four-year, public, land grant institution with an enrollment of approximately 50,000 students (University of Florida, n.d.) confronted veterans during Spring Break in Panama City, Florida. While at a hotel for a fraternity retreat, the fraternity members spat, urinated, and vomited off of balconies on to a group of veterans below, and were verbally abusive to the group (Associated Press, 2015). The fraternity leaders expelled three members and suspended all operations at the University of Florida, even prior to the University of Florida administrators suspending the fraternity as well (Associated Press, 2015). Although this incident was not directed at veterans who were students, it does serve as a reminder that college and university administrators may address bias incidents that occur off campus and/or incidents that do not target members of the university community.

Falsified reports of bias incidents. Heretofore, I have discussed examples of bias incidents directed at a number of targeted populations. When considering issues of bias on college and university campuses, one must also consider that in some instances, the reporting party falsifies the bias incident in some way. This discussion is not meant to suggest that all bias
incidents, or even the majority of bias incidents, should be treated as false reports, but rather to serve as a reminder that as with any type of crime, there are always some reports that are not quite as they appear initially, or are simply untrue.

In September, 2015, an incident suggesting someone was promoting segregation occurred at the University of Buffalo, a four-year, public, research intensive university with approximately 30,000 students enrolled (University of Buffalo, n.d.). Within the course of a week, signs that said “White Only” and “Black Only” appeared around campus at entrances to restrooms and above drinking fountains, leading to police involvement in an investigation (Bauerlein, 2015). As a result of the incident, the Black Student Union hosted a meeting to discuss the situation. During the meeting, Ashley Powell, a Black graduate student, stood up and admitted she had placed the signs herself, under the guise of a class assignment (Bauerlein, 2015). In the days following the incident, Powell wrote a letter to the campus newspaper explaining her actions. She discussed the fact she suffers daily from the trauma of being non-White and that this assignment for an art class was not a social experiment, but rather a manifestation of the trauma she has experienced and a way for her to express her feelings (Powell, 2015). Powell (2015) described incidents in her undergraduate career in which she was called “nigger monkey” and “nigger bitch.” She also spoke of growing up in Chicago and being subject to police intimidation. She went on to apologize for any hurt feelings, but not for her actions, stating that she believed these signs helped to expose racism and White privilege (Powell, 2015). Although the signs in this incident were actually posted and did cause individuals on campus to take notice, the intent of the incident was not to target a minority group. This also serves as a reminder that falsified incidents may not be of a malicious nature, but may serve as a way to express one’s feelings of oppression.
A second falsified incident occurred at the University of Chicago, a four-year private, research-intensive institution with approximately 15,000 students enrolled (though the ratio is 2:1 graduate to undergraduate students) (University of Chicago, n.d.). In this incident, a Black student, who had been leading a group of students as they petitioned the university to address what they termed “a culture of intolerance” on the campus, claimed that his Facebook page was hacked and subsequently bombarded with racist messages that threatened violence and rape against him and the other students calling for safe-spaces on campus (Crepeau, 2014). University administrators called in the FBI to assist in investigating the incident. Within weeks, the victim admitted he faked the attack in order to “shame the school” into moving forward with his agenda for cultural awareness (Lamb, 2014). The administrators did not pursue any disciplinary action against the student, but rather agreed they need to do more to address the culture of intolerance on the campus (Lamb, 2014). This incident, similar to the previous situation at the University of Buffalo, helps to remind us there are a myriad of reasons for a student falsifying an incident of bias. Some examples highlight student mental health concerns. However, some falsified incidents also point to underlying cultures and systems of oppression that should be addressed.

**Microaggressions**

Bias incidents of all types can cause negative effects for individuals’ mental health and general well being. Often times, the only bias incidents that are portrayed in the media are situations in which there has been a significant disruption to the campus community, or the incident in question is so heinous, that it helps to boost news ratings. However, bias incidents do not need to be momentous enough to disrupt the campus community in order to impact individual students in a meaningful way. Rather, bias incidents can be more commonplace,
interpersonal occurrences, which are known as microaggressions. Microaggressions “communicate a hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slight or insult” to individuals or groups based on their race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or other social status (Sue, 2010a, p. 8). Microaggressions fall into one of three categories; microassaults, microinsults, or microinvalidations.

Microassaults are defined as “conscious biased beliefs or attitudes that are held by individuals and intentionally expressed or acted out overtly or covertly toward a marginalized person or socially devalued group” (Sue, 2010a, p. 8). Microassaults can be violent in nature and may be verbal or nonverbal, but demonstrate a person’s explicit bias against a group. Many of the bias incidents on college and university campuses that rise to the attention of administrators and the larger community are microassaults because of the explicit bias and the violence that is usually involved.

A second type of microaggression is a microinsult. A microinsult is defined as “interpersonal interactions or environmental cues that communicate rudeness, insensitivity, slights, and insults that demean a person’s racial, gender, sexual orientation, or group identity and heritage” (Sue, 2010a, p. 9). Microinsults are often unconscious and typically begin with what appears to be a compliment but then ultimately demeans the entire social group to which a person belongs. Microinsults typically do not rise to the level of being addressed by campus administrators, but certainly still have negative impacts on the individuals to whom they are directed.

The last type of microaggression is a microinvalidation. Microinvalidations are defined as “verbal comments or behaviors that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of a socially devalued group” (Sue, 2010a, p.8).
These also are generally unconscious on the part of the person perpetrating them and can consist of things such as color blindness, or being unwilling to acknowledge a person’s color or race, or denying an individual’s personal experience of racism. As with microinvalidations, these types of microaggressions rarely if ever draw the same type of attention from campus administrators as microassaults do.

One study that focused specifically on racial microaggressions found the higher number of microaggressions experienced by an individual student was significantly correlated in a negative way with the student’s self-reported levels of self-esteem (Nadal et al., 2014). The study also found a magnification of lower self-esteem when the participants experienced microaggressions in school or workplace environments as opposed to outside of work or school, in their general community (Nadal et al., 2014). This study helps college and university administrators inform themselves about the potential detriments to students’ self-esteem when experiencing microaggressions in the context of the classroom or in student employment.

A second study also examined the experiences of Black students at several universities and found they experienced racial microaggressions in academic settings, in social settings, and in public spaces (Smith et al., 2007). These students reported stress symptoms that were highly similar to those responses a person would experience from being in battle, including helplessness, anger, anxiety, fear, shock, frustration and disappointment (Smith et al., 2007). These students felt the college environments they were experiencing were directly responsible for their stress symptoms, and the environments were more hostile and aggressive toward African American males than any other group of people (Smith et al., 2007). This article helps to explain the tangible impact and effect that racial microaggressions can have on African
American males on a college campus, causing exponential stress and fatigue on top of the typical stress that often occurs in a college environment.

A third study examined the impact of social media on microaggressions. Tynes, Rose, and Markoe (2013) found that harassment and discrimination that occurs online has the same impact as traditional in-person microaggressions. The authors found that students of color who were more engaged in social media portrayed negative perceptions of campus climate at higher levels than their White counterparts. The authors classified these as microaggressions, but noted that unlike traditional microaggressions, “the victim can potentially be victimized multiple times by the same event with the click of a mouse” (p. 111). This article helps to explain how online harassment and discrimination can impact students in ways that are different from harassment that occurs face-to-face.

**Impact of Bias Incidents on Targeted Populations**

In addition to understanding the types of bias incidents that occur at postsecondary institutions, it is also important to recognize and examine the impact such incidents have on the targeted groups and individuals. College and university administrators should strive to understand the impact of bias incidents on the students they serve and to comprehend how these incidents detract from the academic mission of the institution. Collegiate institutions in the United States were formed with the mission of developing the student in a holistic manner, focusing on their academic development, their spiritual development, their ethical and moral development, and their physical development (Thelin, 2011). Presently, we know that the growth and development of students is still a primary intended outcome of the collegiate experience, and those who attend an institution of higher education do experience certain benefits in the areas of academic learning and personal growth and development (Mayhew et al.,
A disruption in these benefits can occur, however, by a variety of factors, not the least of which are bias incidents.

One study examined the intersection of discrimination based on one’s race and sexual orientation and its effect on mental health. Researchers found men who had sex with other men and identified as African American, Asian Pacific Islander, or Latino, who had experienced racism within the past year from the general population as well as homophobia from within their friend group, were more likely to have higher levels of depression and anxiety (Choi et al., 2013). Similarly, those participants who experienced homophobia from the community at-large also experienced higher levels of anxiety, although there was no significant effect of homophobia experienced from within one’s family (Choi et al., 2013). This study helps to remind administrators at postsecondary institutions about intersections of multiple identities and how attacks on those multiple identities can compound the negative effects on a student’s mental health.

Homophobia, like many other types of bias, does negatively impact the students who experience it. Researchers in one study found 70% of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students sampled downplayed the magnitude of homophobic bias directed toward them; further, the majority still felt their sexual identity was not the norm, indicating they had internalized heteronormativity, or in other words, accepted that being heterosexual was “normal” and being gay, lesbian, or bisexual was “abnormal” (Fine, 2011). Another study indicated sexual minority college students who witness and/or experience hostility, incivility, and/or harassment due to their sexual minority status are more likely than heterosexual students to have higher levels of anxiety and depression (Woodford, Han, Craig, Lim, & Matney, 2014). These studies can help college and university administrators understand that when lesbian, gay, and bisexual students
experience bias, they are negatively impacted, and that administrators should work to address systemic heteronormativity as a means of shifting campus cultures to be more inclusive.

Another study examined the effects of racialized aggressions on college students when the aggression occurs on social media. Gin, Martinez-Aleman, Rowan-Kenyon, and Hottell (2017) interviewed college students of color about their interactions online and their experiences as victims of racialized aggression. They found that anonymous social media played a large role in perpetuating anti-Black sentiments. Further, they found that students who experienced racialized aggression online often showed symptoms of racial battle fatigue due to having to endure the harassment for longer periods of time and more frequently. These emotional responses included, “feelings of annoyance, anger, and paranoia. . . . The students in this study were frustrated and irritated that perpetrators of racialized hostility could not and did not validate the pain and harm caused by racist posts” (p. 166). This study helps us to understand the role social media can play in perpetuating bias incidents, as well as the feelings that targeted individuals and groups experience when exposed to anonymous bias.

**Response to Bias Incidents at Postsecondary Institutions**

When incidents of bias occur on a college or university campus, administrators are faced with the difficult task of deciding whether to respond, and what their process of response is going to be. Responses can range from doing nothing to charging students with violations of a code of conduct, or referring the incident to the police for criminal investigation and prosecution. Other possible responses may include restorative justice processes, letters to the campus and surrounding communities, and open forums and dialogues.

As administrators first learn of a bias incident, the first question they must answer is whether or not to become involved at all. When bias incidents arise, many conflicting opinions
come to the forefront of the debate. In some circles, administrators believe bias incidents that are speech-based are a freedom of speech issue, pre-determined by the First Amendment. Calleros (1995) argued campus administrators who focus on the argument that the First Amendment prohibits acts of bias are doing students a disservice. Calleros said this argument takes the focus and the dialogue off of the speech occurring and places it on a constitutional issue, thereby causing more harm to the campus community by not fostering the type of environment in which debate can openly occur. Similarly, Pavela (2006) argued administrators who enforce hate speech codes and prohibit certain speech are not teaching students to engage in critical dialogue about these types of issues. Although Pavela does not endorse biased speech, he does argue that campus administrators should take the time to teach students about being citizens in a world in which discourse over critical issues is valued.

Delgado and Yun (1994) presented another viewpoint, saying that allowing hate speech and acts of bias to occur under the guise of First Amendment freedom of speech protections actually causes more harm to the campus community and engenders more aggression than just prohibiting the speech altogether. They take the position that the First Amendment freedom of speech protection benefits the majority much more than the minority (Delgado & Yun, 1994). Even if campus administrators believe that the First Amendment protects the speech in question, they are still able to fight the speech with speech, either by condemning the speech publicly, or by having a conversation with the perpetrator of the speech to educate them about the impact of their actions. An author of several short stories and opinion pieces addressing issues of racism and sexism, wrote the following:

The freedom of speech, however, does not guarantee freedom from consequence. You can speak your mind, but you can also be shunned. You can be criticized. You can be
ignored or ridiculed. You can lose your job. The freedom of speech does not exist in a vacuum. (Gay, 2015)

Other students or the public at large, in addition to campus administrators, may also choose to respond to the hate speech by condemning or protesting the speech publicly. One example of this is the case of David Cash, a student at the University of California, Berkeley. In 1998, prior to attending college, Cash witnessed his friend restrain and assault a 7-year old girl. After Cash left the scene, the friend killed the girl. Cash was never charged with a crime. Cash later said during a radio interview, “It was a very tragic event. The simple fact remains I don’t know this little girl. I don’t know people in Panama or Africa who are killed every day so I can’t feel remorse for them” (Shah, 1998, p. 1). When students discovered he was involved and heard the comments he had made, they called for his expulsion. Although administrators did not remove Cash from campus citing Cash’s free speech protections, they did publicly condemn his behavior and his statements about the situation (Shah, 1998). Cash, although not punished by the university or by the legal system, did endure years of public shaming after being convicted in the court of public opinion. This case is an example of an individual who did not violate any laws or formal codes of conduct but still faced consequences, such as being ostracized from peer groups.

Given that many recent court rulings have struck down hate speech codes as overly broad and unconstitutional, it should be noted that many hate speech codes do not work, and may not pass legal muster if they are brought before a court of law. Typically, the courts have ruled against these codes because they are too broad in the speech that is considered unacceptable. The codes may also have jurisdictions that are too far outside the bounds of the educational environment because they apply to any statements a student makes, even if they are not in an
educational setting, thus also causing the courts to rule them as too broad. These rulings have lead many campus administrators to explore alternative solutions.

When bias incidents occur on campus, campus administrators should consider all of the relevant arguments before deciding whether or not to proceed with any action, and which action best suits the situation at hand. If campus administrators have decided to create and/or enforce a hate speech code, leading to action when a bias incident does occur, there are many possible ways the institution can work to resolve the issues. One way to address a bias incident is through the campus student conduct process, or through a hate speech code if one exists. It should be noted that I have not yet found a hate speech code that when challenged in court, has withstood constitutional requirements. The student conduct system exists on most college and university campuses as a way of educating students about behavioral choices they have made while working to protect the safety of the campus community and the integrity of the academic mission of the institution (Paterson & Kibler, 1998). There is certainly an argument to be made that bias incidents jeopardize both of those goals. If there is a hate speech code in place, it must be narrowly tailored in nature and must explicitly state such speech disrupts the mission of the institution; therefore the institution will address it if and when it occurs (Paterson, 1998; Silverstein, 2000).

In recent years, institutions have begun to formulate specific processes to address hate speech and bias incidents that are separate from the typical student conduct process. As noted above, hate speech codes typically do not pass legal muster, however courts have been extremely deferent to institutions as they address actual behaviors that violate an institutional code of conduct or criminal laws. Some of these processes apply to bias within the employee population, however there is also something to be learned about dealing with incidents of bias among the
student population by examining how colleges and universities address bias incidents among employees. Cornell University implemented a new bias response system in 2000 to determine whether or not reported incidents were discriminatory actions, hate crimes, or bias incidents and then to refer them to appropriate offices and resources for resolution (Chappell-Williams, 2007). If the situation in question indeed constitutes a bias incident, then a bias response coordinator, who is trained in counseling and has experience and expertise in one or more areas of diversity, meets with the affected individual to debrief them and discuss ways the university can act to resolve the issue (Chappell-Williams, 2007). The founder of the Stop the Hate Coalition estimated only 20% of four-year colleges and universities had a campus anti-hate task force in 2014 (Thompson, 2014). Although many institutions are beginning to include standards about equity and inclusion from the American Association of Colleges and Universities in their annual goals, many have a long way to go in being able to attract and retain students from historically oppressed populations (Thompson, 2014). Many institutions have yet to develop bias response processes.

One method of responding to bias on college campuses is the utilization of a bias response team. There are mixed views on bias response teams in the literature. Many institutions began creating bias response teams several years ago, some as early as the mid-1990’s (New, 2016). One recent study found that bias response teams could be effective by making connections across campus offices to respond to bias situations. These connections help them to try to respond to the needs of the targeted individual and/or group, as well as work toward implementing “organizational or systemic change to enhance the climate for diversity” (LePeau, Morgan, Zimmerman, Snipes, & Marcotte, 2016, p. 123). However, these teams have come under criticism recently, especially by free speech advocates such as the Foundation for
Individual Rights in Education (FIRE). In particular, a team at the University of Northern Colorado received scrutiny after allegedly impinging on the academic freedom of faculty members. This criticism has caused other institutions, such as The University of Iowa to re-think their process and suspend their bias response teams (New, 2016). Although some universities have processes in place to address bias, other institutions are now rethinking those processes.

University administrators can attempt to handle issues of bias in house but without going through a formal student conduct or bias response process. As was the case for the situation at Oberlin College, college administrators decided to cancel classes and hold a day of conversation and dialogue (“Bias incident,” 2013). Thorne (2014) found this was a quite common response to an incident of bias. Thorne did not believe this action was helpful, but rather felt it was too rehearsed and staged, and the types of programs that occur as a response to bias are meant to simply galvanize students, or make them feel better about the situation on a superficial level. Rather, Thorne advocated for students taking the lead on the response to bias incidents by calling for systematic change and encouraging campus dialogues. It should be noted that systemic change often takes immense time and effort on the part of all involved, and does not occur during a single day of dialogue.

A different way to respond to incidents of bias is for campus administrators to encourage individuals to engage in the difficult conversations surrounding race, sexual orientation, gender, religion, or other topics by bringing in outside consultants. Administrators can work with the Department of Justice’s Community Relations Service Office. Often times, college and university administrators view the Department of Justice as an enforcement agency for rules and regulations that institutions of higher education are required to follow. In these situations, they can also serve as a resource for postsecondary institutions.
Office was formed in the 1960s to assist communities and entities that were dealing with issues of race but now works to resolve all types of bias issues. They help by providing mediation and training for all constituents, such as faculty, staff, students, and community partners. All of the actions taken by the Community Relations Service Office are confidential, therefore providing assistance without magnifying the issues in local media (Gomez, 2011). This office can help those administrators who have little to no experience in the area of bias incident response or do not have adequate resources to aid in a response on campus.

Many administrators may choose to respond to bias incidents with speech simply by addressing the community directly. Recently, the vice provost for diversity and climate at the University of Wisconsin-Madison did just that. A racist note had been slipped under an African American student’s door, causing the student and others to be upset and fearful for their safety. Rather than sending out an email message, Vice Provost Patrick Sims chose to record a video in which he was extremely forthright about what had occurred, and he called out the individual’s actions using extremely strong language. Sims even acknowledged that most administrators choose to send out a letter to the campus community, but said that he did not believe that would change anything (Jaschik, 2016). This type of response, although unique, is intended to reach the larger campus community with a message that condemns hate, while beginning a dialogue about campus climate.

Some administrators, in addition to releasing statements to the campus community, choose to hold campus dialogues in which students, faculty, staff, and administrators can come together in one place to discuss the issues that arise from bias incidents. At Western Washington University, there was an incident in which a student posted threats of violence on Yik Yak, an anonymous social media forum, against students of color. As a result, the campus cancelled
classes and then held a town hall meeting in which the president and other administrators listened to concerns from the community and offered their ideas and plans to work through the situation and address racism on campus (Long & Lee, 2015). Holding a campus meeting is unique as it allows those with concerns to vocalize them directly to administrators, however administrators must work to ensure that the concerns are not simply voiced and then no actions are taken after the meeting has concluded.

Other campuses are re-examining their policies about bias speech on campus. At Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania, college administrators recently passed a policy that emphasizes the institution’s commitment to free speech and free expression, even if that speech and expression is offensive to other individuals (Wexler, 2016). The policy acknowledges that some speech will make individuals uncomfortable and even offended, and encourages the entire community to work through those issues by expressing their own ideas. The administrators said that they want students to learn to be uncomfortable and learn to negotiate those situations (Wexler, 2016). The policy does not give members of the community carte blanche to say or do whatever they want; there are still restrictions on time, place, and manner of speech, and the policy does say that laws cannot be broken in the process (Wexler, 2016). This type of policy demonstrates how administrators are trying to navigate tough situations by allowing free speech to occur while also encouraging others to respond with speech of their own.

**Crisis Response as a Theoretical Framework**

Student affairs professionals are often required to respond to a variety of issues that may occur, depending on the functional area in which they hold responsibilities. When conducting qualitative research, it is helpful to use a conceptual framework as a lens for how the study is viewed and developed (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). Given the lack of research on the management
of bias incidents on college and university campuses, it was helpful to conceptualize this study through the lens of crisis response on a college or university campus. This conceptualization helped to inform the types of situations I sought to study, the questions I developed and asked, and the interpretations I made from the data collected.

SSAOs are often generalists in nature, thus requiring them to be involved in a variety of events, including the management of crisis situations (Kuk, 2009). Crisis can be defined in a variety of ways, at a variety of levels. Organizational crisis can be described as an unexpected or unanticipated event in which there is a high risk of loss to the organization and an immense amount of pressure to make timely decisions (Billings, Milburn, & Schaalman, 1980; Hermann, 1963). Another definition by Mandell and Zacker (1977) added a crisis has a negative impact on the overall functioning of the organization experiencing it.

Examining crisis on college or university campuses, Zdziarski, Rollo, and Dunkel (2007) differentiated various levels of crisis with a crisis matrix that included three distinct types of possible events on the crisis spectrum. The least severe and pervasive type of crisis is a critical incident, which is an event that “affects a segment or portion of the campus in very significant ways but does not disrupt normal operations of the institution overall” (p. 37). This event really is “limited to a specific segment or subgroup of the institution” (p. 37). Critical incidents tend to be somewhat regular in the life of larger campuses in particular and include things such as an individual student death, the death of a faculty member, or a small fire. In some ways, critical incidents can help administrators prepare to deal with larger crises that may occur.

The next most severe and pervasive type of crisis is a campus emergency, defined as “an event that disrupts the orderly operations of the institution or its educational mission” (Zdziarski, Rollo, & Dunkel, 2007, p. 38). Campus emergencies “affect all facets of the institution and often
raise questions about shutting down for a period of time. In terms of scope or magnitude, a campus emergency requires an institution-wide response to address multiple issues” (p. 38). Campus emergencies often require administrators to collaborate with outside responders and can place great strain on several offices or divisions within the institution. Examples of campus emergencies include “large-scale demonstrations, riots at sporting events, a possible serial killer, tornadoes or approaching hurricanes, urban unrest,” (p. 38) and other events that affect the institution as a whole.

The most severe and pervasive type of crisis is a disaster, defined as an event that “disrupts not only institutional operations and functions but those of the surrounding community” (Zdziarski et al., 2007, p. 39). These events likely cause the campus to shut down completely as there is a lack of available resources to continue operations. Disasters cause extreme strain on the both the surrounding community and the campus community, and cause, “virtually every institutional function on the campus and in the community” to be “compromised and functioning at less than full capacity” (p. 38). Disasters typically are natural disasters or mass casualty events that affect wide areas. These events have extremely long-lasting impacts and take months, if not years, of recovery.

In addition to the three levels of crisis, Zdziarski et al., (2007) defined three types of crises. These types include environmental crises, facility crises, and human crises. Environmental crises are “any event or situation that originates with the environment or nature” (p. 40), including tornados, floods, earthquakes, and similar events. A facility crisis is defined as “any event or situation that originates in a facility or structure” (p. 41). These types of crises include building fires, a building collapse, or massive power outage. A human crisis is defined
as “any event or situation that originates with or is initiated by human beings” (p. 41) including suicide, murder, and terrorism.

The third part of the crisis matrix examines intentionality. Zdziarski et al., (2007) defined an unintentional crisis as something that, “occurs by accident. No deliberate act initiates it” (p. 42). Automobile accidents or an outbreak of disease are examples. Intentional crises are defined as something that is the “result of a deliberate act. An individual or group of individuals purposefully takes steps to cause the event that has an impact on others” (p. 43). Examples of intentional acts include assaults or riots.

When considering the crisis matrix as defined above, a bias incident can be a critical incident, campus emergency, or, less often, a disaster. A critical incident handled ineffectively may grow in scope and impact. Similarly, not all crisis events are bias incidents; such as natural disasters or an outbreak of illness. It is also important to note the distinction between a bias incident and a hate crime. Hate crimes are defined by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as, “a criminal offense against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender’s bias against a race, religion, disability, ethnic origin or sexual orientation” (FBI, 2015); thus they involve some type of criminal act such as physical violence or property damage (Wessler & Moss, 2001). As with crisis events, a bias incident does not always rise to the level of a hate crime, such as a noose being hung on a campus. However, by definition, a hate crime is a bias incident, such as was the case with Matthew Shepard’s murder, because he was a gay man.

When administrators begin to respond to a crisis, they should first consider whether or not they have a response plan in place. Bechler (1995) contended advance planning for a crisis greatly assists with the response effort and Barton (1991) said a thorough plan is the one of the best possible management tools to be used in crisis response. Paterson (2006) stated these plans
need to include a student affairs crisis response team, whose primary responsibilities are to coordinate the response while paying attention to the safety and security of all involved, offer counseling to members of the community and their families, and use these situations as learning experiences by helping those involved make meaning from the situation. Bechler (1995) also highlighted the role of communication within a crisis, saying poor communication can be the root cause or exacerbate the issues that led to the crisis, therefore exemplary communication is the key to resolving a crisis. Harper and Williams (2006) also argued student affairs practitioners must consider their own and other individuals’ spirituality in the midst of responding to a crisis. Some individuals may turn to their religious tradition as a way of coping with crisis, though others may feel a deep sense of connection to those around them or some higher power (Harper & Williams, 2006). This spirituality can help to heal those involved and bring a sense of wholeness and peace to those directly affected and those who are responding to crisis (Harper & Williams, 2006).

Since the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, college and university administrators have had to think differently about how to plan for a campus crisis. The attacks in New York City; Washington, DC; and Pennsylvania in combination with the shootings at Virginia Tech in 2007, Northern Illinois in 2008, and other campuses have caused student affairs professionals to increase the depth and breadth of their crisis response plans, leading them to believe they are more prepared to respond than they were in 2001 (Catullo, Walker, & Floyd, 2009). Catullo et al. (2009) identified in their study best practices for crisis response. These practices include having a written response plan, planning for different types of crisis such as those caused by natural disasters, those that are criminal in nature, and those caused by a facility issue, and including the appropriate personnel at the table.
Legal Issues

From the end of *in loco parentis* at postsecondary institutions until the mid-1990s, individual college and university administrators looked for ways to be able to restrict student speech, especially speech that was deemed harmful toward another individual, in order to create more inclusive environments on campus. Many institutions opted to include a hate speech code within their student handbook or student code of conduct (Labaree, 1994). Gilroy (2008) discussed the new iteration of hate speech codes since the 1990s, now termed “campus civility codes,” as a way to “curb hate speech, such as racial slurs and anti-Semitism” (p. 37). Gilroy (2008) acknowledged several court cases have made it more difficult to implement these types of codes, thus causing administrators to try to balance a free exchange of ideas with freedom from harassment. Although the free exchange of ideas is central to the academic environment, creating welcoming learning environments that are inclusive of all individuals is also critically important, thus creating tension when it comes to regulating speech on campus. Pavela (2006) contended that institutional decisions to continue writing, implementing, and enforcing hate speech codes is enigmatic as the courts have clearly stated First Amendment freedom of speech prevails the majority of the time. Additionally, Pavela (2006) suggested that these types of hate speech codes are doing a disservice to the students’ on campus, as they do not teach them to effectively confront others and stand up for their rights while engaging in a civilized discourse. If college and university administrators agree with the contention that part of the academy’s role is to teach students to engage in dialogue with one another about contentious issues, then they must weigh how best to achieve this objective while maintaining a learning environment that is open to all. It is possible that students will self govern on these issues. Chong (2006) found that students are less tolerant of racist faculty, racist books, and others who hold racist views having
permission to share their opinions publicly. Additionally, Chong (2006) found that students are less tolerant of atheist teachers who actively oppose all religions. This study suggests that students may not need to rely on hate speech codes or university administrators to enforce desired behavior, but rather they may speak out against such behavior on their own. These legal issues are critically important to understanding the background and context in which college and university administrators make decisions about responding to bias incidents.

It is also important to note the distinction between public versus private institutions of higher education. The landmark U.S. Supreme Court case *Trustees of Dartmouth College v. Woodward* (1819) established what is now known as corporate law in the United States. In this case, the legislature and governor of New Hampshire attempted to enact a law that took over control of Dartmouth College and revoked the original charter that was put in place between private parties. The court ruled that the charter was a contract between private parties, which could not be interfered with by the government. This case established the distinction between public and private institutions, and set the basis for constitutional law to be applied to public institutions and contract law to private institutions.

Typically, this has meant that the courts will defer to private institutions in cases involving discipline of students and will examine discipline and other matters at public institutions under the guise of the constitution (O’Neil, 1970). Public institutions are required by law to uphold and protect First Amendment freedom of speech rights, however a private university is, “not constrained by the First Amendment; it is empowered by the First Amendment, vested with its own rights, as an organization, to the freedom of speech” (Paulsen, 2008, p. 105). This distinction between public and private must be taken into account when examining institutional responses to bias incidents, especially in how administrators tackle issues
of free speech. Generally, private institutions have greater leeway in restricting speech on campus; however, some states have legislated exceptions to this approach. In California, the state legislature passed Leonard’s Law in 1992 that, “prohibits private, secular universities from making or enforcing a rule that disciplines students for speech that would be protected by the First Amendment or the California Constitution if made off campus” (Sungaila, Fohn, & Breaux, 2017, p. 1). This law was used to overturn Stanford University’s hate speech code, with the court ruling that the code was overly broad as it prevented insulting speech (Corry v. Stanford University, 1995). Although this extension of the First Amendment to students at private universities does exist in California and New Jersey, in other states private universities may restrict students’ speech to a greater degree.

**Legal Cases Not Involving Institutions of Higher Education**

There are several court cases that are helpful in examining the limits university administrators have when attempting to restrict a student’s freedom of speech on college or university campuses. These cases provide a background on how freedom of speech has evolved. The cases can stem from the general public rather than colleges and universities; however, all have implications for how freedom of speech may be addressed on a college or university campus. The first case is that of Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire (1942). This case involved Chaplinsky handing out fliers on the public sidewalk in Rochester, New York. These fliers denigrated and protested organized religion. As Chaplinsky was passing out these fliers, a police officer warned him to keep his actions under control. Later in the day, a crowd formed and began blocking the roadways, thus causing the police to return. Chaplinsky then began verbally abusing the police officer by saying “You are a God damned racketeer” and calling him “a damned Fascist” (Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire, 1942, p. 569). Chaplinsky was arrested,
charged, and convicted for using “addressing an offensive, derisive, or annoying word to any other person who is lawfully in any street or other public place” (Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire, 1942, p. 569). The U.S. Supreme Court upheld Chaplinsky’s conviction in this case, citing that “well defined and narrowly limited” types of speech may lie outside the protection of the First Amendment, including speech that was considered “fighting words,” which were defined as words that “by their utterance inflict injury or tend to incite an immediate breach of the peace” (Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire, 1942, pp. 571-572). The court considered the statements made by Chaplinsky to fall under this categorization, and thus they were not constitutionally protected.

The speech was considered problematic because the man was directing his speech toward a police officer, whose job it was to keep the peace. Given that the officer was an official of the government and was simply trying to do his job, the court ruled that Chaplinsky was interfering with the officer’s duties and using speech that was intended to cause a disruption of the peace.

Although this case did not emanate from a college or university, it did have (and continues to have) far reaching implications for what is considered protected speech. With this case came a novel way of the court addressing freedom of speech complaints as they now began deciding whether or not the speech in question fell into a narrow category of unprotected speech. As a result of the court deciding that “fighting words” were unprotected speech, any speech that was taken as a personal insult or injury against another person was deemed unprotected. This ruling paved the way for early speech codes to be passed and enforced both in the general public and at postsecondary institutions, thus strictly prohibiting any type of speech which was considered insulting, particularly that which was directed at those in a position of authority. This ruling effectively allowed a mechanism for bias incidents and hate speech to be addressed and set the basis for what was and was not considered protected speech. It should be noted that since
this case, many speech codes that have undergone litigation have not been upheld by the court system for reasons that will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

A second case is that of *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* (1969). In this case, four school age siblings and a friend chose to wear black armbands to their schools as a way of protesting the Vietnam War. The school administrators heard about the plan in advance and implemented a policy effective immediately that prohibited students from wearing armbands at school. Any student caught wearing an armband would be asked to remove it and upon refusal would be suspended from school, only being permitted to return if they agreed to comply with the policy. The students were indeed suspended for violating the armband policy and subsequently filed a lawsuit against the school. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the students stating they did indeed possess First Amendment rights at a public K-12 school and that there would need to be a “constitutionally valid reason” for administrators to regulate their speech (*Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Cnty. Sch. Dist.*, 1969, p. 511). The court went on to state that administrators “must be able to show that action was caused by something more than a mere desire to avoid the discomfort and unpleasantness that always accompany an unpopular viewpoint” and that prohibited speech or conduct would need to “materially and substantially interfere with the requirements of appropriate discipline in the operation of the school,” but ultimately it is administrators who get to decide whether this threshold has been met (*Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Cnty. Sch. Dist.*, 1969, p. 509). The children’s wearing of armbands did not rise to the level of disruption described, thus it was considered protected speech.

This case is important when considering speech that may be considered bias speech on college campuses for three reasons. First, it established that K-12 students have First
Amendment freedom of expression rights. The court expressly said that students do not waive their rights “at the schoolhouse gate” (Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Cnty. Sch. Dist., 1969, p. 506). This provision has since been extended to postsecondary students as well (Healy v. James, 1972). Second, the case established that in order for school administrators to restrict a student’s freedom of expression, the conduct in question needed to interfere in a substantial way with the academic mission of the school. This means that a student has the freedom of speech and that speech cannot be restricted until that speech infringes on the rights of others or disrupts the business of the school. This piece of the ruling reduced the amount of restriction schools can impose on free speech, while narrowing the content of speech that is excluded from First Amendment protection. Third, this case helped to establish the concept of time, place, and manner restrictions when it comes to allowing students to protest in schools. The crux of the concept is this: individuals have the right to freedom of speech, however the government has the ability to restrict the time, place, and manner of that speech if it is reasonably necessary to do so. In this case, the court was not saying that the administrators could not restrict the students’ speech ever. Rather, the court ruled that administrators could regulate the speech if there was a significant disruption to the curricular mission of the school, or even if the administrators had reason to anticipate that the wearing of the armbands would cause a substantial interruption of the work of the school. Alas, this was not found to be the case, and thus, the students won their case. It should be noted that administrators were still given the authority to decide whether speech exhibited by students is problematic, however this case should remind those serving in administrator roles to consider exactly how the speech is disrupting the academic environment before trying to impose restrictions.
A third case, *Cohen v. California* (1971), centered around a 19-year old man who was arrested for wearing a jacket inside the Los Angeles courthouse that had the words “Fuck the draft” inscribed on it (p. 16). Cohen was subsequently sentenced to 30 days in jail for his “malicious and willfully disturbing of the peace” (*Cohen v. California*, 1971, p. 16). The U.S. Supreme Court overturned Cohen’s conviction stating that the case revolved around “speech” not “conduct” and that the law could not regulate public morality by censoring freedom of speech, and that the speech could only be regulated if a “reasonable person or group of people” took the speech as “a direct and personal insult” (*Cohen v. California*, 1971, p. 20). It is important to note that when it comes to legal rulings, there is no technical or widely accepted definition of a “reasonable person.” Rather, it is simply a standard courts have used when considering issues by trying to discern what a typical member of society would have done.

This case, like the others, helped state governments and college administrators understand that in order for speech to be regulated, it simply could not come across as hateful, offensive, or immoral. Rather, free speech could only be censored and restricted by authorities if the speech was taken as a direct and personal insult to reasonable people. This case did not set the standard so high as to have to prove the intent of the speaker, but rather, set the bar at considering the impact of the speech, thus allowing somewhat more regulation that would be possible if intent had to be proven.

A fourth case, and the most recent, is that of *Elonis v. United States* (2015). In this case, a man posted threats to Facebook that threatened injury to his coworkers, his wife, the police, and a kindergarten class. As a result, Elonis was arrested and convicted of making “true threats” via interstate means, since he was threatening people in another state than that from which he made the postings (*Elonis v. United States*, 2015, p. 2002). Elonis appealed his conviction
stating that the prosecution should have to prove his subjective intent to threaten, rather than an objective intent to threaten by using a reasonable listener standard. The U.S. Supreme Court ultimately agreed with Elonis, stating that by using an objective reasonable person standard, there was not an adequate way to distinguish what was innocent and accidental conduct from that which is a purposeful and wrongful act (Elonis v. United States, 2015).

This case is extremely significant as it further limits the speech that can be prosecuted or addressed through formal means of action. There has been a steep progression from the days of Chaplinsky where “fighting words” were not considered protected speech, to Cohen where the reasonable person standard was implemented, now to Elonis where a subjective intent to threaten must be proven. No longer can the law, or institutions of higher education, address speech because a person or group of people feels threatened, but rather, they must be able to prove that the individual perpetuating the speech had the intent of actually threatening others. As discussed earlier, this does not mean that speech cannot be addressed with other speech. Administrators can still condemn speech and categorize it as offensive and unbecoming of a student at their institution or a member of their community, even if they are unable to remove a student for the speech. Other students can also publicly condemn speech that is offensive or hateful, and also encourage discussion, debate, and acceptance of individual’s rights to free speech while disagreeing with the content of that speech.

**Legal Cases Involving Institutions of Higher Education**

In recent years, there have also been several court cases that have challenged institutions of higher education and the hate speech codes that they have implemented. Universities feel pressured to address speech that is biased against socially devalued groups or offends individual members of typically marginalized groups, yet the outcomes of multiple legal cases against
universities suggest that colleges and universities may not be able to regulate such speech as they have in the past (Napier, 1991). The cases that follow will help to provide insight about the types of speech permitted to have restrictions imposed by institutions according to the law.

In 1989, administrators at the University of Michigan perceived that they had a problem on campus with the racism and racist comments that had been occurring at an increasing rate over the past several years. They decided the best course of action was to enact a hate speech code, which prohibited any type of harassment against others on the basis of their race, age, ethnicity, sex, or sexual orientation. A student, who identified himself as John Doe in court records, filed a lawsuit claiming that the institution prohibited him from engaging in academic discussion about certain topics because he might offend students who were different from him. The case went before a federal district court, where the university policy was struck down. The court said in its ruling that the policy was “overbroad both on its face and as applied,” and that the “terms of the policy were so vague that its enforcement would violate the due process clause” (Doe v. University of Michigan, 1989, pp. 866-867). This ruling was one of the first regarding a university campus enforcing a hate speech policy and it set a precedent for all other higher education administrators to ensure that any policy restricting speech at their institutions were specific in nature and did not restrict protected speech.

A case similar to that of Doe v. University of Michigan is DeJohn v. Temple University (2008). In this case, a graduate student at Temple University filed a lawsuit against the institution claiming that the institution’s sexual harassment policy was “facially overbroad . . . having a chilling effect on his ability to exercise his constitutionally protected rights” of participating in class discussions (DeJohn v. Temple Univ., 2008, p. 305). DeJohn, like Doe, claimed that he felt an inability to express his opinions about women serving in the military in
class (he was pursuing a Master of Arts in military and American history) for fear his comments would be perceived as sexist and he would be disciplined. The court ultimately ruled in his favor, stating that the policy was too broad and that “discussion by adult students in a college classroom should not be restricted” (DeJohn v. Temple Univ., 2008, p. 315). This ruling only further supported the previous rulings, and again serves a reminder to administrators when crafting speech codes that these policies should be specific and narrowly tailored.

Another case in which a student claimed a violation of his free speech rights was Smith v. McDavis (2014). In this case, a student at Ohio University sued the institution and three administrators claiming that the student code of conduct was too vague as it restricted speech which “demeans, degrades, or disgraces” another individual (Smith v. McDavis, 2014, p. 6). The case centered around the student wearing a t-shirt promoting a student organization, Students Defending Students, that assisted and advised students going through the campus student conduct system. The organization viewed its role as helping students to get away with code of conduct violations, thus they created a t-shirt with the saying “We get you off for free,” on the front of the shirt. The student claimed two separate university administrators told him that he should remove the shirt, because it was demeaning toward women. Due to the student’s intimate knowledge of the code of conduct, and fearing that university administrators would charge him with a violation of the code of conduct and punish him in some way, he did take the shirt off, but subsequently filed a lawsuit with the assistance of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE). The university eventually settled out of court with the student and agreed to remove the vague language from the code of conduct (Smith v. McDavis, 2014). The new language in the Ohio University code of conduct that was agreed to states:
Harassment: Unwelcome conduct (including written or electronic communication) that is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it substantially interferes with the ability of a person to work, learn, live or participate in, or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by the University. In no event shall this provision be used to discipline a student for speech protected by the First Amendment of the United States.

Discrimination: Unwelcome conduct (including written or electronic communication) against another individual that is based upon an individual protected category (as defined by Ohio University Policy 40.001) that is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it substantially interferes with the ability of a person to work, learn, live or participate in, or benefit from services, activities, or privileges provided by the University. In no event shall this provision be used to discipline a student for speech protected by the First Amendment of the United States. (Smith v. McDavis et al., 2014, Exhibit A)

Although the definitions of the two seem similar, this code was agreed upon at the settlement of Smith v. McDavis (2014). These definitions and the code would seemingly meet the legal standards for being appropriately narrowly tailored; however, as has been discussed, this standard is a moving target within the legal realm. These cases help to provide background for the study by demonstrating that often university administrators cannot simply prohibit a type of speech or action by a student or remove them from campus, but rather they must engage in alternate resolutions.

A fourth case involving institutions of higher education is Christian Legal Society Chapter of the University of California v. Martinez (2010). This case involved a chapter of the
Christian Legal Society (CLS) at Hastings College of Law applying for an exemption to Hastings’ policy that all student groups had to accept anyone who wished to join them, regardless of their religion or sexual orientation. CLS required all of the members and officers of the organization to sign a statement of faith, which included the belief that sexual activity should only occur within a marriage between one man and one woman. CLS was denied this exemption by Hastings and subsequently sued the institution. CLS claimed that the administrators of Hastings Law School were infringing on the rights of members of the CLS’ free speech, expressive association, and freedom of religion. The court ultimately ruled in favor of the school saying that the policy was reasonable because it was viewpoint neutral, meaning it applied equally to all groups who wished to be a registered student organization, regardless of the group’s stated beliefs.

This case is especially important for higher education administrators today as it gives administrators the authority to restrict practices that are biased against groups of people on the basis of their identity. Many institutions strive to create safe spaces in which all can participate equally in the life of the institution. Christian Legal Society Chapter of the University of California v. Martinez (2010) reaffirmed for administrators that they could indeed create these environments through policy restrictions so long as the restrictions are “viewpoint neutral,” or apply to all groups equally regardless of their belief (p. 697). This means that an institution cannot single out a specific student group and tell them they must accept members who hold a specific identity (i.e., lesbian, gay, and bisexual) if the institution does not hold this as a requirement for all student groups.
Summary

In Chapter II, I laid the background of the study by describing different types of bias incidents that have occurred at postsecondary institutions. I discussed multiple incidents that included bias against people based on race, religion, sexuality, veteran status, and incidents that were falsified. I discussed the impact that bias has on targeted populations and different options that college and university administrators have in responding to such incidents. I also discussed crisis response as a theoretical framework for discussing bias incidents on college and university campuses. Lastly, I presented several legal cases, both within and outside of institutions of higher education that impact how colleges and universities are permitted to respond to and resolve bias incidents. Although this literature helps to set the context and provide justification for the study, it also demonstrates that there is a gap in the literature surrounding the management of bias incident response at postsecondary institutions, particularly in the role that SSAOs play in responding to such incidents. Next, I discuss the methodology for my study.
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

Bias incidents that occur at postsecondary institutions can cause a significant disruption to the learning that is taking place. Many times, it is the SSAOs who are tasked with responding to these incidents. The purpose of this general inductive study was to better understand how SSAOs managed bias incidents that occur at postsecondary institutions. Four research questions guided the study:

1. How did senior student affairs officers manage the institutional response to a bias incident that occurred within the student population?
2. How were senior student affairs officers prepared to respond to a bias incident that occurred within the student population?
3. What did senior student affairs officers learn about responding to bias incidents that occur within the student population?
4. What recommendations do senior student affairs officers have for training professionals in student affairs to manage bias incident response?

The study was submitted to the human subjects review board (HSRB) and was approved (Appendix A).

Philosophical Approach and Research Paradigm

Every researcher holds certain beliefs, values, and worldviews, all of which must be examined when commencing a new research study. These beliefs, values, and views undoubtedly affect how a study is to be conducted (Creswell, 2013; Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014). Below, I examine both my philosophical assumptions for the study, my paradigmatic assumptions for the research, and the theoretical perspective being incorporated.
Positionality

Before I discuss my assumptions about research or the paradigm and perspective being used, I examined my own identity and the effect it had on the research study being conducted. Jones et al. (2014) suggested that researchers reflect on what led them to the present study and what the reasons are for engaging in the study, the biases and assumptions they hold, and the relationship with those participating in the study. I possess many identities that influence who I am as a researcher and how I view my research. The identity I possess that is most salient to this study is that of a former student conduct officer. Having been a part of the response to bias incidents on a university campus, I have ideas about what constitutes a bias incident and how administrators should respond to those incidents. I worked at a four-year, public, institution that valued students’ rights of freedom of speech while also placing great importance on the inclusion of all students in the campus community. As a student conduct officer, I was expected to weigh these competing values and make decisions as to whether the right to freedom of speech or inclusion of all was prioritized in many specific cases. As a university employee, I was also expected to some extent to protect the institution from potential legal liabilities. The need to protect the institution however sometimes runs counter to my need to protect the rights of students and can cause internal dilemmas for me personally.

I hold other privileged identities that may have affected my research; I am a White, heterosexual, well-educated, Christian, cisgender male, from a middle-class background. This conglomeration of identities might lead one to question why I am conducting research on bias incidents, considering it may be perceived that I have never personally been the target of such an incident. My upbringing, my education, and my faith all contribute to my need to call attention to systems of oppression within society and work to dismantle the structures that promote them.
My background has led me to develop a belief that all people are human beings of worth, and should be regarded as such. The relationship between the participants in the study and me was of a professional nature. They may have viewed me as an insider given that I have worked in student conduct previously. In some instances, however, I may have been viewed as an outsider because I have never attended nor worked at private institutions or two-year institutions.

**Philosophical and Paradigmatic Assumptions**

When conducting qualitative research, there are four philosophical assumptions: ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology (Creswell, 2013). Ontology examines how the researcher views the nature of reality. In qualitative studies, researchers recognize that there are multiple realities that can be embraced equally (Creswell, 2013). Epistemology involves determining what is considered knowledge and how that knowledge is produced. Qualitative research requires that the researcher attempt to “get as close as possible to the participants being studied” (Creswell, 2013, p. 20). The breaking down of barriers between the researcher and the participants allows knowledge to be constructed based on the experiences of both participant and researcher (Creswell, 2013). Axiology refers to the values that guide the research (Creswell, 2013). In qualitative research, the researcher recognizes that all research has inherent values and biases present, thus it becomes beneficial to be transparent about the values that drive one’s research and the interpretations of that research (Creswell, 2013). Methodology is the process and procedure of conducting research, which in qualitative research is “characterized as inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher’s experience,” (p. 22) thus allowing the research process to evolve (Creswell, 2013).

Paradigms are defined as a “basic set of beliefs that guides action” (Guba, 1990, p. 17). As a researcher, I operated out of a social-constructivist paradigm. Social-constructivism views
knowledge and research as co-constructed with participants (Broido & Manning, 2002; Burbules & Rice, 1991). This paradigm allows each person to construct meaning individually based on their experiences and interactions with others in social settings (Creswell, 2013). The crux of this paradigm is the belief that all people can create knowledge because humans are social beings, and each person interprets their own social interactions in meaningful ways (Creswell, 2013). This study was consistent with my research paradigm as I sought to construct meaning with the participants of my study about their management of bias incidents, in the hope that the knowledge created may better assist other SSAOs in their management of bias incidents and creation of more inclusive environments on their campuses.

**General Inductive Method**

A general inductive approach seemed the most appropriate for conducting this study for a variety of reasons. According to Thomas (2006), “inductive analysis refers to approaches that primarily use detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data by an evaluator or researcher” (p. 238). Inductive analysis is also similar to naturalistic inquiry, which is an approach that allows the researcher to examine the experiences of people in their natural setting and interpret these experiences in the larger contexts of society and the culture in which the individuals operate (Lincoln & Guba, 1991). In this study, I was interested in learning how bias incidents were managed at a postsecondary institution from the perspective of SSAOs. Each individual administrator was interviewed about their experiences managing bias incidents. I asked the individual participants to talk about their coordination of an institutional response to bias incidents, how they were prepared to manage such incidents, and what recommendations they had for others to learn how to manage bias incidents in the future.
It was also important before embarking on this study to determine the intent of the research. My primary goal was to better understand how individual SSAOs managed bias incidents on their current or previous campuses, how they felt prepared to do so (or unprepared to do so), and what they learned from the situations. A general inductive approach, “allows research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies” (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). This allowed me to conduct the interviews and use a constructivist paradigm to make meaning of the participants’ experiences.

It should be noted that phenomenology or a collective case study could have been appropriate methodological choices to answer my research questions; however, phenomenology has as a primary goal, discovering the essence of a shared experience, and case studies require multiple data sources to understand the depth and breadth of the cases (Creswell, 2013, Merriam, 1988). It was initially unclear whether an essence to the shared experiences of SSAOs during the management of a bias incident existed. Further, although all bias incidents are bounded by the unique contexts of the campus on which they occur, the type of bias involved, and the people involved (both students and administrators), additional data sources did not exist to make a case study possible, as I describe in Chapter V. Further rationale for choosing the general inductive approach is described below.

First, the general inductive approach was consistent with my research paradigms. Within this study, I wanted to construct meaning with the participants about their management of bias incidents, how they were prepared for handling such incidents, and what they learned from them. A general inductive approach allowed participants’ voices and created meanings to emerge throughout the interview process, thus helping me as the researcher to gain a deeper
understanding of the issues at hand (Thomas, 2006). The general inductive approach also assisted participants and me in examining the lessons they learned. It also allowed the data to be analyzed in a way that could give insight to those who may need to manage bias incidents in the future and may help to ensure the creation of more inclusive environments on college and university campuses (Jones et al., 2014).

A second reason the general inductive approach was a useful one for the research questions I examined was that it allowed me to shrink the raw data from the interviews into broader themes that helped to summarize the data. The general inductive approach also allowed me to make connections between the summarized data and the research objectives in a way that was both “transparent (able to be demonstrated to others) and defensible (justifiable given the objectives of the research)” (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). Allowing each data point (participant interview) to speak for itself and drawing themes from each participant interview, which were then compared with other participants, was especially important in the discussion section, as it allowed the core meanings in the interviews to surface and be presented to the reader.

In the general inductive approach to qualitative research, one can employ purposeful sampling. Morse (2007) described purposeful sampling as selecting participants who are “experts in the experience or the phenomena under investigation . . . who know the information (or have had or are having the experience) in which you are interested” (pp. 231-232). Maxwell (2012) highlighted that,

The guiding principle in selecting settings and participants for a qualitative study is usually not to ensure representativeness or comparability, but, first, to identify groups, settings, or individuals that best exhibit the characteristics or phenomena of interest, and
second, to select those that are most accessible and conducive to gaining the understandings you seek. (p. 94)

For the questions I was asking in this study, it was important that I carefully choose each participant to interview. This was accomplished, in part, by the use of snowball sampling. The technique involved finding a participant who met the criteria for the study and asking them to help identify additional participants (Creswell, 2013). One limitation of snowball sampling is that oftentimes, the potential participants who are recommended by current participants tend to be like the current participant in many ways. This can lead to a heterogeneous sample if one is not careful. A second method of purposeful sampling involved examining the program booklet for two national conventions of student affairs associations and finding individuals who presented at the convention and met the definition of an SSAO. Again, there are limitations with this method, a primary one being that only those who can afford to attend such conferences will be listed, so it was again important to be intentional about who was enrolled in the study. Further, I also identified potential participants by reading about bias incidents that have garnered media attention and reaching out to SSAOs at those institutions.

**Data Collection Methods**

This section will detail the data collection methods used in the study. I describe who the participants were and how the data was collected.

**Participants**

The crux of this study involved learning about the experiences of SSAOs who had the experience of being the person in charge of coordinating an institutional response to a bias incident on their campus. An SSAO is defined as a person who holds significant responsibility in a division of student affairs on a college campus. Among SSAOs, there can exist a large
degree of diversity between titles, years of experience, degrees earned, staff supervised, and even type of institution (Kuk, 2009). Vice president for student affairs (VPSA) and dean of students (DOS) are two common titles for the SSAO. Associate VPSAs are not the SSAO, but are often considered an SSAO. In other words, they may be considered a senior student affairs officer because of their scope of responsibility but they are not the senior student affairs officer because they are not the highest-level official in student affairs at their institution.

In order to not limit participation to a particular role or type of institution, SSAOs were defined in this study as having either (a) responsibility for policy formation or vision planning for a division of student affairs, (b) responsibility for resource allocation within a division of student affairs, or (c) a wide scope of functional areas and/or large number of employees whom they supervise. This definition was decided upon to be inclusive of the wide scope of titles, years of experience, and degrees earned of individuals, as well as the size of institutions, while attempting to remain reflective of the general nature of the duties of SSAOs. Further, this study only examined those personnel who have had to be the point person in managing either a division of student affairs’ or a whole institution’s response to a bias incident on campus.

Potential participants were identified by talking with colleagues in the field to brainstorm names of administrators who met the specified criteria, reviewing lists of program presenters at national conventions, as well as by reviewing relevant media sources about bias incidents at postsecondary institutions and reaching out to the relevant SSAOs at that institution. Two participants were identified by colleagues in the field, one by reviewing media sources, and six by reviewing lists of program presenters at a national convention. The ideal number of participants was six to ten SSAOs, each discussing their management of bias incidents. It was hoped that these participants would be different in their social identities, types of institutions
they have worked, and types of situations they have managed so that maximum variation sampling to occur. Maximum variation sampling is a technique whereby the researcher chooses participants who are different from one another to see if the main patterns hold true (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). This number was chosen as it is hoped that after six to ten interviews, saturation will be reached, although it is important to note that saturation cannot automatically be assumed after a specified number of interviews has been conducted. Rather, saturation in qualitative research can be viewed as having rich and thick data, or rather, a lot of multi-layered, nuanced data (Dibley, 2011). If after six to ten interviews were conducted, I did not feel there was enough nuance and richness within the data, more interviews would have been needed. As I conducted the interviews, I found there were a wide variety of incidents discussed from SSAOs with a range of social identities at a variety of institutional types, providing rich, thick data. By the time I was interviewing the last few participants, I began to see themes from earlier participants being repeated, and no new significant information came to light.

Once potential participants were identified, they were contacted via email (Appendix B) to determine their willingness to participate in the interview portion of the study. These contacts were made based on the demographic information known, as well as the type of institution they worked at, in order to try to capture a range of social identities and institutional types represented among the SSAOs. One potential participant did say no due to constraints in their schedule.

**Interviews**

After potential participants were brainstormed, a list was compiled of those individuals who met all of the stated criteria of this study. Those participants were contacted via e-mail letter with an invitation to participate in the research study through interviews (Appendix B). If participants did not reply within a week or two of the initial contact, a second e-mail letter was
sent as a reminder (Appendix C). Once participants replied indicating their interest and willingness to participate, a mutually agreeable date and time to conduct the interview was determined. These interviews were face-to-face, if possible, to allow for me to build a deeper rapport with participants (Creswell, 2013). Due to distance and financial constraints, six of the nine interviews were conducted using Skype or Google Hangouts, in order to allow observation of nonverbal cues to still occur and some rapport to be built (Creswell, 2013). This type of face-to-face technology prevented some of the concerns that arise when interviewing via telephone or e-mail, such as not being able to observe the participant’s nonverbal cues and vice versa, not being immediately reflexive to the information shared, and saving the cost of phone interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

Prior to the interview, participants were provided the consent form (Appendix D) and asked to review and sign it. The interview then began and followed the interview protocol that I designed (Appendix E). The protocol consisted of semi-structured interview questions surrounding participants’ experiences of managing bias incidents. A semi-structured interview allowed the conversation to be directed around the topic at hand, yet remain flexible enough to be responsive to issues that arose during the interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The interview questions were divided into three categories, which were 1) bias incident management; 2) preparation to manage the incident; and 3) lessons learned. Each interview was digitally audio recorded and subsequently transcribed to allow for data analysis to occur.

I also conducted a pilot interview that was not included in the analysis of the study as a way to ensure that the process was workable and that questions were relevant and worded in a way participants could understand. As a result of the pilot interview, I decided that participants would be permitted to talk about the range of bias incidents they had managed, rather than a
single incident, as it was too difficult for administrators to separate lessons learned from a single incident they had managed versus the collective experience of managing bias incidents. Additionally, I added a question to ask each administrator about their perception of how their own social identities influenced their response to bias incidents. This question replaced a demographic questionnaire that was going to be provided to each participant, thus only social identities revealed during the interview by the participant were learned.

**Document Analysis**

In addition to interviews, I also reviewed each participant’s institutional bias policy as published on the institution’s website. This assisted me in understanding the ways that bias incidents are defined. I used these documents to note similarities and differences in how bias incidents were defined by institutions and was able to include this in the contextual information that helped to frame the remainder of the interview analysis. This helped to provide additional information about each institution and served as a way of verifying some of the data collected (Bowen, 2009).

**Data Analysis**

In qualitative research, data analysis can be described as a spiral, indicating that the analytic process is circular and cyclical, rather than linear (Creswell, 2013). Although there was a plan for data analysis to occur, the analysis was an evolutionary process that was influenced and refined by “insight, intuition, and impression” (Dey, 1995, p. 78).

**Data Organization**

The first step of the data analysis process was simply to organize the data. In order to make sense out of the large amount of data that was collected, I used Atlas TI, a computer software program, to organize the transcripts by participant. This allowed me to have better ease
of access to the data during the rest of the analysis portion (Creswell, 2013). The information gathered was organized chronologically by interview, as the research questions were centered on SSAOs and their preparation to manage bias incidents, their actual management bias incidents, and lessons they learned from managing bias incidents.

**Coding**

Coding, sometimes referred to as “the heart of qualitative data analysis” (Creswell, 2013, p. 184), is the process of analyzing data and beginning to classify the data into themes that will assist the researcher in interpreting the data. In this study, I began the coding process by using open and descriptive coding, or inductive coding (Jones et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2015; Thomas, 2006). Open coding is a method of coding that allows the researcher to remain open to the wide range of thematic possibilities that exist within the data by using codes that fit into minute pieces of data (Jones et al., 2014). Thomas (2006) describes inductive coding as beginning with,

> Close readings of text and consideration of the multiple meanings that are inherent in the text. The evaluator then identifies text segments that contain meaningful units and creates a label for a new category to which the text segment is assigned. Additional text segments are added to the categories to which they are relevant. (p. 241)

Keeping these initial open codes descriptive in nature assisted me in making connections between the codes in later steps of data analysis. I also liked the idea of open or inductive coding, as it allowed the research to speak for itself, rather than having pre-determined codes, which may have constricted and biased how I viewed the data (Jones et al., 2014; Thomas, 2006). Some examples of open codes I used include community impact, emotional impact, faculty involvement, historical impact, letter to community, and town hall meeting. This type of coding was consistent with my constructivist and critical paradigms.
Once I completed an initial coding of all of the data, I proceeded to utilize axial coding, in order to group the initial codes by their overarching concepts (Jones et al., 2014). Axial coding is a method that Wolcott (1994) referred to as “highlighting your findings” (p. 29). Wolcott discussed the fact that qualitative researchers make continuous choices to highlight and report certain items as they are observing behavior. Once the researcher moves to analysis, “that process becomes increasingly selective as some of the data now receive most of the attention” (Wolcott, 1994, p. 29). Thomas (2006) described the process as follows:

The evaluator identifies and defines categories or themes. The upper level or more general categories are likely to be derived from the evaluation aims. The lower level or specific categories will be derived from multiple readings of the raw data, sometimes referred to as in vivo coding. (p. 241)

Examples of open codes that were grouped into an axial code include (1) was accused of not doing enough for own minority groups, (2) bias has impacted their family, and (3) privilege helps her empathize. These three codes were grouped into the axial code of personal considerations in response. Other examples of axial codes included professional considerations in response and impact of bias.

The axial codes assisted me in identifying themes, which Creswell (2013) defines as “broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea” (p. 186). Wolcott (1994) described this process as a way to, “look for and discuss the relationships, the what-goes-with-what that realizes in the study of a single case the potential for understanding something beyond it” (p. 33). The whole point of the coding process was to generate broad, overarching themes that worked to answer the research questions posed at the beginning of the study (Thomas, 2006). An example of axial codes that were grouped into a theme was, (1) how
bias incidents were reported, (2) who investigated bias incidents and (3) who was involved in determining/implementing the response. These three codes were grouped into the theme of bias response processes. Examples of other themes that emerged were response considerations, outcomes of bias response, and post-response reflection.

**Memoing**

The next step of the data analysis process was to review all of the data in its entirety, including my notes and analytic memos. These notes were short phrases or words that helped me to begin making sense of what I was reading, and assisted me in the process of developing themes (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) suggested that memoing can be done for all forms of data, including interviews, field notes, and documents. The memoing process occurred simultaneously while data was being collected as a means of helping me to begin processing the information being gathered, and to help me keep in mind important aspects of the data that I wanted to highlight in the discussion. These helped inform my analysis as they assisted me in determining codes for the transcripts because they captured my initial thoughts during the interview process.

**Trustworthiness**

Any qualitative research study should demonstrate that the findings are trustworthy. There are several ways in which trustworthiness can be achieved, according to Creswell and Miller (2000). In this study to build trustworthiness, I chose to use member checking and a peer debriefer.

Member checking, which assists with providing credibility to the findings, is the process of comparing what the researcher believes to be the realities of the participants, with the actual participants’ perceptions of reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In this study, I first had the
participants review the initial interview transcript for accuracy and clarification. This was simply to make sure that I accurately recorded their words throughout our time together and to ensure they felt that confidentiality had been achieved. As a result of this initial review, one participant asked me to remove some of the specifics of their institution’s identity to better mask the institution. A second individual asked me to remove some of the names of individuals they referenced to better mask their identity.

After the transcripts were verified and coding was completed, I again contacted each participant and discussed with them the primary themes I had discerned from their comments and reviewed the subset of the findings that were relevant to their comments. This contact served as member checking, thus allowing the participant and me to generate a collective meaning to the experience they had described. In doing so, I was able to maintain the confidentiality of the other participants, as participants only reviewed the themes and findings relevant to their interview. All participants felt that I had accurately discerned the themes from their interviews and no changes were made as a result.

Lastly, to assist in demonstrating reliability of the findings, I utilized a peer debriefer. A peer debriefer is defined as someone who is independent from the research study, but is familiar with the phenomenon being studied and can ask the “hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). This person was someone who challenged my assumptions and asked me tough questions about why I was interpreting data in one particular way. A peer debriefer helps to establish credibility to the study by being external to the research but remaining in close contact with the researcher (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This person was selected in consultation with my advisor, and I was able to find an individual who had experience conducting qualitative research and experience responding to bias incidents and crisis
on college campuses. My peer debriefer concluded that the open codes, axial codes, and themes made sense, thus no changes were made as a result.

**Ethical Issues**

When conducting qualitative research, there are several ethical issues that one must consider, such as, “refraining from deceptive practices, sharing information with participants (including your role as a researcher), being respectful of the research site, reciprocity, using ethical interview practices, maintaining confidentiality, and collaborating with participants” (Creswell, 2012, p. 230). This study included several layers of transparency with participants, both in the email invitations, informed consent forms, and at the beginning of the interview protocol. It was my responsibility as a researcher to ensure that participants fully understood the purpose of the study, and that they were participating voluntarily and understood that they could withdraw at any time. The study did not pose a risk of physical harm, however talking about these issues may have brought up some emotions for participants that they may or may not have previously recognized. Therefore, it was also important that I was able to take a break in the interview protocol as necessary, remind participants they could withdraw at any time, and remind them that I was not a professional counselor but that those resources were available if needed. It should be noted that no participants required a break in the interview process and none chose to withdraw.

Concerning confidentiality, I masked participants during the presentation of the study, and participants were able to review this prior to the findings being finalized to ensure both accuracy and confidentiality. The masking process was of the utmost importance as bias incidents often become very public incidents, and it could have been easy to discern which institution was being discussed, and even which administrator was providing information, if
every single detail of each individual incident was discussed. As a result, the masking of participants included identifying the institution in the broadest of terms (i.e., a mid-size public institution) and reducing the titles that participants hold to their generic form.

Two other ethical issues that could have arisen during the data collection process were the possibility for social desirability bias and leading the participant during questioning. Social desirability bias presents itself when participants attempt to portray themselves in the best light possible, thereby skewing the information about what really occurred (Fisher, 1993). This was a possibility in this study because sensitive incidents are being discussed, particularly how leadership acted to resolve these incidents. As a result, participants may have been tempted to gloss over mistakes that were made in order to portray them or others in a more positive light. In order to attempt to avoid social desirability bias, I was explicit about the expectation for confidentiality the participants could have of me, and I emphasized the need for the participants to be truthful about the scenarios they were describing, in the hope that this produced the most accurate results. I also reminded participants that their identities would be masked as best as possible.

The second ethical issue that had to be addressed was the possibility of leading participants during questioning. This can occur if a researcher is hoping for specific results (Jones et al., 2014). In order to avoid this situation, I used a peer debriefer to review the questions in my interview protocol ahead of time, with a goal of avoiding leading questions. I also reminded participants prior to the interview that I wanted to hear their honest perspective on the questions being asked, and that I was simply here to allow them to tell their story.
Significance of Research and Implications

This research is significant for several reasons. First, bias incidents are increasingly becoming an issue on college campuses, one that administrators must address. It is unknown whether there are in fact more bias incidents occurring on campuses, or whether we as a society are simply discussing them more frequently and educating people about them (Thompson, 2014; Thorne, 2014; Wessler & Moss, 2001). Second, it is important that college administrators actually address these types of incidents when they occur, because they can have a significantly negative impact on the learning environment (Brazzell & Reisser, 1999). Given that little to no research has occurred on how student affairs personnel manage bias incidents, this research may help to inform future practice of, and training for professionals. Third, there are several legal restrictions on what campus administrators can and can not do when addressing bias incidents, which allows techniques and strategies such as bias response teams to rise to the top of an administrator’s available options (Chappell-Williams, 2007; Paterson, 1998).

More importantly, there is a large gap in the current literature available. No known empirical studies have been conducted on how SSAOs actually formulate a response to bias incidents that occur on their campus, let alone examine whether the administrators felt prepared to do so or the lessons they learned from managing such incidents. This research may fill that gap by providing a foundation on which others can build. This research may have implications for how student affairs professionals respond to bias incidents on their campus, how student affairs preparation programs instruct future personnel to manage these incidents, and how institutions can implement prevention programs aimed at stopping bias incidents before they occur.
CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS

The purpose of this general inductive study was to understand how SSAOs have managed institutional response to bias incidents on their campuses. Four primary research questions guided this study.

1. How did senior student affairs officers manage the institutional response to a bias incident that occurred within the student population?
2. How were senior student affairs officers prepared to respond to a bias incident that occurred within the student population?
3. What did senior student affairs officers learn about responding to bias incidents that occurred within the student population?
4. What recommendations do senior student affairs officers have for training professionals in student affairs to manage bias incident response?

Profiles of the nine participants, along with brief descriptions of the institutions at which they worked during the interviews are provided. Next, I discuss major findings and themes that were discovered throughout the interview process. The chapter concludes with a summary of findings, which are discussed further in Chapter V.

Participant Profiles

Participants who were responsible for leading the institutional response to bias incidents in their role as a senior student affairs officer were selected for the study. They did not need to be the most senior student affairs officer on their campus; rather, they only needed to have a scope of responsibility significant enough to be assigned that duty. As shown in Table 1, six women and three men participated in the study. Of the nine participants, five identified as White/Caucasian, three identified as African American, and one identified as Latina/Mexican
American. Six participants were the most senior student affairs officer on their campuses and three were a senior student affairs officer. Two of those individuals reported to the SSAO, and one participant was two levels removed from the SSAO. Their years spent working in higher education ranged from 11-31.

Table 1

*Basic Demographics of Study Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Number of Years in Higher Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caitlin</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freddy</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African American</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Mexican American</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
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<td>Melissa</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>28</td>
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This section contains profiles of each participant, highlighting information about the bias incident(s) they described, as well as information about their careers and/or institutions. In the interest of confidentiality, each participant was able to select a pseudonym, although all asked for one to be assigned. Likewise, I also assigned pseudonyms to institutions, as well as any named individuals in the interviews, and masked the titles of specific individuals. It should be noted that any participant’s social identities discussed were gleaned from the interviews and the
responses of participants, specifically the question about how their own social identities played into their response to bias incidents, if at all.

**Caitlin**

Caitlin is the dean of students at Roberts College (“Roberts”). She identified as a heterosexual, White/Caucasian female, and has worked in higher education for the past 22 years, the last 11 of which have been in her role at Roberts. Roberts is a small, affluent, predominantly White institution that is all female and largely residential. Caitlin described Roberts as a place that has done well in diversifying the student population, and is extremely progressive in terms of the social justice education it provides all members of the community. However, she noted that Roberts on the whole tends to still be catered to White students and have systematic oppression built into the fabric of the institution. She talked about how the institution continues to do a lot of work to change this, but historical factors continue to push back.

Caitlin described a bias incident in which a student working the entrance to a campus Halloween party was wearing blackface. Caitlin described the event as one in which, “students [were] trying to form a discussion and educational opportunity with the student in blackface but there was a lot of emotion involved in that conversation.” Caitlin said that ultimately, the student in blackface left the party, but was reported to university administrators by other students and then went through the institutional student conduct process. This incident was extremely public, as it occurred at a public party and then word spread on an anonymous social media forum. Caitlin described this particular bias response process as educational and one in which administrators responded very publicly by working to educate all students about social justice issues, particularly blackface, and developed a “Thinking Through Race” course that is now offered annually.
Carol

Carol is the vice provost for student affairs at The University of the Pines (“Pines”). She identified as a White/Caucasian female and as a lesbian. She has worked in higher education for 31 years, the last 20 of which have been at Pines. Her primary functional area had been residence life, until assuming more generalist roles in the last 17 years. Pines is a public institution with approximately 12,000 students and a large Jewish student population. Carol described the campus as welcoming to all students, and particularly “supportive and positive toward LGBT students and staff.” She discussed the university’s values statement that emphasizes respect and unity against injustice of all types.

Carol primarily discussed a bias incident that occurred approximately three years ago in which two students who were roommates hung a Confederate flag in their residence hall room window that faced a very public area of campus. In discussing this incident, she talked about the fact that many individuals saw the flag and became upset by the symbolism of what the confederate flag means to them. Carol’s discussion of the incident focused on the nuances of bias incidents versus students’ rights to free speech, and she talked about how ultimately, this was considered to be within their right to free speech. Carol described how university administrators had to wrestle with how to respond. Ultimately, the students were asked by the president to remove the flag because it was contrary to the values statement of the institution. There was also increasing escalation from other students, which caused administrators to begin to worry about the safety of everyone involved. The students removed the flag, and hall staff members were able to follow up and have educational conversations with the students involved.
Freddy

Freddy is the vice president for student affairs and enrollment management at Suburban State University (“SSU”). He identified as a straight, African American male, and is a member of a Greek social fraternity that is historically Black. Freddy has worked in higher education and student affairs for the past 17 years, beginning in residence life, moving through the dean of students office, and most recently is serving as a vice president for student affairs. Suburban State University is a regional campus of a state university, located in a small suburban town. SSU serves approximately 7,000 students, with approximately 84% identifying as White, and a small residential population. He talked about the work his current campus has done to address microaggressions and attitudes toward diversity. “We have an education program that we conduct with our students, especially in the first year, on reducing bias language.” He said that this program has really empowered students on his campus to not only deal with issues of bias, but also to talk about them more openly.

Freddy described a number of bias incidents that he has managed, both at his current institution, and at a previous institution, which was a historically Black university (HBU). The incidents he discussed primarily focused on bias incidents against students who identified as LGBT and bias incidents based on race or socioeconomic status. He described incidents in which the LGBT group that he advised “would go to reserve space, and other adults . . . would tell them the space was booked. Then you walked by later, you’d walk down the hall, and no one was there.” A second incident he discussed was one in which a “student government association president wanted to resurrect an age old religious affiliation that the school had, but hadn’t observed in a hundred years to try to keep that same LGBT group from being able to access student activity fees.” Freddy described many of the incidents he talked about as
microaggressions, but emphasized that administrators need to look past the scholarly definition of microaggressions and realize that these are situations in which “individuals are emotionally and mentally damaged by behaviors. Sometimes [it] is physical as well, but most importantly, we have to understand that issues of bias are issues of people hurting people.” Freddy’s focus on the human impact of bias has led him to focus on developing relationships with people so that he can better respond when these issues arise on his campus. He talked about how often times in these situations, he uses his role as an administrator to speak for students who have had their voices marginalized, and tries to teach those marginalized students to “meaningfully agitate” the system by putting their concerns in front of the people who have the power to change the system.

Lisa

Lisa is the vice provost and dean of students at Lewis University. She identified as a White female. She has worked in higher education for the past 26 years, primarily in residence life, student conduct, athletics, and then generalist administrative positions. Lewis University (“Lewis”) is a small, private, non-religious, research university located in a large city. Lewis has just over 3,000 students, with 14% being international students and 22% identifying as Asian American, Latino American, African American, or Native American (ALANA). Fewer than 10% of students live on campus. When describing Lewis, Lisa said, “There has been a lot of attention to climate on campus with regards to race relations.” She said this attention has led to higher visibility about the campuses bias reporting process and protocol, which has resulted in greater utilization of the process by students.

Lisa described an incident surrounding the 2016 U.S. presidential election, when a student running for student government president made a statement on social media about building a wall on campus to keep students from another campus out. She said that the student
was trying to be satirical in nature, but that a student of Mexican heritage was disturbed by his comments and reported the situation. Ultimately, Lisa, as the senior student affairs officer, met with the student who made the comments and had an educational conversation about how his comments were perceived by others. She described the response protocol that is in place at Lewis as a team response where once a complaint is filed online, a team of people receive it, evaluate it, and decide how to proceed. She said that the vast majority of resolutions have been informal in nature, utilizing mediation and educational conversations, rather than moving through the student conduct or criminal processes. Lisa did talk extensively about the line between free speech and bias incidents, and admitted that the line is not always clear, thus administrators at her campus are still working to figure out the nuances when a situation arises.

**Maria**

Maria is the associate vice president for student affairs at Mountain Technical College (“Mountain Tech”). She is not the senior student affairs officer, but reports directly to that person and is considered the second in command. Maria identified as a heterosexual female of Mexican American heritage. She has worked in student affairs for over 20 years; mostly in residence life and student conduct before moving into more generalist positions. Mountain Tech is a private engineering and technical school located in a suburban area. The institution has approximately 17,000 students, with approximately 20% students of color. Maria described Mountain Tech as “a very academic focused, career focused university” that is often open and inclusive as they have a large deaf student population and “the most trans* students that we’ve ever had.” She described these populations as one of the primary reasons the institution has made so much progress when it comes to responding to the needs of students from minoritized identity groups.
Maria primarily described an incident that occurred during which two murals were defaced. The murals were painted by the gay student alliance and the cultural society, and someone wrote slurs for gay males and African Americans on them. A resident assistant saw the vandalism, reported it, and worked to clean it up as much as possible. Ultimately, public safety was able to identify the student responsible and they were charged through the institution’s student code of conduct. Maria said that part of the challenge in responding to this incident was that it had already been shared on social media, which is widely used to share information among students at the institution. She discussed how social media has decreased the amount of time the institution has to respond to an incident, as she believes that administrators should respond within 24 hours, if possible.

Mark

Mark is the vice president for student affairs at Sunset State University (“Sunset State”), and thus, is the senior student affairs officer at the institution. He identified as a White, gay, male. Mark has worked in student affairs for the last 20 years, starting in residence life, and then moving to orientation/admissions, before becoming a generalist in the dean of students’ area. Sunset State is a large, public institution located in a large suburban area, and serves approximately 21,000 students. The demographic breakdown of students is approximately 56% White, 16% Hispanic American, 12% Asian American, and 7% multiracial. He described the students at Sunset State as wanting change to occur around issues of diversity and inclusion, but being “impatient” that the process takes so long. Mark also told me that faculty and staff at the institution are very supportive of the changes that are being made to be more inclusive and more diverse. He told me that the president is very supportive of student affairs and the direction that things are moving, which may help to set the tone for other faculty and staff at the institution.
Mark primarily described an incident in which a student had his possessions vandalized in his residence hall room with slurs that were racial and anti-LGBT in nature. The student also had some property destroyed. The student posted pictures of the vandalism on social media, which then gained traction among the campus community and was brought to the attention of campus authorities. The student was not trying to report the incident, and “didn’t necessarily feel marginalized, but there were many who saw it, saw those pictures and those words, and it impacted them as members of the community.” Ultimately the institution convened their bias response team and sent out messages to the community on behalf of the president and Mark, and then went through the criminal process and the student code of conduct because of the vandalism committed to university owned property. He said that administrators ultimately learned that some of this was due to a rift in the room over the selling and buying of drugs, but that they treated that separate from the bias behavior that occurred.

Melissa

Melissa is an associate dean of students and the director of the multicultural center at Ocean Institute of Technology (“OIT”). She identified as a White, heterosexual female, who grew up economically disadvantaged. In her role, Melissa reports to the dean of students, who reports to the vice president for student affairs. She has worked in the field for the past twenty years. She is also responsible for coordinating the response to bias incidents on her campus, in consultation with the bias response team and the dean of students. The majority of Melissa’s career has been in residence life in various capacities; she has only worked in multicultural affairs for the last 3 years. OIT is a large, public, land grant and military affiliated institution that serves approximately 30,000 students. It is located in a mid-size college town that is part of a larger metropolitan area. Melissa described OIT as being in a state of change right now, as
they have recently hired a new president who is launching new initiatives centered on diversity and inclusion. These new initiatives “encourage every member of the community to get involved and make this place inclusive.” She also said that it has been only recently that students have started to stage sit-ins and other protests in response to local, national, and global injustices.

Melissa described an incident in which an Asian American student (Johnny) who was running for class body president was targeted on social media and in person because of his race. One student in particular began harassing Johnny on Facebook, which then led to other students join in and use racial slurs and make threatening statements toward him. There was also a sign in a residence hall window that said “Vote Trump, not Johnny.” Eventually, another student of color came forward to report these incidents, which led to Melissa meeting with Johnny. At first, Johnny did not identify these incidents as being offensive toward him, but after talking to her, he began to see how these could be perceived as racist. Johnny explained that he had never dealt with anything like this before, so it took some time for him to process what was happening. She said that residence life did follow up because they have a policy against posting things in residence hall windows, but that ultimately there was no action taken against the person posting on social media because Johnny did not want anything to happen.

**Monica**

Monica is the associate dean of students and Title IX coordinator at Hilltop College. She identified as an African American, female, who is heterosexual. Monica reports to the senior student affairs officer and has oversight over three functional areas, including student conduct, Title IX, and bias response. Hilltop College is a small, private, selective liberal arts college that is located in a rural area. The college serves fewer than 3,000 students, with 21% being students of color and/or international students. She has worked in student affairs for the past 11 years,
primarily in residence life and student conduct, although now has responsibility for overseeing a women’s center as well.

Monica primarily described an incident in which two students followed a faculty member of color off campus as he was driving, and began yelling racial slurs at him as they passed him in their car. She talked about the campus climate being less than welcoming toward faculty of color and that the students tend to be very homogenous, holding several privileges. She talked about how the faculty member was able to identify the car, and the students were caught and were taken through the student conduct system for a bias incident, as well as the criminal system for traffic violations. Monica talked about the importance of communicating the institution’s values, as well as the outcomes when those values are violated. “That letter I wrote to the whole community that got the great response, they liked the piece that we told them what happened and what the outcome was.” She indicated that this helped people in the community feel that action would be taken if they reported violations.

Ryan

Ryan serves as the vice president for student affairs at Big Sands State University. He identified as an African American man, who was and is involved in Greek Life. Ryan is the senior student affairs officer at his institution, and has worked in student affairs for nearly 30 years. His career began in residence life before he became more of a generalist and began working in the dean of students’ functional area and then becoming a vice president. Big Sands is a mid-size, public institution located in a mid-size city. The institution serves approximately 13,000 students, 65% of whom identify as White, 13% as African American, 10% as Hispanic, and 10% as another racial identity.
Ryan described a situation in which two nooses were hung on campus about a week apart. He said that they pulled together a team of folks who met to discuss what actions should be taken, and that they were able to include community leaders in this discussion. Ryan discussed the importance of communication with the campus community, the local community, and parents as the response to the incidents unfolded. In particular, they brought in “about a dozen former civil rights leaders and pastors at African American churches where students go.” They shared with this group what their response was going to be and made sure to have their buy in. The president also created a chief diversity officer position after this incident to demonstrate a level of commitment from the institution.

**Constitution of a Bias Incident**

In order to help frame the discussion and the themes that emerged, this section will discuss what participants viewed as constituting a bias incident. Participants were asked to talk about how they defined a bias incident, or what they believed a bias incident to be. They were also asked to describe at least one bias incident that they led the response for on their campus. As a result, it became very clear that there are many different types of bias incidents, and many different ways to define what a bias incident is. These differing views are important as it is necessary to understand what participants viewed a bias incident to be before one can understand how they managed such incidents.

**Types of Bias Incidents**

When asked to describe a bias incident that they had managed, participants described many different kinds of bias incidents. One primary type of bias incident was bias against someone on the basis of race. Incidents described included bias against African American students and Hispanic/Latino/Latina students. These incidents included student staff members in
a dining hall wearing mustaches and sombreros to work on Cinco de Mayo, a Halloween party in which guests wore blackface, incidents of nooses being hung on campus, a confederate flag hung in a residence hall window, comments echoing Donald Trump’s view on immigration but personalized to that specific campus, and vandalism that included a racial slur for African Americans. Additionally, there were also incidents described that included bias based on religion, sexual orientation, Greek life affiliation, socioeconomic status, and gender. These incidents included vandalism that had a slur for gay males written on it, making pledges in a fraternity dress up like cowboys to mock the movie Brokeback Mountain, not allowing an LGBT group to reserve space on campus, attempting to change the funding policy for student organizations to be “biblically based” and exclusionary of LGBT groups, swastikas drawn on murals, and exclusion from participation in sororities based on income.

While all of the participants were able to give numerous examples of bias incidents against minoritized individuals or groups, Freddy also talked about incidents of bias between minoritized groups. He talked about bias between groups of Black students, either based on country of origin, political views, or sexual orientation.

In my other experiences . . . Black-on-Black crime is just not in the streets, it is alive and well at the academy. When I have seen things happen between groups of Black students, the instant thing is that the Black student who doesn’t go with the popular opinion is the traitor. And then when you are the Black administrator who says, you cannot attack this person, because they believe this. . . . [In their eyes] I had betrayed my race.

Freddy said that bias between Black students sometimes presents as harsher than when it is between majority/minority groups. It is possible that Freddy views these situations in this way because of his own Blackness.
Many of the bias incidents participants described were larger and more disruptive in nature, but Caitlin specifically included microaggressions when describing types of bias on her campus.

While we might not have large-scale macroaggressions happening frequently, I do think we have microaggressions happening frequently that are bias related, and that students don't see our processes as one they would engage in for microaggression. I continue to be concerned about the microaggressions that are not addressed. . . . Which is why I continue to struggle around the microaggressions. I want to understand a little bit more about how much of that is happening on our campus, and I don't have a total grasp of it yet.

Caitlin shared two instances of microaggressions that she could recall. The first was a domestic student of color who shared with her advisor that a faculty member told her that her spoken English was better than he expected for someone “not from here.” That student did not wish to pursue any action against the faculty member. The second incident she shared from a previous place of employment was really a pattern of behavior in which a White male student would repeatedly call campus police to report a suspicious person in their residence hall. Three of these instances were a brother picking up his sister for the weekend, a friend of a resident coming by to go out on a Saturday night, and local college students gathering in another student’s room, all of which involved people of color who were doing nothing more than being present in the hall.

Caitlin was the only participant to include microaggressions as a form of bias that does occur and could be addressed through the institution’s bias response protocol. Many types of bias incidents have occurred on the campuses of these SSAOs, and the wide variety in the incidents described by participants helps to demonstrate that what constitutes a bias incident can vary. When
examined in terms of the theoretical framework, most of these incidents would constitute a
critical incident. The incident with the nooses hung around campus that Ryan discussed may
have been the only incident that bordered on being a campus emergency, primarily because
several offices on the campus became involved, not because it caused the closure of the campus
or overburdened the resources of the institution. None of the incidents described approached the
level of a disaster. This is not to say that a bias incident could not rise to that level, but that was
not the experience of the participants in this study.

Ways to Define a Bias Incident

Although one could limit the definition of a bias incident to solely the types of incidents
that have actually occurred, it is also necessary to consider the theoretical definitions of a bias
incident in addition to the practical definitions. These definitions of bias often include formal,
written definitions. As part of the analysis, I examined the written bias policies for each
institution. All of the policies except for SSU’s included a definition of a bias incident. These
definitions were all very similar, with the only exceptions being that three definitions specifically
named genetics as a protected class, three definitions did not specifically name veterans as a
protected class, and five definitions specifically named gender identity or gender expression as a
protected category. Three of the institutions’ policies specified that behavior had to be based on
“actual or perceived membership in a protected category” while the other policies described the
target as being a member of a protected category. All but one of the policies described who to
report the incident to and what the response protocol is.

In addition to the written policies, participants also described the definitions used by their
campuses in their own words. Melissa said, “Our campus certainly has a definition of what [a
bias incident] is” referring to the stated definition of a bias incident in her campus’ policies.
Freddy also talked about formal definitions of bias by saying, “I know we have these scholarly terms for microaggression and macroaggression, and I believe they are very important terms.” He also referenced the legal definitions of bias. Carol also talked about a formal, institutional definition of bias, and indicated that she was the first person to talk about what bias is when she arrived at the institution several years ago.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, some participants described the definition of bias being less formal for them and at their institutions. Mark said,

It’s probably important to also be flexible in what a bias incident is, because I don’t know that I can, I’m not aware of or own every identity. So things that may not feel, to me, with the identity that I hold, as bias related as it might to others.

Although he did not want to be specific about what may constitute bias, he did say, “Obviously, it has to be derogatory toward some aspect of identity or be contrary to the institution’s values around inclusion, not supportive.” Similarly, Melissa said,

I think for me, it is really important to not lock that in, because your hurt still hurts. So I want to hear more about why that is and what happened and how people hopefully move [on]. If you think about restorative justice practices, there are lots of "half ways" with restorative justice, and so I think if you leave that definition open, it allows you to fully consider the range of what could be next steps for healing.

Melissa and Mark both advocated for keeping an open definition of bias as a way of empowering the victims to feel any way they choose. Lisa echoed this sentiment by describing how she really looks to the victim to determine whether something constituted a bias incident.

I think the things guiding our work are just not trying to judge the reporter and say, "was this really an incident of bias or not?" We always kind of assume, well this person felt
that it was, so we are going to approach it from that perspective and try to find out what is going on with the student and see depending on the situation how we want to handle it.

Although Freddy talked about formal definitions earlier in our interview, he also understood the other perspective of leaving the definition more open.

However, I also believe that when you are dealing with people, if you're hurt, you're hurt. It really doesn’t matter if you are aggrieved from an indirect sense of ignorance or if you are aggrieved by outright malfeasance. Especially if you are a student, if you're hurt, you're hurt. And so incidents of bias really expand into, at least for me, into the realm of people being hurt.

Lisa and Freddy also kept an open perspective on what constituted a bias incident, although they were more explicit in letting the victim decide what comprised bias.

While it remained open for participants as to what specifically constituted bias, nearly every participant agreed that a bias incident was an actual behavior of some kind. Monica said, I really think that a bias incident, it can be a number of things. It can be theme parties, it can be jokes, it can be any incidents of unwelcoming behavior that is targeted at someone based on their perceived or actual identity. That's really how I would define it.

Ryan also said that bias incidents are typically acts.

If you think about the shooting in Orlando, it was an act, not an incident per se. Where there is either attack, it could be verbal; it could be written against a group of people because of what they look like, what their religious background is, what their sexual preference is, etc. Because [people] are different.

Maria included that a bias incident can be something that is expressed, as there is a large deaf population on her campus that uses sign language to communicate, rather than spoken word.
Nearly every participant also pointed out that bias incidents do not need to occur in person, but often occur on social media. Lisa described an incident in which a student running for student council was attacked on a university Facebook page.

On our university Facebook page, one of our class pages, another student posted, it looked like, it was a satire on Trump. But it said "Hey, vote for me and I will make sure that no students from [another institution in town] will be able to come on to campus and cross our borders." It was kind of in the vein of some of the statements that Trump is making about undocumented people in the country, people from Mexico in particular. He was trying to parody it in a satirical way, but it just wasn’t clear. Another student who is of Mexican heritage really felt very funny about this, so she put it in a report that said, "I am really concerned about this." That is the crux of what happened.

Mark described something similar in which the incident happened in person but was documented on Facebook.

We had a student get into a series of disagreements with his roommates in an apartment on campus, and post on Facebook about how he was feeling marginalized in the world by his roommates. And he posted pictures of derogatory words and slurs written on his door by his roommate, and the furniture in his room that they destroyed. We only became aware of it when it got social media traction amongst our student body, who raised it to our attention.

In addition to incidents that occur or are documented on social media in which a perpetrator(s) can be readily identified, there are also incidents that occur on anonymous social media such as Yik Yak. Melissa described an incident that began on Facebook with a student harassing another student, and then moved to Yik Yak and involved several individuals harassing the student.
Another first year student, who happens to live in that living and learning community, just decided, "I hate this kid." Don't know why, he has never spoken to him face-to-face. But he started harassing him on all kinds of social media, and even the terrible anonymous forums like Yik Yak and the like, specifically using his name. Other people started joining in on all of this saying, "Yeah we should send all those chinks back to China."

Carol also talked about bias incidents on social media such as Snapchat, where something occurs, but then disappears and cannot be documented.

And now we are finding too that students are sending offensive things over Snapchat, but then we cannot respond because it goes away. The student sits there and says, “I didn’t send anything,” and there is no documentation, no record of it, nothing that we can really respond to. So that is causing real conflict over the social media world.

These and other incidents described by participants add a different layer to the conversation about how to define a bias incident, as it does not necessarily need to occur face-to-face with another individual.

In determining what constitutes a bias incident, participants focused on using past incidents to express their views, as well as theoretical definitions. They also described situations that occurred in person and via social media. It was important to have participants consider how they formulated what comprised a bias incident in their minds, as one could not describe how they managed the institutional response to bias incidents without first being able to tell me what they believed constituted a bias incident.
Themes

After interviews of all participants were completed and transcribed, I coded each transcript using an open and descriptive coding process (Jones et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2015). Next, I used axial coding to place the initial codes into broader categories (Jones et al., 2014). Lastly, I grouped these broader categories into more expansive and general themes. Wolcott (1994) talks about the process as a way to “identify patterned regularities in the data” (p. 33). This process of coding, “is a cyclical act. . . . Recoding further manages, filters, highlights, and focuses the salient features of the qualitative data record for generating categories, themes, and concepts, grasping meaning, and/or building theory” (Saldaña, 2015, p. 8). Thus, I was able to discover the salient themes in the interviews and work to make meaning from the participants’ experiences. An example of this was an initial code of a continued diversity campaign, which then was coded into the category of long term responses implemented, which was then grouped into the theme outcomes of bias response.

Six overarching themes came to light throughout this study. I have described these themes as follows:

1. Bias response processes
2. Outcomes of bias response
3. Response considerations
4. Challenges in bias incident response
5. Preparation for bias incident response
6. Post-response reflection
Each of these themes included multiple axial codes, each of which included several initial codes. Below, I will discuss each theme, its meaning, its nuances, and how it helps in answering the research questions.

**Bias Response Processes**

During the interviews, participants were asked to describe their management of bias incident response, including how bias incidents were reported on their campus, who investigated the incidents and who was involved in determining and/or implementing the responses.

**How bias incidents were reported.** When describing their management of bias incidents, many SSAOs described the bias response processes on their campus, including how incidents were reported. Lisa was the only participant to describe a formal reporting and notification system when discussing bias incidents she had managed. “It's an online form, so the process is that students, staff, or faculty can fill it out, and it automatically gets emailed to the team.” After the report is received, it then moves to the bias response team, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Although participants easily defined bias incidents, only one participant discussed using a formal reporting system. In reviewing the bias policies of all of the institutions, many of the policies articulated some sort of formal process.

The other participants described more informal ways that they learned about the bias incidents that occurred on their campuses. Several of the participants described bias incidents that were based on social media, which then resulted in their learning about the incident from either observing it on social media, or others reporting it via social media. Mark described one such incident.

He didn’t come forward to report. He was surprised at the level of response that he got from folks like me, from the president, our dean of students . . . support from people as
his post was shared. It went virally around our campus community, ended up in the local newspaper because we’re a small town.

Others talked about outrage among fellow students, which led to students other than the targeted person reporting the incident. Melissa described one such incident.

It is interesting because the person who was the target of the message actually didn’t quite define it as bias, but other people did see it that way. Finally, our student government association has a director of equity. It is a student position, and she is a senior. She was talking with Johnny, and he described to her this posting. And she said, "That is racist." And Johnny was like, "Oh is it?" She went and snapped a photo herself and then tweeted it to my office and to the housing and residence life office and said, "You should not allow this racist language to happen on campus."

What Melissa described was somewhat common among participants, as others also had experiences in which the target of the bias did not feel the incident rose to a level that required reporting or a person who was not the target of the bias reported the behavior. Monica also has managed incidents in which others have reported the bias. When asked who typically reports bias incidents, she responded,

Typically, that is the reporting party, or it could be friends saying, "I am really concerned because my friend walked into their room, and there was a swastika on their door." So even though that friend wasn’t the person who experienced that, when I follow up with the person whose room that was, that's who I am saying . . . the impact that the behavior has had on them.

Although many participants described social media as the way bias incidents were discovered, Caitlin also told me that she learned about a particular bias incident from students because she
works on a small campus and there had been conversations among students about the incident. These types of conversations can also happen among faculty, leading one of them to report the incident as has happened in Monica’s experience. As can be seen, there are many different ways that bias incidents can come to the attention of administrators, which would indicate that the process for responding to these incidents is fluid and responsive in nature.

Who investigated bias incidents. When discussing their respective institution’s bias response processes, some participants described who specifically investigates bias incidents on their campuses. Maria described a situation in which the campus public safety office led the investigation into an incident.

We have cameras in the tunnel system, so public safety went back and reviewed the film. Initially, it was difficult to tell, but we were able to . . . [because] we use a Lanell swipe system. Pretty much everywhere you go on campus, you have to swipe to get in, whether it is your residence hall, food service area, academic buildings. They were able to tell who swiped in that would have been able to use that tunnel passage to get from one place to the next. Between the video and the swiping, I got word this morning that we were able to identify the student and so the conduct process is happening for the student.

Maria did clarify that it is not always public safety that investigates, but in this case, due to the location and the nature of the incident, that office did take the lead.

Other participants described their bias response teams as the group that leads the investigation. These teams can involve many different constituents, and will be described below as they often are also charged with determining and/or implementing the response.

Who was involved in determining and implementing the response. When describing who was involved in determining and/or implementing the response to bias incidents on their
campuses, participants in the study discussed a number of different people and/or offices on campus that assist at various times. Some participants told me that the response is coordinated through a specific office or person. Melissa indicated that on her campus, bias response is coordinated through the student advocacy office, which can then liaison with necessary partners on and off campus. Many of the participants described at least one situation in which the president of their institution was either involved in the response or determined the response. In Carol’s situation in which a confederate flag was hung in a residence hall window, the president became involved when she asked for his involvement.

It finally got to a point where I asked the students to take it down, and I finally had to ask the president to call the students and ask them personally to take it down because it was offensive, it was offending people. They finally decided to [take it down] after the president called them. It was getting to the point where we felt maybe something more serious would happen, and we wanted to protect everybody’s safety in the situation. I personally asked the president to give them a call, and that did the trick.

Mark indicated that his president is involved any time there is a bias incident on their campus and that they have discussed several times how their values align with one another and what the response will be in similar situations. Ryan, on the other hand, told me that he has had to push for his president to be a part of the response to bias situations, which she has reluctantly agreed to do.

We actually had the president come out and make a statement in writing and then at the public forum that we had. I think this was a learning lesson for some. In the past, an incident like this would have fallen on the appropriate V.P., so some people are looking at me. Which I would have no problem with, what I also said was this is an attack on the
institution and the African American community in some way. Even though I am a person of color, people want to hear from the boss. They don't want to hear from a V.P. There was some conversation back and forth because that had been the past culture, but we took a new turn, a new path in this, and had our president be out front. Not only in the message, but with the forum.

However, not all participants wanted the president to be involved with the bias response process. Freddy described his chancellor as someone, “who trusts the process and stays out of the way. Sometimes, your chancellor can try to be Harry Hero and they can really ruin things.” In Freddy’s case, he described a process in which even he as a vice chancellor stays out of the response initially. “If the policy dictates that I’m the appeal, I have to stay out of it because I’m the appeal, I cannot be on the front end.” Of course, this is only in a situation in which there are formal conduct charges and possible sanctions. Including the president in the response really depended on the situation at-hand, although generally when the president became involved, it was more high-level and included a communication of university values to the students involved and/or the university community as a whole.

In addition to specific offices or individuals sometimes leading the response to bias incidents, every single participant described some sort of bias response team, which was often led by them as a SSAO. These teams involved a variety of constituents including but not limited to academic partners/faculty, Title IX coordinators and other compliance officers, police, counseling center and health center staff, disability services staff, counsel from legal affairs, multicultural affairs staff, LGBT affairs staff, women’s center staff, residence life staff, religious life staff/chaplains, student conduct staff, human resources staff, and marketing staff. Mark, Melissa, and Ryan all talked about how their teams include content experts that join based on the
type of bias that has occurred. In Mark’s case, these are generally faculty members who have a research interest in a specific area.

The response team has a resource pool [of] about 90 individuals who have content area expertise in many different areas. We don’t have a representative for every under represented identity on the team. Based on the incident, we can say, “okay, you are an expert in Muslim student experiences,” we pull you in. Or “You are an expert on African American issues,” we pull those folks in. And there [are] general levels of expertise on inclusion and response on the team, content area experts come in as the incident dictates, based on what’s happened.

On Ryan’s campus, these are not typically faculty members but rather, members of the community that has been impacted by the incident.

Then we bring in others whose group or community [has] been impacted. So if there is an incident against LGBT students or [the] community, we bring the president of the LGBT group into our group to help us make decisions and communicate, etc.

Although all of the participants have managed bias incidents on their campuses, often they do not do so alone, and they rely on others to assist them in making decisions. The processes they described varied widely, and specific situations often drove the resolution.

**Outcomes of Bias Response**

During the interviews, participants were asked to describe actual bias incidents that they have managed. As part of many of their responses, they talked about the various outcomes of the bias response processes, including short-term and long-term responses.

**Short-term responses implemented.** Once the individual, office, or team that is determining the response has made some decisions, the responses need to be implemented.
Participants in the study described both short-term and long-term responses that were implemented in relation to bias incidents on their campuses. Short-term responses described included communication to the campus community via open forums, town halls, or letters, conversations within residence halls, meetings with student, community, and civil rights leaders, and providing resources to targeted groups. Additionally, short-term responses sometimes included charging the perpetrator(s) with a code of conduct violation and/or criminal charges, or using restorative justice to work toward a solution. Some participants also described interim measures such as removal from campus housing or a room change on-campus.

When incidents were determined to be within the confines of an individual’s free speech rights, some SSAOs would encourage affected students to respond to speech with speech. Carol said, “The institution in many ways is saying, the way you do more is put up more speech that is contrary to the beliefs that those particular students are raising.” Melissa also described an incident in which an incendiary speaker was invited to campus and the institution was unwilling to prevent the speech from taking place. Instead, a group of faculty members formed their own group and distributed materials counter to the speaker’s beliefs, and held a speech of their own immediately following the featured speaker that countered his thoughts and beliefs.

What I like about that is this notion of instead of trying to stop the speech, they added speech to counteract it, and I think that is really unique and useful. It was amazing to be a part of that.

Although the speech could not be punished, free speech can often be used to the targeted group’s advantage.

**Long-term responses implemented.** In addition to short-term responses, often times responses to bias incidents take the form of longer-term responses that require more resources,
planning, and time to implement. Participants described responses such as creating a chief
diversity officer position, creating a council on diversity and inclusion, implementing a long-
term diversity campaign, integrating diversity into the curriculum, forming a bias response team,
reworking the bias response protocol, and holding long-term follow-ups with both the victim and
the perpetrator, specifically involving identity development and social justice education for the
perpetrator.

The most common long-term response was the creation of a chief diversity officer. Lisa
said that her campus had employed a part-time chief diversity officer who was also a faculty
member, but after several bias incidents occurred, the president opted to make the position full-
time. Melissa also detailed a new chief diversity officer position at her institution.

It has been 3 months now that we hired a chief diversity officer who is also responsible
for strategic planning for the institution. She met with 450 people in her first five weeks.
She has also opened a door to say, "I am listening, what is it that you need me to know?"
We have . . . a Twitter handle. . . . There are thousands of people and alumni watching
this feed and seeing if we are [responding to bias]. It was really intentional bringing it
into the light, and I think that those circumstances allow her to be able to do that. And to
get traction behind that too.

Monica and Ryan also reported that chief diversity officers were added at their institutions.

The responses detailed by participants demonstrated that all of them instituted both short-
term responses and long-term responses to bias incidents. There were also a wide variety of
outcomes reached, depending on the specific situation described. This also helps to shed light on
how SSAOs manage the response to bias incidents.
Response Considerations

As the participants in this study described how they managed the response to bias incidents, they talked about many factors that influenced their decisions about how to respond. These factors included professional, personal, environmental, and stakeholder considerations. These considerations and the impact they have on the decision making process are discussed below.

Professional considerations. When discussing the decision making process, participants talked about many different considerations that relate to their professional roles on campus. A major professional consideration is that of free speech, and whether the behavior in question is protected by free speech or not. Carol talked about this in relation to an incident with a confederate flag hanging in a residence hall window. She viewed this as a form of bias that was constitutionally protected under the students’ free speech rights; however, others did not necessarily agree with her.

I think a lot of students and staff were upset about the free speech aspect, which I think comes up quite a bit around bias incidents. If it is purely speech or an expression, then I think folks really don’t understand why a university just can't go in and take it down. If it was more of a direct threat to an individual or a group of individuals, but it was just hanging there. Did people FEEL threatened? It’s a little different than, was it a direct threat? [It didn’t] qualify as harassment. We went through all of the policies to try to figure out if it was a policy violation, but it just wasn’t. It was seen as speech.

Carol did say that after this incident, residence life created a policy against hanging items in windows, but she did not want to limit individual’s expression based on the content of that expression.
Lisa also discussed free speech considerations, and talked about how when something is constitutionally protected, she still works to try to help the offending student understand the impact of their behavior.

This is the thing we are all trying to figure out. I think part of what we would try to do is help someone understand how their statement/behavior/language is coming across. If it is another student, a student-on-student issue, help the student who is making the offensive remark or behavior realize the consequences of that. With free speech, you can say or do whatever you want, but to [also] realize you are part of a community, and there are people you are hurting in the community with this behavior or language. If that is the choice you want to make, then that is the result, the outcome. You must realize that that is what you are doing.

Lisa did talk about the line between free speech and harassment as a fine one, and something that should be monitored closely, and addressed if it is crossed.

But if it starts to flip into, harassment is pretty specific, stalking is pretty specific, all that stuff in the code is pretty specific. Most students at Lewis are sensitive to these issues so they want to be pretty thoughtful, but [they are] not always. It is just a matter of helping students realize the consequence of whatever it is that they are doing. If it is truly offensive, to realize that it is against the values that we have in the community. If the behavior starts to do something else, like cause disruption, or divisiveness, then those things can be addressed through the code of conduct, and they will be.

Ryan agreed that free speech issues are a fine line, and referenced a case at another institution in which someone wrote Donald Trump’s name in chalk on sidewalks around campus.
There is certainly a fine line in that. In the Trump case, at [that institution] in particular, there is an incredible amount of pressure to do this and that, the administration just can't look at it and let it go. I think for me, I think it's about what is the effect of that speech on the community? Are people afraid to go to class? Do they change their behavior, are they somewhat emotionally impacted by this, so it affects their ability to go to school? I think you get some of that when these incidents initially happen. I think you get the sense for how the community responds to it and how it starts to impact them in other things that go on. So that to me is also a barometer.

Many of the SSAOs understood that there were free speech considerations to take into account when examining bias incidents, and that these considerations had potential legal ramifications for the institution. Interestingly, the desire to protect freedom of speech existed for these participants, regardless of whether they worked at a public or private institution, even though private institutions have more leeway in the types of speech they can legally restrict. Many of the participants prioritized protecting speech. Carol also clearly articulated the potential social ramifications if free speech was limited for things she found offensive.

Yet I am also a firm believer in free speech because the moment we start to limit speech is the moment somebody is going to turn around and use it against a certain population.

I’m quite a proponent of [not limiting free speech].

Carol believed that limiting any free speech would give others a chance to try to limit one’s own speech as well, and was very clearly against that. Overall, most participants appeared to interpret the First Amendment correctly and allowed speech within various settings and did not regulate it based on the content of the speech.
Another professional consideration some participants discussed was how bias incidents often highlight the oppressive systems that exist on college campuses, but can be viewed as an opportunity to raise awareness and work to deconstruct those oppressive systems. Caitlin talked about this in the context of her campus.

I think when you work at an affluent, predominantly White institution that has done well diversifying its student community, but still functions like it is an affluent, White institution, that institutional biases are built in the fabric, and unless we continue to shift and change that, there will always be fewer opportunities for students of color to have to manage White affluent leaders or peers.

Freddy talked about this as working within his role as vice chancellor and helping the students to learn how they might “meaningfully agitate the system” as a way of working to deconstruct oppression.

You have your students that will just, you can show up in my office when you want to get permission to have alcohol at your party on campus. But you got this significant social issue, yet you don't come talk to me. So I am fascinated by that, more because usually once you have the conversation, it's like, I am definitely down with the cause. When I was a student, I protested all the time acting like a damn fool, but I think that as an administrator, I am in a position where I can educate students about how to meaningfully agitate the system . . . that this is how you work the politics. I tell students all the time, "If you are pissed about something, don't just stand-up and yell in the megaphone. Don't waste time arguing with people. Write it down. This is who you can put it in front of . . . meaningful agitation gets results. Every protest has to start with a plan. And I think in terms of issues with bias or issues of harm, I think people really have to make a plan. So
if you’ve got this faculty member who is known for decades of aggression and rude behavior and bias and discrimination, it does happen, I think sometimes you have to say, this is how you work the process. You may not get them fired, but you can make them plenty uncomfortable. Sometimes, it is our job to teach. And all we are doing is teaching students how to work the process.

Freddy acknowledged that he does what we can to try to deconstruct oppressive systems, but often, the student voice is much more powerful if used in a way that campus leadership has to listen.

Participants also discussed the considerations of safety, and self-care. Freddy told me that safety was a primary consideration when he manages bias incident response. “Sometimes it can escalate so quickly that we have to look at safety first. And before you can address education, you have to address safety.” Carol had similar thoughts in the situation she described, which is why she escalated the response by bringing in the president. Safety of students, staff, and the entire community was a primary concern.

Closely related to safety is self-care, of the students involved, as well as the staff. Maria especially highlighted the importance of taking care of one’s staff and making sure they are taking care of themselves when dealing with issues of bias.

And then depending on who is involved in the response, is making sure your people are okay. For instance, in this particular case, our center for women and gender director is an African American woman and does a lot of conversations on campus and does a lot of programming about racism and microaggression. I always look for that. I checked in with her to make sure she was okay. We have a great relationship, so there was a natural
conversation about how she felt. She felt angry, she felt sad that people are still utilizing the “n” word.

Melissa also highlighted the importance of self-care, but for the victim of the bias.

My time with her in terms of the reporting was more about like self-care: What are you doing for you right now? What else can I direct your way? How can we align resources for you to feel like I am on it and that it has been heard and it will be addressed? So it was a good conversation. I don’t know that she walked away more hopeful that things culturally are going to shift. But I think she definitely walked away knowing thank goodness that somebody knows.

Both Melissa and Maria felt that self-care was a primary consideration when managing a response to a bias incident.

A fourth professional consideration that participants talked about when discussing how to respond was intent versus impact. Many of the participants viewed intent of the behavior as secondary to the actual impact of the behavior. Freddy articulated this view in his interview.

People can argue about intentionality all day. I get you may have meant no harm, but this intent or this behavior caused harm. People, and behavior hurting people. Those are the educative points I have to begin with in those incidents. I have had student-on-student stuff, sometime you see interesting things in fraternities and sororities, especially NPHC and IFC and PanHel, it can get interesting. . . . My point is those are the type of things that you have to dig into, where you have to just say, "Okay, look, come on. [Here are] my expectations of you.” Sometimes you go into disappointment, and then you go into the education. You can never just attack the people. It's never about what you did; it's about how your behavior impacted people.
Monica agreed with Freddy. “I look more at the impact that it has had on the target, versus the intent, versus the behavior itself.” Participants described various intents that they have observed in students who have committed bias incidents, including a desire for attention, ignorance, malice, and stupidity. Ultimately, these intents seemed not to matter. Rather, participants considered the impact of the behaviors or actions. Often, this included looking at the impact of the behavior on both an individual level, and a group level. Caitlin said, “For me, I think there are bias incidents that impact one or a small group of people, and there are bias incidents that have community impact. They are both, in my mind, both need to be responded to.” Mark talked about how the impact of a bias incident on the community was really the impetus to addressing the situation although there was little personal impact on the individual who was targeted. Mark emphasized how the community impact, in this case, mattered more than the individual impact. In fact, nearly every participant discussed the impact on the community. Caitlin discussed how public incidents sometimes impact the community in an empowering way, whereby they will be more apt to report bias incidents.

I think this incident offered opportunity. I assume there were incidents prior to this one, but this one happened to be public and happened to have a student who understood the system and was able to bring the incident forward in a way that she knew there was a process for it. Following this, we did receive other incident reports, which did allow us to respond as a campus community. I think people understood that you could report and something would happen.

Lisa talked about the impact on the community, and how the student who reported the incident wanted the perpetrator to be aware of that impact.
I asked her what she would like to see happen. She said, "I don't know what the intent was, but if the intent was to be disparaging, I just want him to know that there is somebody out there, in the community who was hurt by that, and I want him to realize it."

Monica echoed this when discussing using a restorative justice process, with the intent of helping the perpetrator(s) understand the impact the incident has had on a community.

So that gets into kind of the broader outcome, and if I am addressing or adjudicating bias, most times with bias incidents, I take it through a restorative justice process, instead of a formal hearing process. That's where you are able to pull in the community, and get them thinking about, get the person who behaved in a manner that was biased or insensitive, to think about how that impacted the entire community. Not even just the person it was targeted towards.

Melissa highlighted that in some situations administrators may not know how large of an impact the incident has had on the community.

The backside of the incident is communicating with my housing/res life colleagues further. . . . I challenged them to think about the fact that this was on a window for three weeks and we don’t know how many passersby made a similar understanding of what this reporting person did. We don’t know how broad the impact could be, so maybe start with the residence hall where it is hanging and have some conversations.

When thinking about the impact on the campus community, it is helpful to consider this through the lens of the theoretical framework. If a particular bias behavior only rises to the level of a critical incident, it may be addressed very differently than if it rises to the level of a campus
emergency or a disaster. Ultimately, there are many professional considerations that SSAOs think about when weighing what the response to bias should be.

**Personal considerations.** In addition to professional considerations, many participants also discussed personal considerations that factor in to how they manage a response to bias incidents. The main primary personal considerations centered on the social identities of the SSAO. Many of the participants disclosed that they held marginalized social identities, such as being African American, gay, lesbian, Mexican American, a female, or someone from a lower socioeconomic status. Ryan talked about how he cannot separate his identity as an African American from his work.

There's no way that I could divorce what happened from me being a person of color, an African American man in particular. All the images, in whatever dramatization/documentary, us being the ones primarily who were hanged and lynched back in slavery times. . . It is my identity; it's who I am. It’s how I identify. I can't hide it.

Maria had similar feelings about her identity and her family history around issues of bias and discrimination.

I can never shake the identity of being a woman. I can never shake the identity of being underrepresented. I am half Mexican, my father is Mexican and my mother is Irish. But I take that with me, no matter where I go. . . . I have been very lucky in my life that I have not experienced a lot of prejudice, but I know from having a father who is a first-generation [immigrant] from Mexico, and some things that he went through, I always feel particularly sensitive about those kinds of issues because it has impacted my own family.
Many of the participants acknowledged that they hold both privileged and marginalized identities and these play into their role as an administrator. Melissa discussed her privileged identities and how they can sometimes present a challenge when responding to bias incidents.

One of the things that I anticipated was that I am going to have to work my tail off to show some of these students that I am here for them, and I am not just another, "I am one of the good White people." It has been hard.

Along with this, Melissa described how she sees her privilege play out when interacting with students who hold marginalized identities.

I notice that the students of color have a less difficult time as a whole, and this may be unfair, but students of color have been more willing to build a relationship with me than faculty of color. The truths around that are, life and lived experience having an impact on trust levels; students having a higher power distance. They have to be nice to me, because some of their budgets run through my office. Or I am in charge of the center that they are enjoying. So there is this kind of administrative politeness. . . . So that is real and has definitely been something I have had to be really thoughtful about where I am showing up and how I am showing up and how much airspace I am taking when I am showing up. Really intentionally using what I am hearing to make change and to influence decisions that I am making every day. Even if it is seemingly tiny things, like, we need to pick out a new paint color for the Black cultural center, it's just paint. But it’s not my center, it's under my org chart, but it's not mine. And so slowing it down to say, the committee feels like a little much, but let me get some groups together, buy some lunch, and talk about, we have these couple of projects we need, how about you all choose? Those are the ways I have to mitigate my Whiteness in that situation.
Melissa recognized that although it may in some instances be harder to gain trust because of her privileged identities, those identities sometimes impact the way that students interact with her and cause students to be further marginalized.

While some participants acknowledged that they could never fully separate their social identities from their role as an administrator, most talked about the need to work for all students, regardless of their identity. Freddy discussed the fact that although he is African American, he is always cognizant of his role on campus.

I think that is tough, here is why. I always say I am Freddy first; but Freddy can’t ever forget that he is the vice chancellor. So it goes back to, I always try to remember who I am first, but I cannot forget my role. Where I am going with that, is that sometimes I may have good intentions, but I have to stop and recognize that because of this role, I may have to say nothing, especially if it's something where I can be the appeal later and I could damage the case. Sometimes I have the pulpit where hearing it from me can really shake someone up. And I leverage that and use it wisely and what I believe is intelligently. And I use it sparsely and with patience. In the SSAO world, there is a certain amount of deliberate impact that your words have, because even if I am Freddy as the individual, I still carry the title with me, so I have to be clear when I express certain things, what my feelings are in terms of the policy, in terms of the expectations that are there. But most importantly, my role is to educate, and I think that is the intersectionality of being me as an individual and being me in this role, my role is educate.

Carol also discussed having to respond the same to all situations, no matter whose identity is impacted.
I often do, I make it a rule that no matter what the issue is, whether it is homosexuality, or race, or any particular identity, that I say something, or at least a bias response team certainly has my support in order to handle it well. So I try to show folks that it’s not just about my own identity. Because if something happened around race, as in the sombrero dingling hall staff issue, I respond the same way.

Monica explained that she tries to remain impartial, but knows sometimes, that is not possible and she needs to step back from the situation at hand.

So certainly when talking to parents, it's not like I can ignore my identities and how other people might perceive that as me using that to lend to the way that I make decisions, but as a student conduct practitioner, it important that you do remain as impartial as possible. And quite frankly, recuse yourself when you can't do that. I think that it speaks volumes to the fact that when I absolutely feel like my identity is going to, I've actually never felt like my identity would necessarily play into how I make a decision. I have recused myself from decision points when I feel like my relationships with students will impact my decision. I think those are some of the things that I have to remind people of when I am dealing with these cases.

Monica not only looks at her identity as an African American woman, but her identity as a student affairs professional and the relationships with students that come out of that.

Another aspect of identity that impacts the way some participants have responded to bias incidents is when they are accused of not doing enough for the marginalized groups with which they identify. Freddy talked about the Black Lives Matter movement on his campus, and members of that group asking him why he had not spoken out in support of the movement.
One of the questions I got was, "Why have you been silent on Black Lives Matter?" I was like, what do you mean? "You haven't said anything." What do you want me to say? Do you want me to get all the Negroes riled up here, what do you want me to do? So it is one of those things, where when I was asked that question, I had return questions. Tell me what you mean when you said I have been silent. Have you read these things that I have written? Did you know that I was doing these things in this space? Oh, so because you were not aware, you painted me silent. So just because I am not on campus with a dashiki or with an afro, holding up the Black Power sign, that doesn’t mean that I am silent, it just means that I am operating in a different place. That does happen sometimes.

Freddy talked about the challenges of students not always realizing everything that he does as an administrator and as a scholar to support African American students.

Mark talked about similar pushback from LGBT students.

Some of our students and the place where they are at developmentally, in their identity, their sexual orientation, is what they lead with. You look at identity development theory, and it is most important to them, so they make decisions and experiences completely through that lens. I’m in a different place in my life and my identity, so it is a factor for me, but it’s not the lens through which I run every decision. And I have had to sit with students and say “I’m actually not the vice president for LGBT students; I am the vice president for student affairs.” That means I have to the make best possible calls that will make everybody in our community feel supported, and sometimes that doesn’t always make everybody feel supported, because there is no way to make a decision that makes everybody feel supported.
Monica also described receiving pushback from students who share her identities as an African American and a member of the Greek community.

I have experienced that. Specifically, when we're addressing bias incidents when students of color are not allowed into spaces, and they are told, "we have our quota tonight, sorry, try to come back later, once a Black person has left, we'll let another one come in." Certainly a bias incident. The way that I approach it and address it varies depending on if we are able to use the restorative justice process or not. I have had students say, "We expected you to come down a little more harshly on these organizations." I have to balance making sure that I am always following the policy, so those are the conversations that I have to have with students who share the same identity.

On the other side, Monica has also received pressure from members of the Greek community and/or the African American community to look the other way when situations arise.

The other part of it is, I get from the Greek community, "You're Greek, you should understand." So explaining to those students, yes I am Greek, but a violation of policy is a violation of policy, and my shared identity doesn’t make the behavior any less worthy of me addressing it. In fact, those things are what make me more compelled to have a discussion with you to be sure that that stops. I see that vice versa when I see students of color who do something that is bias, and they feel like, "I can't be biased," and then having those discussions as well.

It is clear from the participants the primary personal consideration that occurs when addressing bias is the impact of their social identities. This impact is not singular in nature, but rather, occurs in a variety of nuanced ways.
Environmental considerations. Environmental considerations also arose as participants discussed what they take into account when formulating a response. Many of the participants described the climate of their campus, particularly surrounding the bias incident(s) they were describing. Some participants, including Carol, Lisa, and Maria, described their campuses as welcoming, and even having a social justice focus. Freddy and Monica however described histories of non-acceptance at their institutions, and talked about the challenges that presented. Monica in particular talked about the historical racism that still occurs in the larger community surrounding her campus.

So I think that what's at play is just really who we are, where we are located, and I have probably shared this before, but we also deal with the clan constantly, we have the KKK on our campus because of where we are located regionally. We also have the Sons of Confederate Veterans. So these are two groups who come near our campus often and spew hate toward people of color, and anyone different, and anyone who really fights for justice and civil rights. We unfortunately also get a lot of students who are in agreement with that mindset.

Maria and Ryan talked about how students at their institutions are not necessarily explicitly supporting racism and other bias, but are very passive when it comes to changing the culture. Ryan discussed how this fact impacted his thinking when planning a response to the nooses that were hung on campus.

Finally I would say again that our student culture of passivism and inactivity. If this was at Berkeley, there would be a lot more things we would have to figure out. You have the social media stuff going, you probably have protests going, students groups who are not liking this and making demands. There was never any thought for me that people would
protest to the president's office or take over the administration building. Those are some of the things that flew through my head.

Ryan knew the students at his institution would not protest, which caused him to think of other ways he would need to address the bias.

Many of the participants also talked about the importance of being familiar with the demographics of their campuses when responding to bias incidents. Mark discussed the campus demographics, pointing out that in his state, some traditionally marginalized identities are not considered underrepresented.

Sure . . . about 21,000 students, 20,000 undergrads. Predominantly White, upper middle class. Less than 1% African American. Our state does not have predominantly as large African American population as the other coast. And the college-ready population of African Americans is low in this state. Most of our underrepresented students are either of Asian descent, or Hispanic/Latino. In our state, we do not consider Asians an underrepresented group.

Caitlin described her institution as, “a microcosm of the world” and noted how, “for many of our students, this is exactly like home, and for many of our students, this is nothing like home. I think that is true at any college.” Being knowledgeable about the demographics of the student population helped many administrators anticipate the needs of their students when responding to bias incidents.

In addition to talking about the campus climate of students, Mark also talked about the faculty and staff on his campus as activist in nature, but that the students do not necessarily feel the same way.
The staff are supportive and want to see the change happen. I think our faculty are supportive as well. I wouldn’t say that they are barriers. When we have conversations like this, there are many divergent opinions on the way things should happen. So our faculty want to see a number of different academic majors put in place as a way of changing the climate. Which is a piece, but we are predominantly a science/engineering/math school, and so putting in a major in LGBTQ studies is great and it is a visible commitment and it does create a safe academic environment for students who want to study that, but our 6,000 engineers, I don’t know that that is the way we are going to impact them. So we have to do other things. So I appreciate that our faculty want to respond from their place of comfort and how they respond academically, but there has to be both-and. Like many campuses, we have our fair share of activist faculty who are pushing the activist students to move agendas forward for them.

For many participants, the campus and community environment impacted how they thought about their response to bias incidents.

**Stakeholder considerations.** In addition to personal, professional, and environmental considerations, participants also described stakeholder considerations as a factor in how they responded to bias incidents. One of the stakeholders discussed was the victim. Melissa described how in one situation she managed, the student who reported the incident was seen as a victim of the incident, in addition to the targeted individual. She talked about the student’s personality and her leadership role as a reason for her reporting.

Even based on her position, she went out for a position called director of equity for the student government, certainly plays in with her living experiences as a woman of color.
It is a position that she takes very seriously, so when she sees something that feels like bias, looks like harassment, looks like a culture that we want to try to end in our community, she very much takes personal responsibility for intervening. So that is why she went out for that position. So I definitely think it is related to her own personal identities as well.

Melissa indicated that understanding the student’s identities and personality was key for her in knowing how to respond to the student. Caitlin also mentioned personality of the victim as a factor.

Maybe less so about her age, and more so about her personality. Had she been 18, she would have responded the same way. That was just her personality. She would just jump in there and call someone out on their behavior. I think it probably was impactful, I think the experience of the student was impactful in driving the conduct process. We needed to talk that through with her to really say, "This is the right place for us to manage the behavior." She got that pretty quickly, but I think because of her relationship with the conduct process, that was an easier sell. Had she been a sophomore not related to the conduct process, I don’t know that she would have gotten there as quickly that that was a good direction to go in.

Caitlin emphasized that understanding the student’s personality helped her explain to the student why the incident should go through the conduct process.

Melissa also talked about having to negotiate the victim’s views that the incident in question was not bias. She said, “It is interesting because the person who was the target of the message actually didn’t quite define it as bias, but other people did see it that way.” In one situation she managed, she said that the person didn’t respond because the targeted identity was
not really salient to the student. “Johnny identifies as Asian American, but it has never been a really salient part of his life because he grew up in an area in which there were a lot of different people.” The lack of salience precluded the student from seeing the incident as bias against him. This led him to being unsure if the incident was racist. Melissa also talked about how she felt that the victim was always positive, but was also working through his own identity development.

He's just got immense positivity and endless hope. The more we talked about it, he continued to peel back. "Now that I am putting this together, it does feel racist. But the one incident with the poster in the window didn’t feel that way. But I can see how all of these experiences are probably tied to the fact that I am Asian American. This has never happened to me before. What do I do with that?" We talked about resources. I completely empowered him. I told him, "I don’t HAVE to do anything. I don’t have to call the police, or push this through student conduct. This is your story, and this is your experience, so let me tell you about the many different options that we have, and I will follow up with you in a week and hear how’s it going, and ask if you want to exercise those options."

In this case, Melissa tried to tread carefully in how she talked to the victim. She felt that she did not want to cause more damage to his college experience than had already occurred, while at the same time helping him to grow and develop as an individual.

On the other side, Monica talked about the victim, and the targeted group feeling unsatisfied about the process that was taking place to address the bias incident.

Managing that incident was complicated because we were talking about a faculty member, a visiting faculty member, one who had not had a great experience in our community, both on and off campus, so he got more faculty members involved to say,
"Look at this community that you fostered here. Our students do not appreciate
difference or diversity, and this was my experience with them." Those faculty members
who are connected to our campus on a permanent basis then got involved in the conduct
process to say, "You need to make sure they are expelled, so that no one else ever feels
like this again." On our side, it is definitely an egregious offense. I can't guarantee you
it's going to result in expulsion.

The targeted group was really expecting a single outcome, and expressed that they would not be
happy unless that outcome was reached. This did not cause Monica to alter the process, but was
a consideration for her in deciding how to communicate once the process was concluded.

Another stakeholder who was taken into consideration by Lisa was the accused
student(s). She described one situation in which the accused student was extremely defensive.

In the director's outreach to him, [the student] took a very defensive stance and was not
willing to come in. He was saying, "I don’t need to explain this thing to you." It was
something totally different. The director was like, okay, I don’t want to get into it on
email but I really need him to come in, so kept on saying, "I really need to meet with you,
the dean's office asked me to reach out to you. Please come in." And he wouldn’t.

This caused Lisa to think about alternative ways to manage the response, ultimately leading her
as the SSAO to reach out to the student. In Lisa’s situation, she also had to consider the on
campus organizations with which the accused student was affiliated. She told me about one
group, saying, “They consider themselves anarchists and they consider it their job to disrupt
meetings and that kind of thing.” This led her to prepare for a possible disruption of the meeting
with the student, or of other administrative functions.
The last stakeholder that participants discussed was that of the general student body. Freddy talked about the perception among some students that administrators do not care about the effect bias has on students or do not know the effect bias has. Caitlin said that sometimes students do not view the bias response process as one that will address the issue, especially when it comes to microaggressions. Carol said that sometimes, students do not feel as though the institution does enough to address the bias. “They wanted more action than that. They wanted a bit more from the institution about it.” Likewise, Maria said that many students on her campus do not feel supported by the diversity and inclusion office, and that they do not feel that office does enough to integrate marginalized groups, so they will choose to not report bias incidents.

Our LGBTQIA students have been pretty vocal in saying that diversity and inclusion does not include them. . . . That is not a secret on our campus, which is too bad. We have this one area that we call the Mosaic Center. We had taken some classrooms in the union, and they were reconstructed to be a multi-use area that can have speakers. . . . Initially, it was seen as a real way of mixing groups, whether it is students of color, multicultural Greeks doing programs in there, students from the Q Center, all sort of intermixing and doing all these things. What we see though, is that from 7:00-8:00, it is multicultural Greeks. And then 8:00-9:00 is students in the gay alliance. And then 9:00-10:00 is our trans women. Then 10:00-11:00 is our Latino fraternity. So they are all utilizing the space, but there isn't an integration. It is not a sharing of resources or conversations, so we are missing some opportunities there.

These perceptions from the student body can make it difficult for administrators to proceed with a response that meets all students’ needs.
Another perception of the student body that Mark discussed is the perception that the culture is not changing fast enough.

Our campus, like every other campus, is going through the really impatience around issues of inclusion that our students are putting forward. I use the word “impatience” not in a negative way, and I’ve had to do a lot of work with our cabinet around that, we do great work as a university on moving issues of diversity and inclusion. But we have, the president, the vice president, the provost, a 10 to 15 year plan of how we’re going to get from where we are today to where we’re going to go. Our students’ lifetime is much shorter, and it is impacting them right now, so there is impatience around issues of inclusion and the students desire to see things change now. And when these things happen . . . we don’t understand why it’s going to take 2 years to do any one of a number of things.

Mark talked about the importance of hearing those concerns, but remembering that there is a larger, strategic plan in place to address issues of bias.

I think that the biggest challenge is that we can’t change culture overnight. And that hurts me, that hurts the president. We know what we want it to be like, but we have to work to get there and that takes time. Matched with the impatience of our student body, for good reasons again, makes the work extra challenging. And probably, you can make mistakes as an administrative team in that part, where someone says “this happened, now you should do this,” we are trying to take in what’s happening, look at our plan and direction that we agreed upon as a community and stay focused on that. If we lose sight of the bigger role, we will always have these one-off incidents that we are responding to. We will get to the bigger role and we still have these incidents that happen.
For all of the participants, ensuring that stakeholders’ perceptions are taken into account when considering a response was another piece of how they managed the bias response process on their campuses.

**Challenges in Bias Incident Response**

During the course of the interviews, many participants described the challenges they encountered when managing bias incidents. These challenges included determining whose interests took precedence, organizational challenges, and challenges related to social media.

**Competing interests.** One of the major challenges described by participants was deciding whose interests took precedence in the cases they managed. Interestingly, many participants viewed precedence of interest as a hierarchy. Mark put it like this.

I think there is a hierarchy of interest. I think first, that student, then there are the individuals who hold the identities that were named as unwelcome in writing and on social media. Then I think it is our larger campus community. And then the university’s organizational interests about clarifying its values and sending messages to our students about what is welcome and what’s not welcome.

Several of the other participants also talked about precedence of interest in some form of hierarchy.

All participants agreed that at some level, the targeted group or person’s interests should take precedence. Maria believed this group took primary precedence over others.

I like to think that the students were thought of first, the impact on our students. Even though it wasn’t a very public incident, I think we thought about the student groups, or the students who were impacted that belong to those two groups. They really were the center to this, because they all knew.
Ryan agreed that the targeted students came first. “Certainly the interests of the students first and foremost, because it impacts a particular group's ability to feel safe and move about campus, go to class, study. It has ripple effects, potentially on their friends.” Ryan explained previously that safety is always a primary concern for him, thus the ability to feel safe on campus is also important.

Many participants then said that the student body and/or campus community took precedence next. Monica talked about how this can include both student and staff interests.

But I would also argue that it was the community's interest. This goes back to the help of the bias education advisory council. The students on that council were so embarrassed that seniors could be leaving our institution with that mindset; that we didn’t have anything in our curriculum, or their time on our campus, that broadened their horizons or opened up their eyes to the importance of diversity and equity and inclusion. And so we were really trying to put the community's best interest in the forefront. But we were certainly catering to the faculty.

Ryan also included the extended campus community, including parents, in this interest group.

African American students are going home and telling their parents too. I believe this may have been the incident that started us communicating directly with parents when things like this happen on campus. There is a built in channel for the community through email, among the Big Sands State community. There is a built in channel for the media to reach out to the local town community. But if I am a parent who lives in [another town], I am not a member of either of those communities and I don’t know. My kid doesn’t always tell me stuff, so how do I know? I think this started us down a path of [communicating], and I wouldn’t say we were hiding anything, I just think we were not
thoughtful. Parents are part of the community too. Anything like this we send out to the students, we send out to the parents. I think that is what put us on that path. It was clear that many of the participants thought about the interests of their campus communities and extended communities when considering how to respond.

Carol and Freddy also discussed the interest of the accused student as something they work to keep in mind when managing bias incidents. Carol explained that another interest was that of, “the students who hung the flag. It was really clear that the institution was going to protect their freedom of speech to do that, if it wasn’t a policy violation.” Freddy also talked about the interest of the accused students.

There is the interest of the party who made the error, regardless of intention. Because we cannot get so lost in crucifying, that we fail in our attempt to educate. Sometimes it is so blatant and so racist and so evil and so hurtful and so discriminatory, it's like, okay there is nothing we can do here. But we have to keep that in mind. It is uncomfortable to talk about sometimes, but I think it is necessary.

Freddy focused on the purpose of educating accused students when discussing their interests.

Similar to Freddy, Melissa also talked about educating the students, but articulated that outcome as her interest, rather than the accused students.

So that might be MY interest in making sure that they learn. Even though I know in the long run, it is in their best interest to move toward a growth mindset, toward a learning framework in having to interact with others in the world. I don’t think they would say that. Maybe in a couple years, they will look back, I had this thing happen in college, and now I am at work, and now there is this other related thing. But I don’t think they would say that today.
Melissa went on to say that student learning might also be considered the university’s interest, rather than just her own.

But the crux of it is learning. And the learning imperative is the university's interest. I don’t know that the students would identify learning as in their best interest or as something they are seeking out on their own. That is a value of the institution that I work at, and the division that I am able to serve in.

Mark also discussed the university as having an interest in the situation, as was described earlier. Ultimately, participants had many interests to consider as they navigated the management of bias incidents. Discerning whose interests took precedence in a situation caused challenges to all of the participants when navigating the management of bias incidents.

**Organizational challenges.** Another set of challenges that was discussed by participants was that of organizational challenges. One of the organizational challenges Maria described was collaboration between units. She said, “I think there is a disconnect between student affairs and diversity, so that has got to be repaired in some way, but I think that is on the leadership level, that is on the V.P. level.” Similarly, Monica described the challenge of managing all of the complexities of a situation.

It was a lot of people to manage. Typically, when you are managing a conduct process, specifically around bias, you are talking about two to four people, max. I was dealing with the faculty complainant, plus 20 other faculty members who were present. I was dealing with three sets of parents. I was dealing with a criminal investigation and citation that came from the students crossing over the yellow line, and making sure that my process wasn’t interfering with them going to court and what they were doing there.

There was a lot to manage; there were a lot of people to manage. At the same time, I was
managing the board, I was managing the appeal process, I was managing the older factors of the cases that we didn't resolve with this much attention. There were a lot of moving pieces and a lot that I had to learn about how to navigate something when it's an institutional response to it.

Trying to manage a lot of people, whether they are directly involved in the case, supporting individuals involved, or helping to respond to the situation was a clear challenge for both Monica and Maria. Melissa also talked about a similar organizational challenge, that of having an integrated response. She felt that although units may have worked together initially, the public response was not as good as it could have been.

What didn't go so well? I wouldn't call it a failure, but something that could definitely be better is, the concern was raised publicly, the resolution was not offered publicly. There is some potential damage still lingering there, of people being like, what the hell university, you were told and once again, you did nothing. We are doing things, but who knows that? And do they have a right to know that? Other things that probably could be better that were definitely influenced by me coming out of Res Life, I know them. I trust them. Could there be a more integrated response around us talking with those students together? Or formulating the exact plan together, with any other people? Probably. But I didn’t push it, I was like, I know you all got this. No big deal. But I think in a perfect situation, that would be a co-author process of response, when in this situation, that wasn’t the accurate picture to describe it is as a co-authored response.

Melissa talked about the challenge of trying to provide autonomy to others who are involved in managing a piece of the situation, and the challenges that may present.
Another organizational challenge that some participants discussed was the conversations that did or did not occur on an institutional level. As discussed earlier in the context of professional considerations, many participants attempting to manage bias response also considered free speech issues a challenge. If they decided something fell under the purview of free speech, they typically had to defend that decision to students and other staff members, especially those who felt targeted by the incident. Carol talked about the challenges of having those conversations.

I think the challenges were conversations, I think this was a success though too, the conversations that we had around free speech. Really educating people about what that means. The challenge was also being clear about what policies we had and why we had them. For lack of a policy around hanging tapestries, and what is visible from one’s room, we learned from that, we learned about wow, we really shouldn’t have stuff in their windows. People can have things in their room, but when you start to have it visible out the windows, you really are impacting everyone else on campus.

In addition to free speech conversations, Caitlin described the challenge of not having conversations among administrators about bias incidents. “We have a system for managing bias complaints, but I don’t know that it is something that we talk about as often as we should as an institution regarding what is happening.” Caitlin suggested that talking more about the incidents that are reported, as well as the systems in place to report would aid in the overall management of bias incidents.

Another organizational challenge that Monica described is the fact that some folks, mostly students on her campus, consider diversity to just be a class that can be taken for credit, rather than an integral part of the college experience.
Overall, I think that the most unfortunate part is that diversity is a few classes that students have to take in their curriculum, and not something that is weaved into their experience over the years. . . . It shows that we need to do more to make sure that we are not looking at our strategic plans, we're not looking at our curriculum and saying we need to do this, this, this, oh yeah plus diversity, but that this, this, and this has diversity weaved into it. I don't think that our students would be so challenged by these courses if it weren't, "you need to make sure before you graduate that you take two or three classes to fulfill this requirement." Most people put if off until their senior year.

Monica said that the fact students generally view diversity as just a class, provides challenges when trying to manage the incident.

Another challenge described was the lack of staff to assist in managing bias incidents. Melissa described her office’s staffing and the fact that often, she is the only person that is trained in how to handle bias situations. She talked about the necessity for cross training staff in diversity issues and addressing bias, as a way to address the challenge of not having enough staff to help manage such issues.

We all have the responsibility of doing it, but we do not all have the training and experience of doing it. Of the four who are not the admin assistant, one is a first year graduate student and so absolutely beyond capable, but probably the first time, we would do some of that together. One is brand new, just arrived at [the institution], again, completely capable, but maybe not as familiar with the expectations of who and how to communicate, so we would do that together.

Melissa felt that it was important to have many staff able to manage the response to bias, so that if she is not available, the issue can still be addressed in a timely manner.
A final organizational concern that was discussed was that of institutional politics. Monica talked about this in two ways. First, she discussed the fact that some donors were upset with the handling of the incident, and believed that the students involved should not be taken through the conduct process.

I was getting calls from three attorneys, I was getting calls from the parents, I was getting emails and letters from pretty high officials, and people saying, "my donations are on the line here." And we ignore all of that. If you really don’t want to be a donor because someone is held accountable, then your money is not the money that we are necessarily looking for.

Monica takes a straightforward approach by ignoring the pressure from donors, and is supported by her superiors in doing so. Monica also described a previous situation in which members of a fraternity had screamed at a gay, White, faculty member and his partner, calling them “queers” from a rooftop. Members of the same fraternity then perpetrated the bias incident against the Black faculty member, causing the first faculty member to become very upset.

So the other piece of politics in play was a White gay man who had a serious offense from a student happen to him last semester, then watched the faculty come to the defense of a Black straight man, who also had this slur used toward him. But a number of faculty members were there supporting him; it seemed like there was a better institutional response because there was a hearing, there was this letter that went out to the community.

The first faculty member felt discriminated against by the institution because he was gay, when in reality, Greek Life decided to handle that situation internally, against the wishes of Monica. The last piece of politics Monica described was her office being excluded from the process of
choosing a commencement speaker, which resulted in a student from the incident against the White, gay faculty member being chosen as the commencement speaker.

Actually, the person who committed the bias incident against him ended up being our commencement speaker that year, because there was no track record, because that student wasn’t charged. You want to talk about politics, that did not play out very well. It looked like we were not supportive of the queer community. We use "queer community" on our campus, but those students were using it as a slur. We totally recognized that the students were using it as a slur. It looked like we weren't being inclusive and caring of that community, but immediately addressed a race issue on campus and responded to it in a different way. So we had a ton of politics at play.

Monica discussed how multiple political issues could make it difficult to respond to bias incidents, as well as make it difficult to appear that she as a SSAO cares about all people equally. Organizational issues in general provided some of the greatest challenges to SSAOs as they tried to manage the response to bias.

Social media. A final challenge to managing bias incident response discussed by participants was that of social media. Many participants described social media as how the bias incident either occurred, or knowledge of it spread, causing them challenges in trying to get in front of the situation. Carol described it as a reason to respond as quickly as possible.

That’s just it. That is why you get at it really quickly now, because it will just take off, whether you want it to or not. There’s no more one to one. We used to be able to handle incidents, if it happened on a floor or in one residence hall, it was fairly contained, we would address it, deal with it, make sure the students knew where we were coming from. Now it can go campus wide or worldwide pretty quickly.
Maria also described how the spread of information on social media could cause many more students to be impacted than an incident that occurs and is not posted on social media. We look at how broad the impact was. How many students saw it? How many people saw it? How did it impact the every day of MTC? In this case, we don't believe many people saw it [in person initially]. Maybe a handful. Of course it goes on Reddit, then you have hundreds of students read about it.

Mark described the positive aspect of social media, saying, “With social media, that makes it much easier to learn quickly.” He views it as a tool to help administrators learn about incidents they might not normally have heard about.

Another aspect of social media is that it changes how the institution has to respond. Carol talked about how social media, combined with the national conversations around race, have changed how she responds.

I find it interesting that our conversation about the Confederate flag, of how different we would handle it today because of the national climate than we did then. And social media, I think those two things, what is happening nationally and in the world, and social media has really changed how we have to think and respond to these issues.

Similarly, Freddy talked about his view that social media provides a forum for the public to find someone guilty of something without ever hearing all sides to the issue. Freddy talked about a situation in which a well known professional in student affairs was accused of sexual assault by another well known professional via social media.

I am sure today, you have probably seen . . . the male professional in our field and what happened [to them] because of what you do. . . . When you look at how many people have jumped on the bandwagon about this, both on his side and on the woman’s side,
months later, he has now come back with three independent reviews and a police
dismissal saying "I am not wrong. This organization had an independent body, the
school had an independent body, and the police all say this didn’t happen." If we follow
the law, then based on the law, he has not been proven guilty. So if that happens based
on the law, he should be able to get a job tomorrow based on his experience and
qualifications, right or wrong? So now, what's going to happen when he starts looking
for jobs? Are people going to say, "this is what I find when I Google him; this person
tweeted this or that." So what happens? There will be others who say, “I don’t want her
in my organization when she looks for a job." Social media has exacerbated that far
beyond ten years ago. So these people both have issues of bias that they are going to
carry with them everywhere they go, because now it lives in digital perpetuity.

Freddy emphasized the fact that bias incidents and the descriptions about them on social media
will exist forever, which can cause others to have preconceived notions about those involved.
Ultimately, social media provides many challenges for SSAOs when trying to respond to bias
incidents.

**Preparation for Bias Incident Response**

The fifth theme that emerged from the participants’ interviews was that of preparation for
bias incident response. Participants discussed both the actual preparation they had received to
manage bias incidents, as well as what they felt ideal preparation would be for those who will
have to manage bias incidents someday.

**Actual preparation.** Throughout the interviews, participants discussed what preparation
they had received to manage bias incidents. The number one thing participants felt prepared
them to manage bias incidents was actual on-the-job experience. Monica said that for her, this began as early as her assistantship during her master’s program.

I covered it a lot in my practicum and assistantship experiences. We were actually kind of trained in a sense, when bias occurs, here's how you need to talk to your staff about it, here's how you need to talk to your students about it, and this is what the conduct process looks like for us. I don't remember the conduct process being as strong honestly, but I do remember at least talking about, these are bias incidents, and here is how to help your staff work through what their community might be experiencing.

Freddy said for him, it was something talked about during his time as a resident assistant. “I am going back to when I was an RA, this is stuff we dealt with in RA training 20 years ago.” Mark on the other hand felt that he did not learn how to manage bias incidents until he was a mid-level professional.

Probably for a good 7-10 years, having been the dean of students at another institution and associate dean of students there, where those issues of bias tend to be resolved, and the leadership is brought out from the dean of students in my mind or in my experience. I have had many of them, different campuses deal with them differently.

Similar to Mark, Carol attributed all of her experience along the way to becoming a vice president as preparing her for dealing with bias incidents.

I think all of the incidents that I have ever been involved in have taught me something along the way. I learned a great deal. I think a lot of what you do as a senior student affairs officer is you do learn anyway by experience. You learn by handling certain things and debriefing it, and kind of learning on the job. And calling other colleagues about how have you handled this, asking for advice, making sure you have colleagues on
campus you can look to for advice and support. I think in that way, you learn quickly as a senior student affairs officer that you want to get as many different opinions around the table before you make a decision, and make sure you understand what you are walking into.

Carol talked about learning as you go, and really trying to hone your management skills with each new incident.

Many other participants talked about specific aspects of their work along the way that prepared them. Maria described her previous role as director of student conduct.

When I became the chief student conduct officer, those things fell in my lap and I did a lot of training and professional development then, because things were coming to conduct. Then of course because of my role on the behavioral intervention team, then when I moved to assistant V.P. and associate V.P., I really have been the person dealing with student behavior.

Carol also talked about her time in student conduct as preparation.

I should also say, when I did my doctoral program, I was a hearing officer for the campus, and I also worked in the conduct office while also learning about laws and higher ed, so I think the two were good in terms of giving me a good background in terms of policy situations and conduct and how to respond to student behavior. In my classroom, I am learning about free speech, the right to assemble, the right to expression. I think the two really gave me a good education.

Monica also credited her student conduct experience as preparation to manage bias incidents.

Being a conduct officer for almost ten years now, just the experience and seeing these things over time across institutions, serving at higher levels in commissions and things of
that nature, to understand how these things are impacting our field and our campuses across the board. I think that those are the things that help contribute.

It was clear that many participants saw a connection between managing student conduct cases and managing bias.

Caitlin and Ryan also compared managing bias to managing other campus crises, and said that learning how to manage crisis response helped with their preparation to manage bias response. Ryan described his experiences managing campus crises.

You can argue it is campus crisis, so how do you respond to campus crises? Certainly me being the poster child for hurricane response; I wasn’t by any stretch the lead on dealing with a major hurricane, I had a small piece of our recovery. It's not like we conduct tabletop exercises or role-play in a meeting if this happens. I have not heard of people doing it in a case like this. But I really do think it is experience, time, and sharing. I think everything builds on itself.

Caitlin also talked about crisis response and credited her time observing others managing crises as preparing her to do the same.

I think deans learn how to manage crisis by watching [other] deans manage crises as they move through. By watching deans when I was a student, a grad student and as a new professional has streamed into what I do now. Looking to mentors and supervisors to model the way.

Both individuals said that managing bias and managing crisis are very similar in nature.

Some of the participants also discussed their doctoral programs as a piece of what prepared them to manage bias incidents. Carol described the academic component of her doctoral program.
When I went and got my Ph.D., my concentration was on legal issues in multicultural affairs, so I feel like the legal classes I took gave me a very nice and strong grounding. Kind of my own take on bias incidents and what that means, and free speech and how you weigh all those things out.

Freddy mentioned one diversity class in his doctoral program that discussed bias, but not how to manage it. Ryan also credited his doctoral program as preparing him to manage bias incidents, but said the topic was not specifically covered.

No. It’s not to suggest that there was a specific class or event at my Ph.D. institution that prepared me for this. It was the overall doctorate experience that is about perseverance, even a little bit of quick thinking and ambiguity. You will most of the time, not have all the answers you want in order to make a decision, but you have to act. That is the degree piece.

There were other participants who held doctorates, but did not mention those programs as preparing them to manage bias.

Additionally, nearly all of the participants felt there was no preparation whatsoever in their master’s programs to manage bias incidents. When asked if this topic was covered, Caitlin responded, “Absolutely not. I'm not even sure managing crises was covered in my graduate courses.” Maria also said that it was not covered and that, “There was nothing spoken about bias or microaggressions. This was a long time ago, but no conversation about that at all.” In fact, every participant, when asked if they had taken a class that covered, even as a part of it, bias management in their graduate programs, answered no.

Some participants credited other professional development opportunities they have had as helping to prepare them to manage bias incidents. These opportunities involved training by
national associations, including presentations at national conferences, bystander training, microaggression training through their campus, morality training, restorative justice training, training about free speech issues, and the Social Justice Training Institute, sponsored by ACPA, College Student Educators International. All of the participants though relayed that these trainings were few and far between, and that none of them fully prepared them to manage bias incidents.

**Ideal preparation.** As part of the interview process, participants were asked to talk about what preparation they felt would be ideal for someone who would be managing bias incidents in the future. Four of the participants felt that training in, and reflection on one’s own identity development is key for being prepared to manage bias response. Caitlin said the following.

> When I went to graduate school, we didn’t talk about identity development, particularly for students of color, or first-generation students, and I think that understanding that is critical to the work if you’re going to work with a diverse population.

She felt as though learning about how others develop within their social identities is a key piece of knowing how to manage bias incident response. Monica felt that not only should identity development be incorporated into one’s graduate preparation program, but also that there should be explicit discussions about bias and the impact it has on one’s identity.

> I would say that there is a lot of good literature out there now on bias, on microaggressions. It's interesting because the media is nitpicking right now at the overuse of microaggressions and things of that nature, and how we are kind of coddling our students and taking away freedom of expression and freedom of speech. I have even heard the argument that we are policing offensive behaviors. We don’t want people to
ever be offended. But I think that within various programs, if there could just be an introduction as to what is bias. . . . So even if you can't weave it into the entire program or course, you could weave it into a project when you are focusing on identity or learning about student development theory. How do you talk about how bias has impacted you and your growth and how you grapple with your identity and intersectionality and things of that nature? More specifically, there could just be training on, this is what bias looks like, and here is how you can address it. If you are faculty, here's how you work on it in a classroom. If you are a student affairs practitioner, here's what you can do to educate your staff and make sure that you have policies and systems in place to address bias on your campus.

Identity development and impacts on identity development were one of the pieces identified as ideal preparation.

Other participants discussed various additional components that could be incorporated into graduate preparation programs. Maria said, “Students identify themselves differently. I think those things should be talked about. And certainly crisis response, mental health, race, ethnicity, any bias, should be critical pieces of preparatory programs.” Mark and Ryan also agreed that crisis response should be incorporated into master’s programs. Carol also identified legal training as a necessary component of master’s programs.

I am a firm believer in that student affairs professionals should take legal issues in higher ed, as many courses as they can on that. I think given where we are today with not only bias incidents, but with the Clery Act and Title IX, they really need to have a firm understanding of the law, federal law as well as local law.
Melissa also suggested ensuring that counseling classes are incorporated into graduate programs, as she believed they provide good training for managing bias incidents. She said, “I would look for some counseling theory, because counseling theory really has some cultural competence and expectations and evaluations for practitioners.” Lisa really summed up that the graduate school experience should be training for future professionals to understand multiple perspectives.

I think what we are preparing for in student affairs is that you have to look at things from all angles. What does the law say? What are the values of the institution? What are the written and unwritten codes? These are things you ought to take into account in determining a course of action. I think in discussions/examination of coursework, you learn to take all those kinds of things into account.

It was clear that all of the participants felt there were components that could be added to graduate preparation programs to help prepare future professionals for managing bias.

In addition to refining graduate preparation programs, some participants talked about further professional development and training that would be helpful to those who have already gone through a graduate program, but need some additional preparation. Freddy discussed training institutes and books to read, specifically, “Jamie Washington’s social justice institute . . . or David Jones’ social justice training. Kathy Obear has a great book everyone should read too.” Caitlin also felt that professional organizations could play a role in training individuals to manage bias incidents. “I think professional organizations have an opportunity to offer something really valuable to new professionals who are working with diverse students.” Melissa also suggested that professionals in student affairs look at what other professions outside of higher education are doing, and try to learn from them.
I would also, this is sacrilege in some places, because it's looking outside of student affairs, but to me, community organizing has so much to offer us that I think we are afraid of. They deal with conflict resolution all the time. And if we do that with bias as conflict, let's look to the people who are literally using the masses and using communities to self define what conflict resolution could be. So I would encourage, whether training in a professional sense or academic preparation program, I would really ask people to look outside of higher ed case law and outside of higher ed counseling centers to take a broader look at conflict resolution and community organizing.

These professional development opportunities, along with changes to graduate preparation programs and self-work on identity development are all pieces of what the participants described as ideal preparation for managing bias incidents.

**Post-Response Reflection**

The last theme to emerge from the interviews was that of post-response reflection. Participants described the necessity of reflection on what had occurred, and talked about the growth that came from reflecting on the situation, realizations they had about managing bias incidents, ideas about how they would respond differently in the future, and strategies to prevent future bias incidents.

**Professional and personal growth.** As a result of reflecting on the bias incidents they managed, participants discovered the personal and professional growth that had occurred while managing bias incidents. In terms of professional growth, many participants felt that the experience of managing bias incidents would have a positive impact on their careers. Ryan talked about how managing bias incidents helped him add knowledge and experience to his skill set.
It's a matter of not if, but when, something happens. So this experience now goes in the tool kit, with the hurricane that hit and the hazing incidents. These are my three big ones, in trying to manage situations, bias incidents, or campus crisis in general on a go forward basis. . . . It's not like the noose incidents were a 48-hour didn’t go home and shower sort of deal. It was long, the next day was long, but I was still able to manage and still take care of me. . . . So what I am saying is I am prepared for whatever comes.

Monica talked about how managing bias incidents had a positive impact on her relationships with faculty, which in turn has helped her be able to educate more students.

If anything, it made me more popular with the faculty! More of them knew me after that, and trusted my work, and one of the great things about that incident is by having the opportunity to educate them about a process that they didn’t understand, more of them invite me into their classrooms now. I do multiple sessions for faculty on our campus now, specifically around bias and microaggressions and bystander intervention. I had a faculty member last week call me a "leading expert" in bystander intervention. . . . If anything, that incident helped me gain some credibility and respect from the faculty, which will ultimately help my career.

These experiences helped Monica and Ryan prepare for other incidents that might arise during their career.

Other participants did not necessarily feel that managing bias incidents had a positive career impact, but did realize how the mismanagement of a bias incident could have a negative impact on their career. Mark talked about this.

I don’t see an impact. I do see though that if I look at bias related incidents in general, I think that if folks in leadership positions aren’t taking the incidents that happen seriously,
it could have an impact on their career path. Because I think our institutions will not tolerate individuals in leadership positions that are not using their positions of privilege as leaders to advocate for those who feel marginalized.

Melissa also recognized the risk that comes to one’s career with managing bias incidents.

I see the risk, not living under a rock, there are very real complications. My husband worries about it a lot. Because I know that I never actually have to make a decision on my own at the institution I am right now, and I know that I work hard every day to center others' experiences, I think that risk feels smaller to me than maybe some of my colleagues. I also have put some of my own errors into public light before, so I think that kind of showed other people that I am human. . . . But even day-to-day, I just try to be honest about, I "f” up sometimes, so you should not worry when we are doing this all the time. That is different of course, if it goes to a court of law. It is real, and I don’t take it lightly. But I have also come to a place where I know that risk is a part of what I do by being present with other people while we live our lives. If I can use that as healthy motivation, that is great. Sometimes it manifests as anxiety. But if you do it well, it can manifest as motivation to continue to be thoughtful and do right by people.

Similarly, Maria recognized that students are always watching, and that she needs to continue to be transparent.

I don't know if it will have any impact on my career path, because this was a minor incident. It does remind me that the role I am in, and hopefully in my future role as a V.P. is that I have to be thinking about these issues, [and] have swift responses because of the way social media is. Students look for that response and look for that support. The more transparency, the better.
These participants grew professionally as they learned that the mismanagement of bias incidents not only harms those who are targeted, but could potentially harm their career as well.

Some participants also talked about the personal growth that occurred, particularly around recognizing their privilege and becoming more aware of different perspectives. Melissa described this.

I have been in this role, and in this office, this was a new office for me, for 19 months. I have noticed a couple of things that are definitely related. There are things that I anticipated, and there are things I did not anticipate. One of the things that I anticipated was that I am going to have to work my tail off to show some of these students that I am here for them, and I am not just another, "I am one of the good White people." It has been hard. I notice that our groups or individual students who have done the most self-reflection and the most formal study of queer theory, intersectionality, to put in all in the basket, those who have done the most study on this, have the most hesitation. Which is good, that is the whole point. [To] experience the world with a sense of critical questioning.

Melissa went on to talk about how she works to mitigate this by empowering the students of color and encouraging them to challenge her, and to only give her respect if she earns it. Freddy discussed that he has become more aware of different perspectives and has learned to be a better listener.

I think it also helps me understand the perspective of the different parties involved, and I think it had made me a better listener because there have been things that I personally didn’t understand, but professionally, it was like, oh okay I get this.
Personal growth and professional growth both came as a result of participants reflecting on the incidents they had managed.

**Realizations about managing bias.** As participants talked about post-incident reflection, many discussed the realizations they have had as a result of managing bias incidents. One of these realizations that Melissa discussed was to think more critically about what the goal of bias response really is. She said the following.

The only thing that is left floating around is I feel like as administrators in higher education, we tend to rely on the system to feed itself, and that is not how bias works. So if the goal of a bias response protocol is just to know what's happening, then we are kind of missing the mark. We know some things that are happening. If the goal is to cover our asses about the things that we do know, we are good on that. But if our goal in this process is to change the culture of bias in our communities, we are way off. Things like bystander training, having a critical lens on orientation or student program experiences, all of that has to be examined if that third piece is our goal.

Similar to Melissa, Carol said that managing bias incidents has led her to think more deeply about the purposes of higher education.

People will have different beliefs. There is not a policy against people with different beliefs, and you don’t want to make a policy about that. A college campus wants to be a place that everybody comes here and has really different opinions and beliefs and thoughts, and that is what a college campus is. So we try very hard to protect that, because the minute you don’t protect that, what good is a higher education? That is why we want students here, so they get a real sense of the diversity around them, different opinions, and learn how to critically think about things.
Carol felt that managing bias incidents can help to emphasize that purpose, but if freedom of speech is not protected in the process, then that purpose may not be fulfilled.

Another realization that Lisa and Caitlin discussed is the recognition that it is only a few students who actually perpetrate bias incidents. Caitlin said this.

I tell people all the time, the majority of my day is working with the 1% of the population who absolutely cannot manage themselves. I make sure my staff starts with students that are doing well when we start with students of concern, because we need to remember that there are 2700 students here, and we are working with 40 of them. So there are 2660 students who are doing perfectly fine and managing themselves.

Caitlin did add the caveat that there are microaggressions happening more frequently that may not come to the attention of administrators. Lisa talked about the realization that there is more to an accused student than just this one incident, and realizing that as the SSAO, she still has to interact with and support that student.

We’ve had several of them happen that I’ve been responsible for and now I can’t remember any of them. It’s funny, that’s how my work tends to go, I do the thing and then I’m on to the next. I forget, so that when I see students again, I don’t have all this in my head.

She said that this does not mean that she does not hold students accountable for their actions, but that she does not want this incident impacting the rest of her relationship as an administrator with these students.

Many participants described the lessons they realize they have learned from managing bias incidents. One of the lessons that many participants talked about was the need to focus on the humanity of the situation. Lisa said the following.
I think just a reminder that no matter what my reaction is, what is more important is the experience of the person who went through the situation. And while that doesn’t necessarily mean that that person has rights to be able to take any certain action, it does mean that that person deserves to be listened to and understood, and action has to be considered, especially if it is something that is going to improve the community.

Mark expressed similar sentiments by saying, “I think the biggest picture takeaways was obviously you have to not be an administrator and you have to be a human being. Because these are human issues, you have to bring your most empathetic self.” Freddy said that the human empathy must also extend to the accused student. “Give an earnest effort to understand the perspective of the aggressor or the person who made the error.” The lesson of remembering that this is a human issue and not just an administrative process was one that the participants realized during their reflection.

Other lessons that participants discussed were remembering to be educational in the process and realizing that the situation is always complex and no two situations are alike. They emphasized the need for communication and collaboration, but also said that those should not take priority over a timely response. They said that they realized the need to always do their homework, including working on their own identity development and trying to keep their own biases in check. Lastly, they talked about the need to focus on the impact of the behavior versus the intent of the behavior, while also remembering to follow the policies and laws that are in place. Overall, participants had many realizations when reflecting on bias incidents they had managed.

**Ways they would respond differently.** Another component that arose during participants’ post-incident reflections were ways they would respond differently in the future.
One thing that Maria and Mark said they would do differently would be to have a quicker response. Maria talked about this throughout her interview.

It was a Sunday night when it happened. By the time the report was done and we met, it took a little bit longer than I think it should have; it would have been nice had it been that day. But it went out within 24 hours. But it was good feedback. So we went back and said the next time, we'll need to move this along. We have a new V.P., she has only been with us for 18 months. So she took a little longer I think in editing what we had sent. Just a little longer than I think it needed to. But most of the feedback we got from the students was really good. It's just our LGBTQIA community was a little tenuous. "Why isn’t this already out? I hope that it isn’t taking longer because our community is involved." That was not the case, it just got a little slow there in the editing.

Maria’s primary concern for the timeliness of the response was because she wanted to ensure that the targeted community felt that the institution was addressing issues of bias against them. Mark also talked about this in his interview.

I think you have to work, putting on my administrator hat, you have to move quickly. Often times, by the time it gets to someone like me, it’s many hours old. There are challenges and stories and meaning that people make from, we haven’t heard from the president, we haven’t heard from the vice president. And so that is the downside of us communicating and being so open, is that folks expect to hear from us, and they expect to hear from us quickly. And I think that is probably a good standard of response in general.

Both Maria and Mark felt that a quick response was something that could be done better.
Carol said that if she could go back and do anything differently, she would have done more to educate students about the history and meaning of the confederate flag, doing so particularly through open forums and additional conversations.

I might have done more, now with today’s climate, especially around the confederate flag. I think we’d have to handle it very differently than we did. We probably would have to really get at the open forum idea and hold more venues. I bet the president would have responded a lot quicker in terms of asking those students to take it down. If we didn’t have the policy and happened now, it would still have to be [taken down] by request. And I think there would be very little tolerance for that in today’s day and age.

Similarly, Monica said that she would have had more conversations about the institution’s values.

And I think that after seeing something go so terribly wrong the semester before, I learned that communication is key when it comes to talking about our values. If we say that we value something, we have to demonstrate that, but we also have to communicate with people how we are being sure that we are holding true to that.

Education around the bias and the values of the institution were something that these participants felt could have been improved. Participants did not communicate the values of the institution in the responses that were issued. However, often these communications came from individuals one level higher than the participants (i.e., the president, the SSAO) or were drafted by marketing and communications officials; thus, participants may not have had direct input into the statement that was released. Generally, participants felt that the incidents were handled well, although in some cases, after post-incident reflection, there were things that could have been improved.
**Strategies to prevent bias.** The last piece to arise from post-incident reflection was strategies to prevent bias in the future. Some participants, after reflecting on the situation, acknowledged various ways that they might work to prevent bias on their campuses. One of the primary strategies discussed was the education of students. Freddy talked about the educational component that was instituted after a bias incident on his campus.

We have an education program that we conduct with our students, especially in the first year, on reducing bias language and we have a pre-test with their predisposition to . . . stand up to certain words in the classroom or social setting. Then we take them through this education, and at the other end we measure it. At the end of the year, we do a post-test and say, "When did you face these things, and did you engage and talk about this?" It is really neat. Our dean of students’ office manages that. It has really kind of shifted the discourse of students to say, "Not only am I empowered to deal with it, but we're talking about this in first-year seminar, [and] I am hearing it from the dean of students,” so there is a lot of support out there.

Lisa talked about an educational program that was put in place for students wanting to run for leadership positions.

If students want to run for Student Council, they are supposed to submit their intent to run, and go through a training that talks about the policies for running. That would have included etiquette, sensitivity, thinking about campaigning, that kind of thing.

Mark also talked about education, both an online component, and including remarks during orientation.

We are putting together an online course about diversity and inclusion for our first-year students to take. We are going to shift soon to leader training, we are going to build
issues of inclusion into our organization review process, in particular, for fraternities and sororities. Many different things along those lines to really set the tone. . . . I am the person who welcomes the students at orientation, so I want to change my remarks. I have an opportunity, on the very first day, when they are listening, to talk about what we expect of them out in the community. We have been doing that, but we may need to shift our messaging a little bit more to how we expect them to treat each other and value each other.

These participants felt that education of students was essential in working to prevent future bias incidents.

In addition to educating students, Freddy also talked about the need to educate faculty and staff around issues of bias.

I think the most important part is the faculty engagement, because it's not just about the policy. It's really about the training and going into that faculty engagement, because that stuff that happens in the classroom goes unchecked. If the student feels like, "I can't respond to this because I don’t want the professor to jerk around with my grade," that is a bit of a challenge. So I think, on our campus, we have our faculty in our first-year seminar, they are some of the co-educators in this bias language stuff, so I think it's approached very carefully. At my last institution, the faculty [members] were not in that at all. There were a couple on the committee, but that was all.

Sometimes, this education includes educating all members of the campus community about the institutional values. Carol said the following.
We also have a values statement for the university. . . . There is often misunderstanding, students think of it as a policy rather than our values statement, so they get confused often when bias incidents happen, that the institution cannot do more.

She said that although administrators may not be able to enforce the values statement as they would a code of conduct policy, having a values statement is important in working to reduce bias as it lets members and prospective members of the community know what is expected of them.

Lastly, Ryan talked about ensuring that the institution is committed to diversity and inclusion in a sustainable way as a strategy to prevent bias. He said that this includes having a chief diversity officer, a bias response team, and an advisory council on equity and inclusion. Ryan asserted that if an institution does not have some of these key components, he would question whether they are actually committed to ending bias on campus.

Overall, participants emphasized the need for post-incident reflection. Many of the participants viewed post-incident reflection as a necessary part of bias response, and described the benefits that had arisen from that reflection period. These included professional and personal growth, realizing issues about bias management they had not previously acknowledged, learning what they could do differently in the future, and creating strategies to prevent future occurrences of bias.

Summary

The interviews that were conducted provided a great deal of data. After engaging in a coding process, six themes emerged that helped to answer the research questions posed at the beginning of this study. Chapter V includes a discussion of the findings, implications for practice and future research, and limitations of this study.
CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this research study was to understand how SSAOs have managed the institutional response to bias on their campuses. In this chapter, a summary of the findings is presented and examined in light of the literature that exists on crisis management and bias incidents. Additionally, implications for practice and future research are discussed. The limitations of the study and conclusion are presented last.

Discussion of Findings

Nine SSAOs were interviewed either in person or via Skype or Google Hangouts. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were sent to each participant to review for accuracy. I then coded the data using an open coding method while examining the transcripts in detail. Next, I grouped the initial codes by using axial codes, which then led to the development of six themes. I then shared the themes with participants as they related to their interview, as a way to conduct member checking. I also shared the transcripts, codes, and themes with a peer debriefer who helped me examine the themes in relation to the transcripts and ensured that I had thought through various aspects of the data. The six themes that emerged were bias response process, outcomes of bias response, response considerations, challenges in bias incident response, preparation for bias incident response, and post-response reflection. A summary of these themes and discussion of them is presented in the following section.

Bias Response Process

The bias response process can best be described as an evolving process, both in terms of how bias incidents are reported and who is involved in managing incidents. Participants described a variety of ways that incidents were reported. One way that administrators found out about bias incidents was through a formal reporting system. This is consistent with the formal
reporting systems described by Chappell-Williams (2007). However, only one participant discussed their institution’s formal reporting system. While it is possible other institutions have formal reporting systems and processes in place, the lack of discussion may suggest that institutions do not actually follow these processes, or that they are so ingrained in the participants’ ways of operating, they do not think of bias response as a formal process. When examining this dynamic through the lens of the theoretical framework, crisis response best practices dictate that campuses should have a formal plan in place to address crisis when it occurs. Therefore, the same should be true for bias response, and the lack of a plan may indicate that administrators do not believe that bias incidents can have the same types of effects that a more traditional crisis can have.

Another method that administrators found out about bias incidents was from social media. This makes sense given that incidents of bias and hate have increased on social media, particularly in anonymous forums (Tynes et al., 2013). When thinking about how incidents are reported in the context of crisis response, it is important to remember that bias incidents, like crises, can rapidly escalate, demanding a more complex response. This can be especially true for those incidents that occur on social media. A timely response is key to working to prevent the intensification of these incidents. The methods of learning about bias incidents were both formal and informal, and varied on the individual campus. The varied ways that participants described indicated that a formal plan to respond to bias incidents may not exist at their institutions. When examined through the lens of crisis response, this is counterintuitive because crisis response best practices dictate that campuses should always have a specific plan in place to respond to crisis incidents. This does not mean that the plan cannot be adapted based on the individual situation, but working without a plan may hinder the efficiency and effectiveness of the response.
Participants also described a number of different ways in which they investigated and responded to bias complaints. Most commonly, participants described a bias response team of some kind. This may suggest that Thompson’s (2014) estimation that approximately 20% of institutions had a bias response task force of some kind is underestimated; however, the current study examined just nine campuses. It also suggests that New’s (2016) assertion that campuses are moving away from bias response teams may not be as common as he would have the reader believe. The person in charge of deciding how to handle a case varied among participants, sometimes even varying among experiences an individual participant had. Sometimes it was the SSAO who decided who was going to lead the response, and sometimes it was a conversation among the bias response team that determined the office that would take the lead. In a situation that Monica described, it depended upon who was notified of the incident in the first place. This was why it could appear that a situation was handled for one targeted group but not for another. When viewed through the theoretical framework of crisis response, this model of having a bias response team, with a clear and constant plan of action for the response is consistent with Barton’s (1991) recommendation that a crisis response plan be in place, as well as Paterson’s (2006) recommendation that a crisis response team be formed. Crisis response teams generally consist of a predetermined group of individuals who gather in a specific location to determine the plan of action when a crisis occurs. Campuses should institute this same method for bias incident response. Tailored to the campus as appropriate, recommendations for this team include the most senior student affairs officer, the campus diversity officer, the director of housing and residence life, the director of student conduct, the director of the counseling center, the chief of police or public safety, a representative from the president’s office, a member of the communications and marketing team, legal counsel, and representatives from the targeted group
or groups. This core group of individuals represent the various skills and areas that participants described as being involved in the response to bias incidents and would likely be necessary in formulating a response to any bias incident that occurred. These teams were at the core of many of the participants’ experiences managing bias response.

It was also clear that bias response processes involve a number of constituents across campus. These constituents almost always included members of the student conduct office, which is consistent with Paterson and Kibler’s (1998) recommendations. The participants talked about the teams working together across institutional boundaries to provide a holistic response to bias incidents. This is consistent with LePeau et al.’s (2016) findings that bias response teams are effective when they work together to create connections that will benefit the targeted student. Additionally, the SSAO was almost always involved in the response at some level, which is consistent with the theoretical framework of crisis management and Kuk’s (2009) recommendation that the SSAO be involved in managing campus crisis. Many participants also described the president as being involved in the response to bias. This is consistent with the case that Kingkade (2015) described at the University of Oklahoma. I strongly recommend that presidents of institutions work to educate themselves about issues of social justice, equity, and inclusion, as well as bias incidents and the skills needed to respond to them. It is unrealistic to assume that any one individual will be fully equipped to respond to all bias incidents on their own. I suggest that presidents hire individuals to lead the division of student affairs who do have these skills and then allow them to put together teams that are trained and ready to respond to these incidents as they arise. Participants described many different ways that bias was investigated, and the response to bias was formulated.
The first research question posed was how did SSAOs manage the institutional response to a bias incident that occurred within the student population? Learning how the bias response process worked from participants helped to provide an answer. By learning that the reporting mechanisms were dependent on the individual campus, and that often, they utilized bias response teams involving a variety of constituents, and sometimes the president, a better understanding of how SSAOs managed the response to bias was gained.

**Outcomes of Bias Response**

The outcomes of bias response also vary widely depending on the institution, the person in charge of the response, and the policies and procedures an institution has in place. Participants described a number of potential outcomes, which were grouped into short-term responses and long-term responses. One short-term response that was discussed was communication with the campus community, whether via a letter to the community, an open forum, or a town hall meeting. This is consistent with previous responses at other institutions in which a high level official sent out a message to the campus community or an open forum was held (Jaschik, 2016; Long & Lee, 2015). Generally, administrators described these communications as having a positive impact, which is contrary to Thorne’s (2014) assertion that these conversations are often staged and not helpful. It was surprising that more participants did not frame these communications in terms of institutional values, although it also was unclear whether these individuals had sole responsibility for writing the communications and what the exact content of these communications entailed. When examined through the theoretical framework of crisis response, it makes sense that communication was important to many SSAOs as Bechler (1995) argued that communication is key in resolving crisis.
Other short-term responses included interim measures, which are consistent with the response at the University of Oklahoma, or charging students with a violation of the student code of conduct, which is consistent with the situation that occurred at Oberlin College (Kingkade, 2015; Thorne, 2014). Often, institutions that utilized the conduct process did so for concurrent violations such as vandalism, which is consistent with Napier’s (1991) conclusion that an institution faces possible legal ramifications if they try to regulate speech, but they can regulate other behaviors that violate institutional policies. Some participants also talked about utilizing restorative justice, with a goal of making right the wrongs that had occurred. This may help to alleviate the stress symptoms and feelings of a hostile environment that students of color experience when faced with discrimination and bias (Smith et al., 2007). Lastly, administrators described fighting speech with speech, encouraging students, faculty and staff to speak out against speech they found offensive. This is consistent with the response at UCLA to a tirade against an Asian student, as well as the response to anti-Semitism at San Francisco State University (Associated Press, 2011; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2006). This engagement in a critical dialogue is also consistent with the recommendations from Pavela (2006). The theoretical framework of crisis response helps us to understand that timely decisions in the form of short-term responses are necessary when crisis arise (Billings, Milburn, & Schaalman, 1980).

Participants also discussed long-term responses that were implemented as the result of the bias response process. One of the common long-term responses was the creation of a chief diversity officer position, which may help to address issues of intersectionality in identities, as recommended by Choi et al. (2013). Another long-term response for some participants after an initial bias incident was the creation of a bias response team, which is consistent with LePeau et al.’s findings (2016). Some participants also integrated diversity into the curriculum, working to
create systematic changes over time as recommended by Thorne (2014). Similarly, some campuses also chose to implement social justice education, sometimes for the perpetrator, and sometimes for the entire campus. This is consistent with the actions taken at Middlebury College, which reflected a long-term commitment to diversity and social justice education (Linder et al., 2013). The long-term responses described by participants also varied widely depending on the specific situations.

The first research question examined in this study was how do SSAOs manage the institutional response to a bias incident that occurred within the student population? Learning about the various outcomes of the bias response process also helped to answer the first research question. It became clear that different SSAOs manage the response to bias in various ways and achieve different outcomes. These outcomes often depend on who is at the table when determining a response, as well as the specific situations of the incident at hand and the policies that are or are not in place.

**Response Considerations**

Participants in the study also discussed the various considerations they take into account when considering how to respond to bias incidents. One of the considerations discussed was that of free speech. Participants felt that it was important to consider whether the incident fell under the protections of free speech before formulating a response. Some participants wanted to ensure that they protected free speech, which was consistent with recommendations to foster environments in which debate can occur by ensuring an institutional commitment to free speech (Calleros, 1995; Miller, Guida, Smith, Ferguson, & Medina, 2017; Wexler, 2016). This commitment to free speech also reflects an understand of previous legal cases, such as *Christian
Legal Society Chapter of the University of California v. Martinez which ruled that the content of speech could not be regulated if an institution had created a forum for such speech to occur.

The commitment to free speech extended across both public and private institutions. Five participants worked at public institutions and four at private institutions, however all nine participants were committed to protecting the free speech rights of students. Although it is clear that the constitution views public and private institutions differently in terms of what First Amendment protections administrators need to afford students, participants at private institutions worked to maintain the free speech protections of students even when not legally required to do so. This may be a reflection of a particular ethos that exists among student affairs professionals or a commitment to providing a true liberal arts education where the public forum is protected at all costs. Participants understood that their institutions could face legal ramifications if they infringed on a student’s right to free speech, which was reflective of Gilroy’s (2008) observation that many campus speech codes have been struck down due to free speech restrictions. When describing the responses to bias incident, participants only addressed bias incidents through the institution’s code of conduct if the incident occurred in tandem with a separate code of conduct violation, and no participant discussed a hate speech code. This indicates that participants acted in accordance with previous court decisions, such as Doe v. University of Michigan and DeJohn v. Temple University, which demonstrated that hate speech codes are generally overbroad and therefore unconstitutional.

Additionally, participants recognized that even though a student may have the right to say whatever they please, they would also likely face social ramifications for speech that was offensive. This was consistent with the facts of the David Cash case at UC Berkeley, as well as Gay’s (2015) assertion that freedom of speech was subject to scrutiny by others (Shah, 1998).
Many participants used free speech protections as a way to motivate other students to speak out against the bias incident, which is consistent with Thorne’s (2014) recommendation to empower students. All of the participants recognized that free speech included many nuances. Many talked about balancing the protection of free speech with upholding the values of the university community, which is consistent with Miller et al.’s (2017) findings that administrators who led bias response teams wanted to respect the First Amendment while also supporting those who have experienced bias.

Participants also discussed the considerations of safety of the community, wanting to ensure that all felt safe on campus. Additionally, some SSAOs recognized when an incident was moving toward a more severe situation that jeopardized the safety of individuals, and wanted to prevent hate crimes against people from occurring (FBI, 2015). This consideration is consistent with the theoretical framework of crisis response as Paterson (2006) discussed the need for response teams to be concerned with safety of the community. Similar to safety, some participants also said that self-care was a concern, both that of the targeted groups and that of the staff responding to the situation. Many SSAOs recognized that their own marginalized identities may lead them to be more personally affected by the bias incidents they were managing, thus requiring them to practice extra self-care. This is consistent with Harper and Williams (2006) and their discussion of self-care as an important aspect of crisis response.

Another consideration that arose was to examine the intent versus the impact of the behavior. Participants recognized that regardless of intent, bias behavior does have an impact on the targeted individual, and the community at large. This is consistent with the findings of previous studies that indicate bias incidents can cause lower self-esteem in individuals and can disrupt the community in which they occur (Nadal et al., 2014; Schlosser & Sedlacek, 2001). In
the framework of crisis response, Harper et al. (2006) discussed the importance of managing a crisis to prevent it from reaching a level that disrupts the normal operations of the campus. This impact is not always negative, however. In the situation Melissa described, the target of the behavior did not initially recognize the behavior as bias against him. Rather, it took him some time and some prodding from others to start to see the behavior as bias. This is an example of a student of color having an initial “encounter” or an event that changes the way they look at their own identity, as described in Cross’ model of racial identity development (Cross, 1971). It is important to remember that bias behavior is perpetuated against individuals at various stages of their own identity development and may influence them in differing ways. It is also important to consider not just the effects of an incident to the physical structures on campus, which is what the crisis matrix focuses on, but to also consider the psychological and emotional effects on individual students. Although the psychological and emotional impact may be no different in a critical incident than in a disaster, if a bias incident causes widespread riots and puts a strain on the educational mission of the institution as a whole, administrators are likely to consider different actions than if the actions affect a small group of individuals. It is also important to consider that the crisis matrix does not take into account the psychological, emotional, and spiritual effects of a situation, but rather tends to focus on the infrastructure of the institution. Bias incidents are likely to affect the human psyche more often than the physical resources of the institution. The fact that there may be different responses on the part of administrators also suggests that to some extent, there is a greater value placed on property than on the human experience.

Participants with marginalized identities also discussed the accusations they have faced that they do not do enough to respond to bias against their own marginalized communities.
When considering this accusation, this may in fact be an example of bias itself, as it demonstrates a view by marginalized communities that administrators who are a part of those communities should respond in a particular way and not doing so makes them less valuable members of that community. Harper et al. (2011) found that often, students of color who were leaders faced harsher criticisms of their work ethic and professionalism simply because of their race. This may indicate that SSAOs who are part of a marginalized community experience bias from that community, even when they are working to address the bias that has already taken place.

Lastly, participants also discussed the considerations they have for the campus climate and various stakeholders, including the targeted student or group, the accused student, and the general student body. The concern for the campus climate is consistent with the findings of Tynes et al. (2013) who found that bias incidents caused negative perceptions of the campus climate among targeted students. Further, the concern for the victim and targeted group was expressed as wanting to ensure resources were given to those affected by the bias, and programs were put in place to help those students continue to feel welcome and included on campus. This was consistent with the response that Reinhardt (2013) described at Middlebury College in which programs were enacted to help targeted students cope with and recover from the bias behavior. Lastly, the concern for the accused student and their continued growth and development was consistent with Mayhew et al.’s (2016) findings that growth and development are a primary intended outcome of the college experience.

Understanding the various considerations that SSAOs took into account when developing a response also helps answer the first research question. These various considerations help us to
better understand the thought process of SSAOs while they managed bias incidents, which can give us better insight into how SSAOs managed the response to bias incidents on their campuses.

**Challenges in Bias Incident Response**

Another theme that emerged from the interviews was the challenges that arise when conducting bias response. Participants described many challenges they have faced including those of deciding whose interests took precedence in the response. Participants talked about the interests of the targeted person(s) or group, the student body as a whole, the accused student, the institution, and their own. The consideration of various interests was similar in nature to the considerations that are discussed above, such as safety of the community, self-care of individuals, the impact on the community, and the accused student’s free speech and legal rights.

Participants also discussed the organizational challenges that have occurred, specifically related to collaboration between units and efforts to manage multiple people involved in the response. These challenges persisted even when bias response teams were in place. LePeau et al. (2016) said that bias response teams function best when they work together to create connections, but they did not provide insights for combatting the challenges in doing so. Paterson (2006) said that crisis response plans should include a crisis response team, but also did not provide any direction about how to ensure they effectively work together. Bias response plans typically address some of these organizational issues, but may not adequately address the complexities of real-time response. Having a plan in place pre-bias incident may alleviate some of the organizational challenges described by participants by allowing various administrators on campus to know exactly what role they have in responding to the situation. Organizational challenges also included the political aspects of the organization, including obtaining the human resources necessary to address bias incidents. Participants described both of these challenges as
having a negative impact on the effectiveness of the organization to address bias issues. From a crisis management theoretical framework, Mandell and Zacker (1997) argued that a crisis has a negative impact on the overall function of the organization, however this study suggests that if the organization does not function well in the first place, the under-functioning could lead to a crisis.

Another challenge participants faced was the belief of some students that diversity is just a class. Administrators worked to eliminate this challenge by providing education where they could and working to create systematic changes when possible. This is consistent with Thorne’s (2014) assertion that responses to bias need to be deeper than surface level acknowledgements of the bias behavior and should include systematic changes when necessary. Pavela (2006) also supported this as he called for managers of bias to engage in critical dialogue about the incident.

Participants also described challenges presented by social media, particularly the fact that bias incidents can spread more quickly when captured by social media, in turn impacting many more students than a face-to-face incident. This is consistent with previous studies indicating that victims can be victimized multiple times when the bias occurs on social media and that often, targeted groups are subjected to bias more frequently and for longer periods of time (Gin et al., 2017; Tynes et al., 2013). Zdziarski et al., (2007) discussed the evolution of a crisis, detailing how every crisis event begins as a critical incident but may evolve to a campus emergency, and then a disaster. Prolonged and more frequent exposure may be a catalyst for this evolution to occur, causing what was once just a critical incident to rise to the level of a campus emergency, or even a disaster, impacting not only the campus community, but also the surrounding community in a significant way.
Further, the time in which administrators need to respond to a bias incident on social media has been drastically reduced. Although some participants emphasized responding to incidents within 24 hours, that may be too long of a time frame to issue a response. Rather, administrators should work to get some sort of initial communication out as quickly as possible and then continue to update the campus community periodically in the hours and days to come. Additionally, perpetrators of bias via social media may have to deal with the consequences of their actions in perpetuity as often, the digital record of this bias remains well beyond the initial posting. This may have negative consequences on how others perceive the perpetrator, even if they were not convicted of a crime or any wrongdoing.

Gaining an understanding of the challenges that SSAOs face when managing bias incidents helped to answer the first two research questions regarding how SSAOs manage the institutional response to bias and how SSAOs were prepared to respond to a bias incident. By knowing the challenges that occurred, I was better able to understand how SSAOs managed the response to bias, often by needing to address not only the actual incident, but also other barriers that were placed in their way when implementing a response. Likewise, I was also able to understand some of the lessons that SSAOs have learned from managing bias incidents as they talked about the frequent challenges that have occurred and how they have responded to these challenges.

**Preparation for Bias Incident Response**

A fifth theme that emerged from the interviews was that of preparation for bias incident response. Participants discussed how they were prepared to manage bias incident response, if at all. Those that felt they had some preparation prior to managing bias response generally gained this from their doctoral programs, specifically from the law course they took. A knowledge of
past legal precedent, as well as the requirements by the law to address such issues while maintaining students’ constitutional rights can be imparted upon professionals through such a course. Participants also claimed that there was no preparation to manage bias incidents in their master’s programs. However, many of the skills described as ideally needed to be prepared to manage bias incidents are included in many masters and doctoral programs (e.g., communication skills, helping and counseling skills, social justice training, knowledge of higher education law) so there may be a disconnect for professionals in combining these skills to form holistic responses to bias. It is also possible that not all of these topics were addressed in graduate programs when these SSAOs were enrolled. For example, a clear focus on multiculturalism and social justice may not have been included in the curriculum 20 years ago. These SSAOs may have completed degrees before the existence or widespread use of social media (e.g., Twitter began in 2006). It is extremely difficult for any program of study to anticipate the needs of professionals twenty or thirty years post-graduation, and the participants’ concerns may be a reflection of that fact. Indeed, there is a gap in the literature when it comes to graduate programs providing training to manage bias incidents, leading me to believe that the vast majority of master’s programs may not cover bias incident management as a specific topic, even though they do provide the skills necessary to respond to bias incidents.

The majority of participants felt that the only preparation they had received to manage bias incidents came from actually managing bias incidents, essentially saying they had no training in how to manage a bias incident prior to managing the first one they encountered. The Southern Poverty Law Center (2016) reported that there were over 1,000 reported bias incidents following the 2016 presidential election, which is a higher number than is typical, so many professionals are likely to gain this on-the-job experience. Additionally, there has been a focus
on the effectiveness of bias response teams in managing bias incidents, particularly when it comes to regulating speech that may be biased but is also protected by the First Amendment (New, 2016). Administrators who have the opportunity to work with these bias response teams will likely pick up some skills and tactics about how to balance those competing interests, which may serve them well as they manage future incidents.

Some participants did say that their time working in student conduct prepared them to manage bias incidents. This is consistent with Paterson and Kibler’s (1998) assertion that the conduct system is designed to educate students about behavior while ensuring the safety of the campus community. If these are the skills gained from working in student conduct, then a logical conclusion is that the professional conduct roles prepare people to work toward the same goals in bias response management. Additionally, some participants credited their management of other crises on college campuses as preparing them to manage bias incidents. They viewed bias incidents as versions of campus crisis, requiring the same type of skills and knowledge to lead a response. Kuk (2009) argued that managing response to crisis is the responsibility of SSAOs, thus leading me to agree that bias response management is also the responsibility of SSAOs.

Participants also discussed what they considered to be ideal preparation to manage bias incidents. This preparation involved infusing key components into the master’s level curriculum, including identity development, mental health and counseling skills, law, and social justice training, along with explicit training about bias incident management. Many programs do teach identity development theory, as the growth and development of students is an intended outcome of college (Mayhew et al., 2016). Additionally, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) does include student development theory, counseling and helping
skills, law in higher education, and social justice in the curriculum requirements for master’s programs (2015). CAS also includes under the social justice and inclusion standard that master’s programs should teach how to effectively address bias incidents affecting campus communities. Even though these specific competencies are part of the CAS standards, participants suggested that programs should emphasize how students’ development can be hindered by bias incidents, and that programs should encourage students to more frequently examine their own identity development. Graduate preparation programs incorporating mental health and counseling makes sense in light of the literature describing victims of microaggressions and bias experiencing lower self-esteem and battle fatigue (Nadal et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2007). Similarly, the recommendations to incorporate law and social justice into graduate preparation programs is consistent with the arguments that regulating speech can be problematic due to constitutional rights to freedom of speech and the need to create systematic changes to oppressive systems and structures respectively (Pavela, 2006; Thorne, 2014). However, many programs do include these areas in the curriculum but may not specifically relate them directly to bias incidents CAS requires that master’s preparation programs include in the curriculum the history of higher education and student affairs, student development theory, organization and administration of student affairs, instruction about individual and group strategies, and supervised practice (2015). Within these areas, the curriculum should include a discussion of legal issues, the history of marginalized populations in higher education, theories of minority student development, and education about diverse students and the unique issues they face. Programs should work to ensure that the multiple competencies that assist in the management of bias incidents be intentionally tied together to help students understand how they might utilize these competencies to effectively address bias incidents on campuses.
In addition to suggestions for graduate preparation programs, participants also suggested that professional associations and organizations take a role in educating and training professionals of all levels. Again, there are wide gaps in the literature about what preparation is ideal when it comes to preparing future professionals to manage bias incidents, thus leading me to believe that these suggestions from participants are a step in the right direction. Professional associations have a real opportunity to fill in the gaps in training that exist, either because graduate preparation programs have not done well in connecting the individual pieces of training to the holistic management of bias incidents, or because new challenges continue to emerge that cannot be anticipated by graduate preparation programs.

The third and fourth research questions examined what SSAOs learned from responding to bias incidents and their recommendations for training future professionals. The discussion of actual preparation and ideal preparation to manage bias incident response helped to answer these questions. Participants descriptions of the preparation, or lack of preparation, they received helps me to better understand how they were prepared to manage bias incidents. Their beliefs about what ideal preparation would look like helps me to understand what recommendations they have for training future professionals to manage bias incidents.

**Post-Response Reflection**

The last theme that emerged from the interviews was that of post-response reflection. Participants talked about a variety of realizations as a result of post-response reflection. One of these realizations was the impact that managing bias incidents can have on one’s career, both positive and negative. One positive impact discussed was the positive change in relationships with others at the institution, particularly faculty. LePeau et al. (2016) concluded that bias response teams are more effective when connections are made across functional areas, however
this finding also indicates that the relationship may also be reversed and connections are more likely to be made when the response to bias is effective. Additionally, it makes sense that participants would realize there could be negative impact to their career when examining this through the crisis response framework. Zdziarski et al., (2007) described the three levels of campus crisis, and concluded that if crisis is not handled properly in a lower level, it can become a larger crisis. When a crisis becomes more widespread, observers may conclude that the person or people leading the response are ill informed or ineffective; this can have a negative effect on their careers. A prime example of this occurred at the University of Missouri, where in 2015, the campus had several bias incidents occur over a period of seven months (Izadi, 2015b). These situations all began as critical incidents, but due to the lack of acknowledgement and resolution from administrators, students began to protest and call for the firing of high-level administrators. This demonstrated the evolution that Zdziarski et al., said could happen if critical incidents are not addressed early and effectively. Ultimately, in the Missouri situation, the president and chancellor resigned, but only after one student went on a hunger strike, the football team said they would stop playing, and legislators called for the president’s resignation (Izadi, 2015b). Post-incident reflection in this case could have helped administrators understand that the issues had not been resolved, thus allowing them to continue to work to address the incidents and try to prevent the evolution that was about to occur.

Another result of post-incident reflection was the need to be transparent during the response process. In crisis management, communication is important and a key to resolving the crisis (Bechler, 1995). This included being transparent with one’s self and being aware of one’s privileges and understanding of different perspectives. Linder et al. (2013) described a continuing commitment to diversity and breaking down oppressive systems at Middlebury
Colleges as the result of a bias incident response. Therefore, if professionals are committing to this type of action on their campuses, they need to also model this action in their personal lives. This personal commitment to diversity and inclusion is closely related to thinking critically about the goals of the bias response process, and more broadly, of higher education as a whole. Thorne (2014) asserted that bias response processes should have the intent of creating systematic change, thus reflection on whether the process is really achieving that goal is appropriate.

Participants also described their continued desire to empower students, while focusing on all persons’ humanity. Pavela (2006) believed that encouraging students to create change and engage in critical dialogue was a necessary function of administrators when responding to bias incidents, thus supporting participants’ desire to do the same. Ultimately, participants agreed that post-response reflection was critically important to their understanding of how to manage future bias incidents and to discern what lessons they learned from their previous management. When considering crisis management, Harper and Williams (2006) also stated that reflection was an important component, thus leading me to believe that it is equally important when it comes to bias incident management.

The third research question posed was what did SSAOs learn about responding to bias incidents that occurred within the student population. The fourth research question posed was what recommendations do SSAOs have for training professionals in student affairs to manage bias incident response. Ultimately, the reflection that participants engaged in post-incident response and the realizations they had helped me to answer these questions. The reflections offered generous insights into what lessons SSAOs learned from managing bias incident response. They also provided a further understanding of what recommendations SSAOs have for training professionals in student affairs to manage bias incidents.
Crisis Response as Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this study was crisis response. Zdziarski et al., (2007) described crisis as a matrix, with a variety of factors being considered in determining how a crisis is defined. This matrix helped me to understand how participants talked about bias response and helped to frame the incidents discussed, especially in terms of the levels of crisis that were described by Zdziarski et al., (2007). It became clear however that this matrix might not be fully functional as a way for conceptualizing bias incidents, as often there is a lot of nuance in incidents that can be defined as critical incidents. Based on this study, I recommend a revision of the crisis matrix to include more sublevels under a critical incident. These sublevels should include a consideration of the number of individuals affected, whether the incident occurs in-person or via social media, whether there is continued and repeated exposure to the incident, and the degree to which administrators respond to the incident. Additionally, the matrix should include some consideration of the various ways that a bias incident may affect the campus. The matrix already considers the effect on infrastructure, but should also include some consideration of the emotional, psychological, spiritual, and developmental effects that a bias incident has on individuals. A revision of the crisis response matrix would help administrators better understand the holistic effects that bias may have on the campus community and would assist them in formulating better responses to the bias incidents.

Implications for Practice

This study shed light on how SSAOs managed bias incidents at postsecondary institutions, and what lessons they learned from managing bias incidents. It also provided insight into how SSAOs were prepared to manage bias incidents and what they felt would be ideal
preparation for managing such incidents. These findings provide some implications for practice in the field.

It was clear that bias response processes varied across institutions, both the ways that administrators learned about bias and who was involved in determining the response to bias. When thinking about bias response through the theoretical framework of crisis response, having a response plan in place is one of the keys to success (Barton, 1991). Therefore, one implication of the study is that administrators should develop formal bias reporting systems, as well as a set plan of who will be involved in the response and how the response will be decided upon when they learn about the incident. The literature also suggests that bias response teams can be effective, if implemented in specific ways that strive to create connections across units (LePeau et al., 2016). Although it is important that bias response teams remain reflexive and allow individuals with content expertise to be brought in depending on the situation, a second implication is that a core team of professionals should be gathered together into a bias response team, thus providing consistency and stability across cases.

In addition to response processes being different across institutions, the outcomes of the bias response process also varied across institutions. Kuk (2009) described SSAOs as individuals who have a wide scope of responsibility and broad decision-making power. With that responsibility comes some knowledge of how to make broad decisions, including gathering all of the available facts. A third implication of the study is that administrators who are responsible for managing the response to bias should consider all of their options when determining what responses to implement. It was clear that a one-size-fits-all approach is not effective or practical. Rather, administrators must keep in mind that they likely have options when it comes to implementing a response, and they should consider both the short-term
response and the long-term response to an incident. They should also work to create responses that are not one-off in nature, but rather responses that address the systematic oppression and injustice that exists on college campuses.

SSAOs have myriad considerations they take into account when developing a response to bias. Learning about these considerations helps direct future practice. A fourth implication of the study is that administrators have competing considerations to account for when formulating the response to bias incidents. They must carefully weigh the safety and security of all students on their campus. At the same time administrators must remain mindful of the free speech rights of the accused student, and also the impact of the bias behavior on the targeted person(s) and/or group, as this can be a difficult balancing act and has many nuances to consider (Miller et al., 2017). At the same time, SSAOs should practice self-care, and encourage their staff and students to do the same, as this has been shown to help heal wounds that have been caused (Harper & Williams, 2006). The implication here is that although it would be ideal for SSAOs to have a prioritized checklist of considerations they should account for, they often need to think about all of them very quickly and make the best decision possible. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the SSAO to ensure they are up to date on the most recent legal cases, student development theories, and research about the impact of bias incidents so that when the time comes, they can make the best decision possible with the information they have available.

The challenges that SSAOs face when managing bias response provide a fifth and sixth implication for practice. The fifth implication is that SSAOs must understand the organizational environment in which they are operating. If SSAOs have a solid grasp on the political environment, the organizational hierarchy, the existing relationships within the organization, and the culture of the organization, they will be better equipped to address any organizational
challenges that may occur during the bias response process and better equipped to work together to address bias (LePeau et al., 2016). The sixth implication is that SSAOs must familiarize themselves with the social media culture. Bias incidents are becoming more prevalent in the social media landscape, and the effects of bias on targeted populations are magnified when the bias takes place online (Gin et al., 2017; Tynes et al., 2013). If SSAOs are not aware of and stay up to date on the social media applications their students use on a regular basis, they will likely be ill equipped to even understand the bias incidents that are taking place, let alone to respond to such incidents.

As a result of the discussion of preparation to manage bias incidents, both actual and ideal, a seventh and eighth implication for practice arise. The seventh implication is that graduate preparation programs need to include a specific, required element of the curriculum that focuses on teaching students about bias, microaggressions, and bias incident management on college campuses. This element is already incorporated into the CAS standards for master’s preparation programs, however programs need to do a better job of helping students pull all of the pieces together so they will be better prepared to respond to bias incidents. Experiential learning occurs through assistantships and internships that prepare and train students how to advise students on their academic progress, how to plan and implement social activities, and how to manage housing units. Further, there is training in the classroom around student development theory, identity development, the history of student affairs and higher education, and sometimes counseling techniques and skills. Yet we do not specifically train students on how to manage bias incidents or respond to crisis unless it occurs in the course of their job duties. One could argue that bias incidents have deeper and longer lasting effects on students than the other functions mentioned, so professionals should be trained in how to respond (Smith et al., 2007).
It is important to note that although programs can make improvements in helping students learn how to manage the response to bias incidents, professionals may not actually need to utilize these skills until years or decades after their master’s, or even their doctoral programs, thus putting responsibility on the practitioners to stay current on the best practices surrounding bias response. The eighth implication is that institutions and professional associations alike need to offer continuing education about bias incident management. Bias incidents are constantly evolving in nature, frequency, and mode of transmission (Gin et al., 2017; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). Professionals should be given ample opportunity to learn about the best practices surrounding the management of such incidents, as well as the chance to refresh the skills they may have learned in their graduate programs.

The discussion about post-incident reflection was rich, and provided insight into answering the last two research questions. It also provided a ninth and tenth implication for practice. The ninth implication is that professionals who manage bias incidents must make it a priority to engage in post-incident reflection. This is a critical piece in evaluating how well the incident was managed, learning what deficits exist in one’s own skill set to manage incidents, examining one’s own self-care, discovering what can be done better the next time, and communicating the assessment to those involved (Bechler, 1995; Harper & Williams, 2006). I also suggest that professionals develop a formal after action report to be used each and every time that a bias incident occurs, thus creating some sort of documentation for them to recall their reflections. The tenth implication is that professionals need to critically examine the methods for responding to bias, in order to ensure that they are designed in such a way that will address the oppressive structures that exist in institutions of higher education. Critical evaluation and dialogue is a skill that is just as important for professionals to learn and practice as it is for our
students (Pavela, 2006). Simply responding to bias incidents in order to quiet criticisms, make people feel better, and positively impact one’s career does a disservice to marginalized populations. Rather, SSAOs need to continuously challenge the oppressive structures and examine all bias incidents and bias incident responses through a critical lens, so that real change can be made and future occurrences prevented.

**Implications for Future Research**

The purpose of this study was to better understand how SSAOs manage the response to bias at postsecondary institutions. Although research exists on crisis response, defining bias, and the impact of bias on targeted populations, very little research exists on understanding the inner workings of bias reporting and response on college campuses. This current study offers a starting point to thinking about the management of bias incidents, and provides a starting place from which to draw future research.

First, in depth case studies of single bias incidents could be performed. This research utilized a general inductive approach to try to understand how SSAOs manage the response to bias from the perspective of nine SSAOs. According to Merriam (1988), “a case study is an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group” (p. 9). The case study methodology allows for a deep understanding of single cases within the context they are bounded by which can be useful when examining rich questions (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2013; Jones et al., 2014). Performing in depth examinations that collect multiple data points of a single case could really deepen our understanding of how bias incidents are managed. Case studies could allow a multitude of perspectives surrounding a single case to be examined.
Second, the findings surrounding actual preparation and ideal preparation to manage bias incidents raised some questions for me. This general inductive study had a relatively small number of participants (nine), all of who claimed they had no training in bias incident management during their master’s program. Although I have no doubt that experience is true for them, and likely for many professionals of their generation, it is worthwhile to study current graduate preparation curricula to discover whether bias incident management is being taught, either in whole or in the components discussed earlier. It may be beneficial to replicate this study in ten to twenty years, when current graduate students have become SSAOs to see if they are benefiting from the training that is now incorporated in many masters and doctoral programs, or if like the participants in this study, they feel they were not prepared adequately to manage bias incidents. This could also take the form of a longitudinal study that follows current professionals as they progress in the field, with a goal of understanding how they manage bias incident response earlier in their career versus later in their career.

Further, it would be useful to understand the viewpoints of the faculty members and why faculty chose to incorporate this in their specific curriculum or why they choose not to. This could be accomplished by developing a mixed methods study that contains a quantitative component to assess whether bias incident management is being included in various curricula, and then a qualitative component to dig deeper into a sampling of both institutions that have included bias incident management and those that have not (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010). This would allow us to better understand what types of preparation are actually occurring in current master’s programs.

The findings from this study alluded to the experience of victims of bias throughout the various themes, but always from the perception of the SSAOs. Another possible study would be
to conduct a phenomenological study of victims of bias that occurs at a postsecondary institution, with the goal of understanding what shared essences exist, if any, in relation to how the incidents against them were managed (Creswell, 2013). This could in turn help to inform the practice of SSAOs, especially as they work to be victim centered and to remove oppressive systems on college campuses.

Other possible future studies could include examining the involvement of presidents of institutions in the response to bias incidents. Participants in this study indicated that many times, their president was involved in some way or another, and a detailed study about when and how presidents get involved would be worthwhile. It would also be helpful to study issues of litigation around bias incident response, and better understand the circumstances that have precipitated litigation as well as the outcomes of those proceedings. Another study that may be of interest is examining bias incident response in the contexts of private versus public institutions. The current study did not explicitly examine institutional type, thus allowing for a future study that compares and contrasts the response to bias at various institutional types. Finally, a study of community organizers and how they respond to bias incidents in their respective organizations could provide some important lessons that may be transferrable to the management of bias incident response in higher education.

**Limitations of the Study**

With any research study, there are limitations that affect the outcomes. The limitations in this study were related to the methodological design, particularly the change in method due to lack of artifacts, participant interviews, and transferability.
Change in Method

Initially this study was designed as a collective case study, with the goal of creating a deep understanding of each individual case and then comparing findings across cases to better understand how SSAOs manage bias incident response. A necessary component of case study is the collection of multiple data points, including but not limited to interviews, internal documents, police reports and newspaper articles (Merriam, 1988). This study was designed to collect all of those items for each case; however, during the interviews with each participant, it became clear that in the vast majority of cases, those documents did not exist. In the two cases in which they did exist, they did not shed any light on how SSAOs made decisions about managing the bias response, but rather were the letters that were sent to the campus community. After consultation with my advisor, the decision was made to frame the study as a general inductive study, which summarizes raw data (in this case, interviews) utilizing codes and themes and then makes connections between the data and the research objectives (Thomas, 2006). This change in qualitative method did not change the data collection or data analysis process as was proposed, but rather allowed the study to proceed utilizing single data points in the form of interviews.

Participant Interviews

A second limitation has to do with the participant interviews that occurred. Three participant interviews were conducted face-to-face and six participant interviews were conducted via Skype or Google Hangouts. While the use of video technology was an option approved in my original proposal with the hope that visual cues would not be lost, there were still difficulties with this method. In three of the interviews, the internet connection was not great and the video conference froze at least one time, necessitating the interview to be paused while trying to re-call the participant. This led to some participants have lapses in their thought process, which may
have influenced the information shared. However, I was still able to gather rich data from the video interviews.

Transferability

A third limitation of the study is that it may not be highly transferrable. In the later interviews, data largely supported prior themes and did not introduce radically different ideas, yet I cannot claim I reached data saturation. Participants were selected to represent a range of institutional types and social identities, yet the results are still the experiences of these nine participants alone. The data shared here should help readers judge the transferability of these findings to other settings.

Conclusion

Throughout the interviews, participants described their experiences managing bias response. The processes they engaged in were much more varied that I would have originally hypothesized, and the considerations they took into account were broader than I would have guessed. Having worked in student conduct, I expected there to be a wide variety of outcomes of the response process if participants truly were working to educate students, and this was reflected in their interviews. I also expected the participants to have encountered challenges, particularly around social media, which was also reflected.

Participants generally described being prepared to manage bias incidents by previously managing bias incidents, which raises concerns about how as a profession, we must better train individuals for this important function. Similarly, the reflections they had from managing bias incidents were instrumental for many of them in adjusting their management of bias incidents moving forward, yet none of the participants have written about the lessons they learned or utilized these lessons to train professionals under their purview about managing bias incidents.
The purpose of this study was to better understand the experiences of SSAOs as they manage bias incident response at postsecondary institutions. Participants described this responsibility as one that could have significant positive or negative effects on their career, as well as significant effects on those involved in the incident, yet they generally felt confident in how they responded and did not feel they would change those responses if they could. Participants learned a great deal from reflecting on how they managed these incidents, and generally discussed that the purpose of responding to these incidents was to break down oppressive systems and structures. Working to end oppression on college campuses is a primary goal for SSAOs who are responsible for managing bias response.
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APPENDIX A. HSRB APPROVAL LETTER

DATE: February 2, 2016
TO: Howard Gonyer
FROM: Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board
PROJECT TITLE: [843473-2] An Examination of Bias Incident Response at Postsecondary Institutions
SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: January 31, 2016
EXPIRATION DATE: January 11, 2017
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review
REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is available as a published Board Document in the Review Details page. You must use the approved version of the consent document when obtaining consent from participants. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure.

You have been approved to enroll 15 participants. If you wish to enroll additional participants you must seek approval from the HSRB.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on January 11, 2017. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 419-372-7716 or hsrb@bgusu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence regarding this project.
Dear Colleagues,

As a Ph.D. student at Bowling Green State University in the Higher Education Administration program, I am conducting a study regarding the management by senior student affairs officers of bias incidents on college and university campuses. Your name came to my attention either through a colleague or through a media source, as it seems you may currently be, or in the past have been responsible for managing the response to a bias-incident at a postsecondary institution. As such, I would like to offer you the opportunity to participate in my study.

If you agree to participate in my research study, the next step in this process will be an individual interview of approximately 60-120 minutes in length. During this interview, I will be asking questions that focus on your experience managing bias incidents on-campus, as well as your preparation to manage these incidents and the lessons you have learned from doing so. The information gathered is for research purposes. The interview is going to be recorded digitally and transcribed. During the transcription and data analysis process, you will choose a pseudonym, which will mask your identity to protect your confidentiality.

There are several anticipated benefits of this study, though they are to the field of higher education administration and not of a personal nature. First, a gap in the literature on bias incidents, specifically the management of them, feelings of preparedness to manage them, and lessons learned from managing them, will be filled. Second, these findings will provide a resource for graduate preparation programs as they instruct future student affairs administrators, as well as current student affairs personnel as they examine their current competency levels surrounding these issues. The anticipated risks are no greater than those normally encountered in daily life.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please email me at gonyerh@bgsu.edu within two weeks. At that point, I will contact you to set-up a day and time for our interview. If you have any questions, please contact me at gonyerh@bgsu.edu or 419-601-0715 or my advisor, Dr. Maureen E. Wilson, 419-372-7382 or mewilso@bgsu.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Howard “Ardy” Gonyer
Doctoral Candidate
Higher Education and Student Affairs
Bowling Green State University
Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to you as a reminder to the previous email I sent you asking about your willingness to participate in my study. As a Ph.D. student at Bowling Green State University in the Higher Education Administration program, I am conducting a study regarding the management by senior student affairs officers of bias incidents on college and university campuses. Your name came to my attention through a colleague, as it seems you may currently be, or in the past have been responsible for managing the response to a bias-incident at a postsecondary institution. As such, I would like to offer you the opportunity to participate in my study.

If you agree to participate in my research study, the next step in this process will be an individual interview of approximately 60-90 minutes in length. During this interview, I will be asking questions that focus on your experience managing bias incidents on-campus, as well as your preparation to manage these incidents and the lessons you have learned from doing so. The information gathered is for research purposes. The interview is going to be recorded digitally and transcribed. During the transcription and data analysis process, you will choose a pseudonym, which will mask your identity to protect your confidentiality.

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Howard “Ardy” Gonyer  
Doctoral Candidate  
Higher Education and Student Affairs,  
Bowling Green State University
APPENDIX D. PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent for Senior Student Affairs Officers

**Introduction:** I, Howard “Ardy” Gonyer, am a doctoral student in the Higher Education Administration program in the Department of Higher Education and Student Affairs at Bowling Green State University. You are invited to participate in a collective case study on the management of bias incidents at postsecondary institutions by senior-level student affairs personnel. A case study is defined as “an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group” (Merriam, 1988, p.9). This research study is being conducted for my doctoral dissertation. My advisor, Dr. Maureen E. Wilson, is supervising my study.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to fill a gap in the literature on bias incidents, the experience of managing them, feelings of preparedness to manage them, and lessons learned from managing them. For the purpose of this study, a bias incident is defined as, “an act of bigotry, harassment or intimidation that can reasonably be concluded to be directed at an individual or group based on that individual's or group's actual or perceived age, color, creed, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity/presentation, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status or any combination of these factors” (Chappell-Williams, 2007, p. 36). This study may benefit current student affairs personnel as they examine and strengthen their current competency levels surrounding these issues, as well as graduate preparation programs as they instruct future student affairs administrators. This study may also benefit you as you process an incident that you have managed; your reflections may help to identify best practices for yourself and other student affairs professionals in the future. There are no direct benefits such as a monetary award for participation.

**Procedure:** I will ask you to participate in one interview, either in-person or via Skype, the duration of which will be approximately 60-120 minutes in length. There is a possibility of a second, follow-up interview to clarify information gathered from the initial interview. I anticipate a second interview would last no longer than 60 minutes. If at any time during either interview you appear or express that you are fatigued, I will offer the option to take a 10-minute break in the interview. You also have the option to discontinue the interview at any time.

During the interview, I will be asking questions that focus on your experiences managing bias incidents at postsecondary institutions. The information gathered will be used for research purposes. All interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed. Personal and identifying information will be masked to maintain confidentiality by assigning pseudonyms to all participants and their postsecondary institution. Your identity will not be revealed in any published results unless you specifically request identification. All audio files and transcripts will be saved in password protected files on my computer. These files will be kept by me for 7 years.
Additionally, there will be two follow-up contacts. In the first, you will be asked to review the initial interview transcript for accuracy and clarification. In the second, you will be asked to review the subset of the findings that are relevant to your comments. These steps are part of the member checking process and are necessary to ensure that your words, thoughts, views, and feelings have been accurately represented.

Voluntary nature: Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. You may decide to skip questions or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Deciding to participate or not will not affect your relationship with Bowling Green State University.

Confidentiality Protection: The interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed. I will keep the audio files and the electronic transcripts of the audio files on my password-protected computer that is only available to me. The audio recordings will be deleted one year after the conclusion of my research study. All hard-copy documents will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my personal home and will also be destroyed one year after the conclusion of the study. In order to maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms will be selected for your institution. In addition, I will not reveal your identity. You will create a pseudonym, and all personal identifiers will be removed from my transcripts. When I report my results, I will associate your quotations with the pseudonym that you select. I will keep a list of real names and pseudonyms on my password-protected computer that is only available to me.

Risks: The anticipated risks to you are no greater than those normally encountered in daily life. By participating in my research study, you will help me fill a void in the current literature on the management of bias incidents at colleges and universities. Your stories may encourage college and university administrators to reconsider how they manage incidents of bias on their campus, as well as how graduate programs teach students to prepare to manage incidents of bias.

Contact information: If you have any questions or comments about my research study or your participation in it, you may contact me, Howard "Ardy" Gonyer, at 419-601-0715 or gonyerh@bgsu.edu. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Maureen E. Wilson, at 419-372-7382 or mewilso@bgsu.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Review Board at 419-372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu, if you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research. Thank you for your time.

I have been informed of the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits of this study. I have had the opportunity to have all my questions answered and I have been informed that my participation is completely voluntary. I agree to participate in this research.

Participant Signature ____________________________ Date ____________________________
APPENDIX E. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introductions

- Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research.
- Review the purpose of the research.
- Review and sign the consent form.
- The interview will last for approximately 60-120 minutes and will be audio recorded.
- Responses will not be shared with anyone at your institution and your confidentiality will be maintained when the results are reported.

Beginning Questions

1. Why did you agree to sit down with me today?
2. How do you define a bias incident or believe a bias incident to be?

Bias Incident Management

1. Tell me about a single bias incident that occurred where you were responsible for managing the response.
2. What were the environmental or external circumstances surrounding this incident?
3. Did your institution have a protocol or response team in place to manage this incident?
   Can you tell me about the specifics of the protocol and/or the composition of the response team and their duties?
4. What is the scope of jurisdiction of the institution either by policy or by culture?
5. What factors about the situation played into how you chose to manage the response?
6. How did your social identities and whom you are as a person affect how you responded to the incident?
7. What was the institutional response to the incident? Were there institutional politics that came into play during this response?

8. At any point, was a communication officer and/or legal counsel consulted about this situation? What was their role in the resolution of the incident?

9. Whose interests do you believe took precedence in this situation?

**Preparation to Manage the Incident**

1. Prior to the bias incident occurring, what training or preparation did you have to manage bias incidents?

2. Had you been a part of managing a bias incident prior to this experience? Can you tell me briefly about those experiences?

3. Where did you receive your training to manage bias incidents?

**Lessons Learned**

1. What lessons did you learn from managing this bias incident?

2. What do you believe were your successes and failures in how you managed this bias incident?

3. If your institution did not have a response team or protocol in place prior, do they now? How was this developed?

4. What challenges did you face in managing this bias incident?

5. If you could do anything differently in your management of the bias incident, what would you do and why?

6. What, if any, impact do you see this incident having on your career path?

7. Was the topic of bias incidents in general or the management of them something that was covered in your graduate program(s)? If not, do you wish you had received academic
instruction concerning how to define and manage bias incidents as part of your graduate school experience?

8. What type of graduate program did you participate in?

9. What might you suggest for training other student affairs professionals, either as part of their graduate education or as continuing education?

Closing

1. Are there any official documents that you know of (e.g., police reports, executive summaries, investigative reports, press releases) that I might be able to access to better help me understand the context of this situation?

2. Is there anything else you wish to share with me in regards to this incident?

3. Would you be willing to share a copy of your resume with me?

Thank you for your time. I will be contacting you again as I write the results for further clarification and/or verification of your statements.