Development of the Appreciative Advising Success Inventory (AASI)

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Abstract

This article describes the process to develop and validate the Appreciative Advising Success Inventory (AASI). The AASI instrument is designed to measure the success of college students, as measured through correlations to student psychosocial factors (PSFs), who interact with academic advisors who are trained in applying the Appreciative Advising theory-to-practice framework. PSFs are attitudes and behaviors that influence how students think about and approach their college experience. Applying psychometric theory and instrument development methods that have been applied in similar projects, the AASI instrument can be used to improve advising practice and measure the impact of Appreciative Advising. The results from this preliminary study suggest that when academic advisors use the Appreciative Advising framework effectively, it directly influences key PSFs that then influence such student success outcomes as academic confidence, academic motivation, and intent to persist.

Keywords

Appreciative Advising, academic advising, instrument development, college student success

In reviewing the student success literature, researchers (Robbins et al., 2006; Robbins et al., 2004; Robbins et al., 2009; Schreiner, 2010, 2020; Sedlacek, 2004) have identified psychosocial factors (PSFs) as critical to college student success. PSFs are defined as attitudes and behaviors that influence how students think about and approach their college experience (Schreiner et al., 2013). An important characteristic of PSFs is that they are malleable, meaning they can be influenced through intervention (Fong et al., 2017). Given that the empirical literature shows the important connection between academic advising and college student success factors such as retention and persistence (DeGeare, 2019; Disrude, 2021; Hutson, 2010; Robinson, 2015; Shirley, 2012), the relationships between students and academic advisors likely fosters positive PSF development. Cuevas et al. (2017) suggested that advisors use the Appreciative Advising theory-to-practice framework to guide their interactions with students as an effective intervention to impact positive PSF development. Upon review of the growing Appreciative Advising empirical literature, no survey instrument currently exists that measures the effectiveness of the engagement of the Appreciative Advising framework on PSFs that have been demonstrated to influence college student success outcomes. Consequently, we developed the Appreciative Advising Success Inventory (AASI) to address this gap in the literature.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the development and performance of the Appreciative Advising Success Inventory (AASI) instrument and to explore the predictive validity between Appreciative Advising and selected PSFs that show positive correlation to student success. Our hope is that the development of the AASI will spark further research to better understand the ways in which Appreciative Advising contributes to students' development of the competencies, skills, and dispositions related to students' success in college and beyond.

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Literature Review

This review of the literature delves into the research on psychosocial factors (PSFs) that can be shaped through the relationship with an academic advisor and the specific PSFs included in this study. Additionally, the research on Appreciative Advising including its theoretical underpinnings and its' six phases is covered.

Psychosocial Factors (PSFs)

Psychosocial factors (PSFs) contribute to college student success, including such outcomes as retention, persistence to degree, satisfaction, and graduation (Bean & Eaton, 2000; Habley et al., 2012). PSFs involve attitudes and behaviors that influence how students think about and approach their college experience. For example, Robbins and colleagues (2004; 2006; 2009) have identified in several studies that PSFs including self-efficacy, self-regulation, motivation to attain academic goals and succeed academically, and being committed to college correlate to academic performance outcomes such as grade point average and persistence to degree. Furthermore, PSFs are malleable (Robbins et al., 2004; Schreiner, 2013), that is, they can be influenced by interventions. For over a decade, Schreiner (2020) and colleagues, for example, have been researching malleable PSFs as pertinent to the student success concept called thriving.

Meeting with academic advisors has the potential to influence such PSFs as self-confidence, motivation, and persistence to succeed in college and beyond. Young-Jones et al. (2013) posited, "Academic advising is at a point at which student behavior and institutionally controlled conditions meet to potentially influence student achievement" (p. 9). Not only have scholars for decades documented the important contribution academic advising has on student success (Drake, 2011; Habley, 2004; Kuh et al., 2005; Light, 2001), but in the 2017 National Student Satisfaction and Priorities Report (Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2017) students reported that academic advising is a campus experience that mattered most to them. Scholars have noted that building a relationship with an academic advisor contributes to a student's sense of belonging (Drake, 2011; Eaton, 2020) and belief that someone cares about them (Drake, 2011; Habley & McClanahan, 2004). More specifically, academic advising seems to influence a trifecta of interrelated PSFs in college students: ***self-confidence*** to handle challenges, create and attain academic and career goals, and succeed in college; ***motivation*** to get involved and exert one's best effort to academically perform, and ***persistence*** to attain their goals and dreams for their futures. Each of these PSFs will be explored in more detail next.

Self-Confidence

Self-confidence or *self-efficacy* is one's belief in one's ability to set goals, handle challenges, and succeed (Bandura, 1977). Academic self-efficacy is believed to increase student persistence to degree (Pintrich, 2003). Academic advising is documented to help increase academic self-efficacy by increasing student confidence levels more generally (Miller, 2010) and influencing confidence in planning future courses (Donaldson et al., 2016) more specifically. Furthermore, through their feedback, academic advisors "provide the student with confirmation and positive encouragement" (Elrich & Russ-Eft, 2011). Such feedback is referred to as "*micro-messaging*" (Rowe, 2008), which is believed to support and foster student confidence more broadly (Blanchard Kyte et al., 2020) as well as persistence, particularly in students of color (Jaimes, 2022). Furthermore, Burt et al. (2013) found that "perceived support from academic advising predicted the development of student self-efficacy beliefs, perhaps in relation to meeting long-term educational or career goals" (p. 51). Self-confidence or self-efficacy, therefore, is related to academic motivation.

Motivation

Academic motivation is defined as "the students' desire or interest in engaging with learning and their school experience (Hulleman et al., 2016, as cited in Koyuncuoğlu, 2021) and explains the goals that people set for themselves, and how actively they pursue those goals" (Remsing, 2013, p. 10). One popular empirically based motivation theory is *Self-Determination Theory* (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which examines the interrelated roles of competence, relatedness, and autonomy as keys to optimal functioning and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In a quantitative study by Burt et al. (2013), findings demonstrated positive correlations between advisor support and competence, relatedness, and autonomy. In their chapter entitled "Appreciative Advising: A Theory-to-Practice Framework for Putting *Self-Determination Theory* into Action," Bloom et al. (2016) posited, "The key principles of Appreciative Advising empower advisors to assist students to meet these basic psychological needs" (p. 46). More specifically, it is through the advising relationship and application of the Appreciative Advising framework, that advisors can help students build and regulate their own internal motivation, which is a key to persistence.

Persistence

Tinto (2017) defined academic persistence as "the quality that allows someone to continue in pursuit of a goal even when challenges arise" (p. 2). Importantly, Tinto emphasized, "A student has to *want* [emphasis] to persist to degree completion in order to expend considerable effort to do so" (p. 2). Graunke et al. (2006) noted, "a student's commitment to educational goals may affect the student's persistence when he or she experiences difficulties" (p. 16). Like confidence and motivation, the advising relationship seems to also contribute to students' persistence. Several research studies have demonstrated that the application of the Appreciative Advising framework has resulted in increased GPA, retention, and persistence to degree for students in academic jeopardy or on academic probation (Hutson, 2010; Kamphoff et al., 2007; Miller et al., 2019; Sanders & Hutson, 2012). Consequently, we believe that advisors who employ the Appreciative Advising framework may likely influence persistence for all students.

Appreciative Advising

In 2002, Jennifer Bloom and Nancy Archer Martin published a seminal article entitled "Incorporating Appreciative Inquiry into Academic Advising" that launched what has become known as Appreciative Advising. Bloom and Martin (2002) applied Appreciative Inquiry, an organizational development theory aligned with Positive Psychology, to the field of academic advising as a means of increasing advisor and student success. From this work, Bloom et al. (2008) developed the Appreciative Advising theory-to-practice framework, which is defined as "the intentional collaborative practice of asking generative, open-ended questions that help students optimize their educational experiences and achieve their dreams, goals, and potentials" (Appreciative Advising, n.d.). Since then, the empirical literature on Appreciative Advising, which is predominated by qualitative studies and a growing number of quantitative studies, has burgeoned (see www.fau.edu/oae/resources to reference a comprehensive compilation of empirical studies).

Theoretical Underpinnings

Appreciative Advising emerged from the field of Positive Psychology which focuses on the "the strengths that enable individuals and communities to thrive" (Positive Psychology Center, n.d.), and is informed by several theories. Most notably, Appreciative Advising was initially inspired by, and is rooted in, Appreciative Inquiry (AI), which is an organizational development model authored by David Cooperrider at Case Western Reserve University in

the 1980s. Appreciative Inquiry is defined as "the cooperative search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them…AI involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to heighten positive potential" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000, p. 10). AI is guided by key principles (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003) that guide conversations, foster capacity building, and cultivate generative learning (Mann et al., 2018). Additionally, Appreciative Advising draws on other theories, including reality therapy (Glasser, 1986, 2000), Covington's (1982) self-worth theory, Vygotsky's (1978) scaffolding model, academic hope theory (Snyder et al., 2002), and validation theory (Rendón, 1994), among others.

In *The Appreciative Advising Revolution* book, Bloom et al. (2008) added two phases (Disarm and Don't Settle) to the original four phases of Appreciative Inquiry (Discover, Dream, Design, and Deliver). The addition of the two phases sought to more fully capture the relational aspect inherent in the Appreciative Advising framework when applied to interactions between academic advisors and their students. The Appreciative Advising Theory-to-Practice framework is a "social-constructivist advising philosophy" (p. 11) and is undergirded by the Appreciative Mindset and the six phases: Disarm, Discover, Dream, Design, Deliver, and Don't Settle. Subsequently, the Appreciative Advising framework has been broadly applied within a variety of educational and non-work contexts as a means of building trusting relationships with students, staff, family, and friends.

The Appreciative Mindset

Because the Appreciative Advising framework is designed to "unleash each person's unique story and potential, the advisor must be steeped in the Appreciative Mindset" (Bloom et al., 2008, p. 27). There are six key components to the Appreciative Mindset. The first component is "caring about and believing in the potential of each student" (p. 27) and to intentionally help students leverage their strengths to reach that potential. The second component is possessing "an attitude of gratefulness" (p. 27), which is an appreciation for the opportunity to make a positive difference in the lives of the students. The third component is making a commitment to honing and refining one's professional craft of advising. The fourth component is remembering one's power, a reminder to advisors that the words they speak to students carry weight. Caring about students and being insatiably curious about their stories is the fifth component of the Appreciative Mindset. Finally, the sixth component is being culturally aware and responsive, meaning advisors/coaches "need to first explore and understand their own cultural identity…reflect on their own cultural identities and be aware of the existence of cultural norms…[and] treat everyone in a culturally sensitive manner" (Bloom et al., 2008, p. 31). The Appreciative Mindset provides a mechanism to assist advisors in intentionally shifting from a deficit-based to a strengths-based mindset to working with students.

Six Phases of Appreciative Advising

According to Bloom et al. (2008), the Appreciative Advising theory-to-practice framework is comprised of six phases, which:

> advisors intentionally use positive, active, and attentive listening and questioning strategies to build trust and rapport with students (Disarm); uncover students' strengths and skills based on their past successes (Discover); encourage and be inspired by students' stories and dreams (Dream); co-construct action plans with students to make their goals a reality (Design); support students as they carry out their plans (Deliver); and challenge both themselves and their students to do and become even better (Don't Settle) (p. 11).

The key features and recommended advisor behaviors of each phase are summarized in the subsections that follow.

Disarm. In the Disarm phase, advisors intentionally set the tone, whether virtually or in-person, for initially engaging with students to begin establishing trust and rapport (Bloom et al., 2014). The four key features of the Disarm phase include extending a warm welcome (i.e., greeting students with a genuine smile, making appropriate eye contact, being fully present), creating a safe and a comfortable environment (e.g., designing and decorating either physical or virtual office spacing; considering language and tone of pre-meeting communications), appropriately self-disclosing experiences to relate to students, and engaging in appropriate nonverbal and verbal immediacy behaviors (e.g., posture, facial expressions, verbal remarks).

Discover. The Discover phase involves asking students generative, open-ended questions that elicit student stories. Given that "stories are transformative" (Mann et al., 2018, p. 58), advisors actively listen to help students discover their strengths, abilities, and assets, as well as listen for their challenges and needs, by using such techniques as strengths-based story reconstruction (Ivey & Ivey, 2007).

Dream. During the Dream phase, advisors ask questions that invite students to imagine and create powerful images of their future professional and personal lives. Notably, advisors assist their students in making "purposeful connections between the discover and dream phases" (Bloom et al., 2014, p. 44) by identifying the congruency (or lack thereof) between students' strengths and experiences, and their vision of their future.

Design. The Design phase involves advisors collaborating with their students to co-create an action plan to help transform their dreams and goals into reality (Bloom et al., 2014). Critical to this phase is helping to "teach students [how] to make decisions" (p. 51). Advisors can assist by coaching students through a series of strategies such as "brainstorming, researching the options, and weighing the pros and cons" (p. 51) of their choices. Importantly, advisors have an opportunity to build students' confidence as they engage in the process of pursuing their dreams by giving "positive feedback and encouragement" (p. 53). Additionally, Bloom et al. (2014) warned that advisors should "be aware of the curse of knowledge" (p. 53), that is, having inherent knowledge and expertise that they forget their students may not yet possess, and to be mindful to "intentionally and thoughtfully share it" (p. 54) with them. Importantly, advisors must recognize that they are likely not going to have all of the answers and therefore, they need to build a dynamic referral network in which they can refer students to appropriate campus and community resources (Bloom et al., 2014).

Deliver. The Deliver phase draws upon motivation theory (Cofer & Apley, 1964) to "motivate and energize students to be their best" (Bloom et al., 2014, p. 63). In addition, hope theory (Snyder et al., 2002) is central to the Deliver phase, which comprises students' desired *goals*, determining the various *pathways* to achieve said goals, and students' *agency* or motivation and self-efficacy to achieve those goals. Through asking Appreciative questions and conversations, advisors can help students ignite their intrinsic motivation and build their self-confidence to deliver on their goals. During this phase, advisors should "end the conversation well" (Bloom et al., 2014, p. 64) by reviewing what was covered during the session including next steps and deadlines; encouraging students to contact them with questions, concerns, or new directions, and reiterating their confidence and belief in the student to carry out the co-created action plan. Finally, advisors are encouraged to check-in with the student and/or schedule follow-up appointments with the student to monitor progress and assist the student in making any necessary adjustments.

Don't Settle. The final phase of the Appreciative Advising theory-to-practice framework is Don't Settle, which "challenges students to do better, think differently, and push further" (Bloom et al., 2014, p. 73). Advisors employ Sanford's (1966; 1968) challenge and support model both to propel students' growth and to offer support as they encounter and navigate challenges in pursuit of their goals. Additionally, advisors operationalize Kuh et al.'s (2005) concept of *positive restlessness*, that is they provide students with "positive feedback on their accomplishments while simultaneously challenging them to achieve more" (Bloom et al., 2014, p. 73) and effectively "raise the bar" (p. 73) as appropriate to help students attain new levels of success. Notably, a key principle of this phase is "the virtuous cycle" (p. 74), which enables advisors to celebrate students' efforts and successes and further bolster students' confidence and motivation to fulfill not only their desired outcomes, but also often achieve even more than they once imagined or thought possible.

Methods

As previously stated, the purpose of this research was to develop and pilot a new quantitative tool that would measure and support future research in the field of Appreciative Advising. Moreover, it will provide the field with the means to conduct empirical studies to explore how Appreciative Advising influences student success outcomes. Undoubtedly, the opportunity to examine the framework more rigorously is an important next step in the evolution of the framework. Therefore, the development and application of the Appreciative Advising Success Inventory (AASI), is one such effort to better understand the impact of advisor's use of the Appreciative Advising framework on student success.

Research Design

This research employed a mixed methods approach to develop and introduce a valid and reliable instrument aimed to measure an academic advisor's efficacy in applying the Appreciative Advising framework in practice. The application of mixed methods in instrument development is not new (Zhou, 2019). The decision to apply a mixed methods approach is often "due to the lack of existing instruments in their field" (Zhou, 2019). Qualitative data for the development of the AASI were collected to ensure multiple perspectives were captured specifically to support item construction and examine instrument validity through formal discussions, informal discussions, and feedback (Creswell et al., 2011). Quantitative data were collected through the application of the AASI in a pilot study and were used to examine the instrument's reliability through coefficient *alpha*.

Beyond the development of the AASI, this research also examined the predictive validity of Appreciative Advising on selected PSFs. As presented in the literature review, there is promising evidence that supports the notion that the application of Appreciative Advising influences student outcomes across selected psychosocial success factors (PSFs). These PSF's show to be important characteristics/behaviors for overall success in college. Therefore, this research was guided by the following two research questions:

1. To what degree is the AASI a valid and reliable measure of the Appreciative Advising framework?
2. To what degree does Appreciative Advising predict the outcomes of selected psychosocial success factors?

Recruitment and Sample

This study sought participation from two groups: one group for the validation study and another group for the pilot. All participants in this study were recruited and identified through convenience sampling. For the validation study, we invited Appreciative Advising

Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to participate. All SMEs were doctorate-holding professionals, employed in institutions of higher education, and have adopted the Appreciative Advising framework into their own practice. In the pilot study, researchers recruited university students to respond to the AASI after meeting with their academic advisor. Potential student participants for the pilot study were asked by their academic advisor at the end of an advising appointment if they would like to participate in the study. The pilot study collected responses from students across a single institution that has provided training to their academic advisors using the Appreciative Advising framework.

Instrument Development

Although a step-by-step process to guide the development of the AASI was limited upon review of the literature, we selected Benson and Clark's (1982) four-phase instrument development model to support the development of the AASI. The four-phases included in their model were (a) planning, (b) construction, (c) quantitative evaluation, and (d) validation.

Considering that the Appreciative Advising framework is well established in the literature, we modified Benson and Clark's (1982) four-phase process and choose to examine the instrument's validity before piloting the instrument in the quantitative evaluation phase. This decision was made out of concern that the study would not obtain enough responses to conduct a confirmatory factor analysis which was the initial goal for this project.

The following subsections include key information and the procedures related to the application of Benson and Clark's (1982) four-phase model in this research. Further information related to decisions made related to the development of the AASI for each phase can be found in the results section below.

Planning

Benson and Clark (1982) considered the planning phase to be the most important of all four phases included in the instrument development process. The primary step of this phase is to identify the purpose of the instrument. To define the instrument's purpose, the authors, which consist of a professor of higher education leadership, the director of the Office of Appreciative Education, and a doctoral student with instrument development experience, convened to discuss the development of a quantitative instrument for Appreciative Advising. The second step led to the need to examine the existing body of literature to verify no other instrument of its kind has already been developed. The final step included "formulating an operational definition for the constructs to be measured" (Benson & Clark, 1982, p. 791). (Note: Because the conceptualization of Appreciative Advising (see literature review) has already been defined and recorded in the literature, we chose not to move forward with this step in the planning process.) Instead, we chose to default to the original conception by Bloom et al. (2008) for each construct included in the Appreciative Advising framework (i.e., Disarm, Discover, Dream, Design, Deliver, Don't Settle, and Appreciative Mindset).

Construction

Using the operational definitions for each of the seven constructs, we developed items based on the behaviors, actions, and dispositions an academic advisor would need to demonstrate success in said construct. Over the course of several meetings, the team finalized the set of items to move forward with the validation process in the validation phase outlined in the next section. All items were developed using the literature review from the planning phase. A final step in the construction phase included identifying the scale that will be applied to evaluate the items across the instrument.

Validation

As previously stated, we decided to move forward with the validation process before the quantitative evaluation phase out of concern of survey fatigue and to ensure all items developed in the construction phase were aligned with the operational definitions that were developed in the planning process. Considering that 58 items were developed, there was a need to examine whether those items were appropriate measures of the Appreciative Advising framework.

Next, we invited Appreciative Advising SMEs to participate in the validation study. As previously mentioned, all SMEs were doctorate-holding professionals, employed in institutions of higher education, and have adopted the Appreciative Advising framework into their practice. Items were grouped by construct and were free from any headings that would indicate the name of the construct the item was intended to measure. SMEs were asked to rank the items in order of importance and then asked to provide a rationale for why they ranked the items in the order they did. We dropped any items in which five out of six SMEs (83%) agreed that an item was least important over the other. Notably, any items that were ranked lower did not mean that those items were invalid. Rather, it meant that the items were less desirable over the other items presented to the SMEs.

Quantitative Evaluation

For the quantitative evaluation phase, we initially aimed to conduct a factor analysis to support the further examination of the Appreciative Advising framework. To examine the internal consistency or reliability of the instrument developed, we conducted a pilot study at an institution with a diverse student population located in South Florida that has trained their academic advisors on applying the Appreciative Advising framework in practice. To support data collection, participating academic advisors asked their advisees to complete the AASI following an advising session. If their advisees agreed, advisors walked them to a computer lab where we identified two computers to use for data collection and posted a set of instructions for participants to complete the survey. Data for this research were collected in the Fall 2019 semester from mid-September to mid-October after IRB approval was obtained to conduct this study.

To examine the internal consistency of the scales across the AASI, we computed for coefficient *alpha* using a lesser-known tool called AlphaMax developed by Morris (1978a; 1978b). AlphaMax was designed to maximize coefficient *alpha,* which is a limitation of the traditionally used IBM SPSS software. The benefit of AlphaMax is that it considers the Standard Error of Alpha (ASE). ASE informs the precision by which coefficient *alpha* is calculated for each of the possible subset of item combinations. The closer the ASE value is to zero, the more precise and confident a researcher can be in terms of future application of the instrument into research. The final procedure included in the validation phase was to examine how the constructs across the AASI are related through a correlation analysis.

Predictive Validity

Included in the quantitative evaluation phase for this research is to examine the predictive validity of Appreciative Advising to student success. A set of nine items related to selected psychosocial success factors (PSFs) (i.e., academic self-confidence, motivation, and persistence) were added to the final survey to provide the means to examine the predictive validity of the instrument (see Table 4). Through conducting a multiple regression test, we posited that the seven constructs of the Appreciative Advising Framework would predict PSF outcomes. In total, ten tests will be computed. Nine of those tests will examine each of the

PSF-related items independently and the tenth will examine the degree to which Appreciative Advising predicts the PSFs as a whole.

Limitations

Although this study shows promise for the development and use of an instrument to measure the effectiveness of the Appreciative Advising on student success, it is not without several limitations. The first limiting factor is sampling as outcomes represented a single institution study with a limited number of students and somewhat homogenous demographics (namely White females), which limits a fuller understanding of a more diverse sample of students across institution types. Second, the data were self-reported. Consequently, reliance is upon the participants' experience and is not verified by other means such as student academic transcripts. Third, the study design is correlational, which limits conclusions about causality and therefore, caution is needed when interpreting the study's findings.

Results

The results of this study are organized by Benson and Clark's (1982) four-phase model for instrument development that framed this work. First, we summarize the outcomes of the planning, construction, and validation phase that resulted in a complete version of the instrument that we applied in the quantitative phase. Next, we present the results from the quantitative phase that include a description of the sample followed by the results of the reliability analysis and examination of the constructs. Finally, we record our findings from an examination of Appreciative Advising predicative validity to the PSF.

Planning Phase

Key to the planning phase is to identify the purpose of the instrument being developed. The purpose of the AASI is to examine students' interactions with academic advisors trained in the Appreciative Advising framework and the relationship to student success. Additionally, we hope to provide the field with a quantitative measure of academic advisors' practice across the Appreciative Advising framework to support future empirical studies to further understanding of how Appreciative Advising influences other factors such as student success, retention, graduation, etc.

The second step in the planning process included a review of the literature to determine if an instrument for evaluating Appreciative Advising already existed. And after reviewing the literature, we concluded that the field is void of any quantitative measure to evaluate the Appreciative Advising framework. In the final step in the planning phase, we developed operational definitions for each of the seven constructs included in the AASI and we have presented this information in the literature review above.

Construction

Based on the operational definitions developed in the planning phase, we developed the initial set of items that would target responses from university students to measure their perceptions of their academic advisors' application of the Appreciative Advising framework in practice. We based this decision on the notion that although academic advisors benefit from the application of the model (Howell, 2010; Damrose-Mahlmann, 2016), the model is student-centered (Bloom, et al., 2008).

Item construction was guided by considering this question, "what does success looks like for students who meet with an academic advisor trained in the Appreciative Advising framework?" We explored this question using the literature for each construct included in the framework. Starting with our collective experience grounded in the literature, we constructed

items that were aligned to each operational definition that was established in the planning process. Through several meetings and multiple discussions, an item pool that contained 47 items resulted. The final step in the construction phase was to set the scale that would be applied to the instrument. The scale applied to the AASI was a 5-point Likert style scale as follows: (0) strongly agree, (1) somewhat agree, (2) neither agree nor disagree, (3) somewhat agree, and (4) strongly agree.

Validation

In the validation phase, the team designed a process to examine content validity and invited six Appreciative Advising SMEs to participate in the validation phase for this project. SMEs were doctorate holding practitioners from across the United States intimately familiar with the Appreciative Advising framework. Survey items were organized and constructed on Qualtrics (an online survey medium). The SMEs ranked the items by their perception of importance. The purpose of ranking the items was to reduce the number of items developed during the construction phase. An analysis of the results showed eight items that did not meet the 83% threshold. These items were dropped from the survey and then sent out a second time to the same experts to examine face validity.

SMEs were also asked to respond to an open-ended question at the end of each set of survey items that were grouped by construct to examine content validity by analyzing each SME's response to which construct they felt the set of items were evaluating. The data from the validity study revealed that all six experts agreed that the items were evaluating the construct for which they were intended to evaluate. After the validation phase was completed, the final AASI included 39 items ready for the quantitative evaluation phase.

Quantitative Evaluation

For the quantitative evaluation phase, we conducted a pilot study that collected responses to the AASI from 275 university student participants. The demographic breakdown for the sample included 52% White, 22% Hispanic or Latino, and 19% Black. Table 1 demonstrates the demographic breakdown of the sample by race compared to the University at large. Analysis of the descriptive data show that 11.3% of White students reported meeting with their academic advisor more frequently than the other groups.

Table 1

Race Comparison Between Participants and University at Large

Student Group	Sample	University
Asian / Pacific Islander	3.3%	4.4%
Black or African American	18.5%	19.8%
Hispanic or Latino	22.2%	26.9%
Native American or American Indian	0%	0.2%
White	52.4%	41.1%
Mixed	3.3%	N/A

Other characteristics of the sample included 72% Female, 27% Male, and 1% elected other as their gender identity. Moreover, 93% of the participants reported that meeting with their academic advisor is very or extremely important and 80% confirmed that they intended to graduate.

Reliability Analysis

To examine the instrument's reliability, we computed coefficient *alpha* for each of the seven constructs. Using the AlphaMax tool, we computed coefficient *alpha* and recorded the results in Table 2.

Table 2

Reliability Analysis

	M	*SD*	ASE	α [Confidence Interval]
Disarm	3.27	1.083	.017	.844 [.810, .879]
Discover	4.44	1.90	.024	.782 [.736, .828]
Dream	4.65	2.08	.027	.719 [.666,.772]
Design	5.53	2.30	.030	.692 [.634, .751]
Deliver	3.62	1.23	.024	.786 [.739, .834]
Don't Settle	4.57	1.78	.035	.655 [.587, .724]
Appreciative Mindset	6.89	2.56	.017	.829 [.795, .862]
PSFs	10.96	4.345	.007	.921 [.906, .935]

Note: Confidence intervals represent the lower and upper bound of standard error of *alpha*.

The results in Table 3 indicate that the PSF construct performed the best at .921 followed by Disarm at .844, and Appreciative Mindset at .829. Discover, Dream, and Deliver ranged from .719 to .786. The lowest coefficient *alpha* was for the Design and the Don't Settle constructs.

AASI Constructs

To examine the relationships between the constructs included in the AASI, we computed the Pearson Correlation between each construct independently. Table 3 demonstrates the results of the correlation analysis between each construct across the AASI.

The results in Table 3 show that the constructs that comprise the Appreciative Advising framework are highly correlated to one another. Conceptually, these results fit the Appreciative Advising model considering it is a process model, that is, one construct theoretically influences another. The Appreciative Mindset, the construct that undergirds the model as a whole, shows the highest correlations with the other constructs examined. Correlations between Disarm and the other six constructs show the smallest correlation compared to the other outcomes. An interesting finding is the .769 correlation between Don't Settle and Deliver. More information on how the research team interpreted these results is found in the discussion section below.

Table 3

Correlation Analysis

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Disarm	-							
Discover	.544** [.454, .623]	-						
Dream	.350** [.240, .450]	.629** [.551, .695]	-					
Design	.380** [.272, .478]	.631** [.553, .698]	.572** [.486, .647]	-				
Deliver	.436** [.344, .529]	.644** [.569, .709]	.631** [.553, .697]	.745** [.687, .794]	-			
Don't Settle	.317** [.205, .421]	.625** [.546, .692]	.588** [.504, .660]	.696** [.629, .753]	.769** [.715, 814]	-		
Appreciative Mindset	.583** [.498, .657]	.740** [.680, .789]	.674** [.603, .734]	.653** [.578, .717]	.795** [.746, .836]	.756** [.700, .803]	-	
PSFs	.476** [.377, .565]	.652** [.577, .716]	.627** [.548, .694]	.629** [.550, .696]	.728** [.666, .780]	.674** [.603, .735]	.717** [.653, .771]	-

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Predictive Validity

Through a series of multiple regression tests, we examined the predictive validity of the instrument against a set of selected PSFs that were added to the AASI. To showcase the results, we conducted 11 regression analyses all together. Ten of those looked at each of the ten PSF-related items independently (see Table 4) and the eleventh test was computed using the average score across all ten. When examining the degree to which Appreciative Advising predicts overall student success (all ten combined), we discovered that the Appreciative Advising framework accounted for 77% of the variance found in student success factors. Looking at each PSF-related item independently, *Meeting with an Academic Advisor has increased my confidence in my abilities to succeed* (74%) and *Meeting with an Academic Advisor has increased my confidence to create goals on my own* (72 %) were predicted best by the Appreciative Advising framework.

Table 4

Regression Analysis

Psychosocial Success Factor	R^2 (%)
Meeting with an Academic Advisor will be a part of my success this semester.	64.2%
Meeting with an Academic Advisor has better equipped me to handle challenges that I may face this semester.	57.1%
Meeting with an Academic Advisor has not provided me with the confidence to handle challenges that I may encounter.	34.3%
Meeting with an Academic Advisor has increased my confidence in my abilities to succeed.	74.0%
Meeting with an Academic Advisor has increased my confidence to create goals on my own.	72.2%
Meeting with an Academic Advisor will motivate me to be involved in extracurricular activities at my university and/or community.	65.8%
Meeting with an Academic Advisor will help me to stay focused on my dreams and goals.	66.8%
Meeting with an Academic Advisor has positively impacted my motivation to do my best to achieve my goals this semester.	68.4%
Meeting with an Academic Advisor will assist me in preparing for my future career and/or college goals.	64.3%

Meeting with an Academic Advisor has not provided me with the confidence to handle challenges that I may encounter, yielded the lowest result at 34%. However, given that this item used reverse scoring, the low percentage indicates that participants were attentive to the items and their wording. Among the results shown in Table 4 above, the lowest was 57%, *Meeting with an Academic Advisor has better equipped me to handle challenges that I may face this semester*. Although this result is low, there is still promise in the other results that the Appreciative Advising framework can explain well over 50% of the variance found across each of the PSFs selected to apply to this study.

Discussion

The primary focus of this study is on the development of the Appreciative Advising Success Inventory (AASI). In this section, we discuss the soundness of the instrument, the correlations between the framework concepts, and psychosocial factors (PSFs) of import.

Sound Instrument

Given that the body of literature covering Appreciative Advising is predominately conceptual and that most of the empirical research conducted to date has applied qualitative methods, this quantitative study expands the current understanding of the benefits of the Appreciative Advising framework and the impact it has on college student success. As previously mentioned, reliability and validity are the two most important factors to examine in the evaluation of an instrument. Validity being important for ensuring that the instrument is indeed measuring what it was designed to measure, and reliability is critical for researchers in terms of their confidence in that using the instrument will be effective in the research process. As indicated above, the Disarm and Appreciative Mindset constructs fared the best, reporting a coefficient *alpha* of .844 and .829 respectably. The Design phase resulted in a coefficient *alpha* much less than we would have liked at .692. Six of the constructs resulted in a coefficient *alpha* above .7.

In consideration that the literature has been void of any explicit measure of the Appreciative Advising framework, this new instrument can provide the means for researchers to examine other variables in which Appreciative Advising can benefit not only students, but also the advisors themselves and their higher education institutions. Introducing the AASI to the field of Appreciative Advising can potentially allow for future studies to measure the impact of the framework across this landscape and enable more quantitative studies that will strengthen both the theory and practice of Appreciative Advising for years to come.

Appreciative Advising Framework Correlations

Notably, given that all the correlations between each of the phases are statistically significant, the results of this study corroborate how the co-founder of Appreciative Advising often describes the model in practice as "rather than occurring in lock-step fashion, the phases tend to blend into one another" (Bloom, personal communication, May 13, 2019). The model provides a framework for establishing and building relationships. Therefore, the phases are interconnected, and the power of the framework occurs in the synergistic application of the framework. Consequently, the data reflect how the framework functions. Below we will explore several highly correlated relationships as illustrations.

Deliver and Don't Settle

The final two phases of the Appreciative Advising framework are Deliver and Don't Settle, which were significantly correlated at .769. Although Bloom et al. (2008; 2014) clearly outlined key behaviors and characteristics that demarcate each of these phases, the phases sometimes blend together in practice. As students deliver their goals, advisors are there to support them through the process and celebrate their progress. Furthermore, part of the Deliver and Don't Settle phases are the elements of self-reflection and assessment of how students delivered on their goals and how they can "get better" (Halvorson, 2011), which succinctly defines Kuh and colleagues (2005) concept of "positive restlessness."

Dream, Design, and Deliver

The Dream and Deliver phases were significantly correlated at .631 and Design and Deliver were significantly correlated at .630. These findings are not surprising as these

phases all tie together in practice. In the Dream phase, students imagine their best possible futures and then co-create or Design goals and a strategy to Deliver those goals. Although each of these phases theoretically has specific behaviors and characteristics that distinguish them from one another (Bloom et al., 2008; 2014), in practice, they are elements that occur within a continuous and iterative process.

Appreciative Mindset

Finally, all six of the Appreciative Advising phases are significantly correlated with the Appreciative Mindset. Again, these results likely reflect that the execution of the phases are rooted in the elements of the Appreciative Mindset (Bloom et al., 2008). Notably, we believe these correlations indicate that participants perceived that their advisors within this study demonstrated a strong passion for their work and genuinely cared about students and their success.

Psychosocial Factors (PSFs)

As an additional component to this study, we investigated how students perceived that meeting with their academic advisors (who were employing the Appreciative Advising framework) influenced specific student success factors. Given that prior empirical research has shown that the application of the Appreciative Advising framework has been successful with students on academic probation (Hutson, 2010; Kamphoff et al., 2007; Miller et al., 2019; Sanders & Hutson, 2012), we were curious to see how the framework worked with any students. In particular, we examined a number of PSFs based on the theoretical literature on Appreciative Advising (Bloom et al., 2008; 2014), that we believed would potentially be influenced when a student met with their academic advisor such as building confidence in their abilities to handle challenges and succeed at pursuing goals, staying focused and motivated to get involved and achieve goals, and intent to graduate.

The results of this study clearly indicate that participants perceived that meeting with their academic advisor contributes to their success in college. These outcomes further corroborate what has been previously found in the literature that students deeply value academic advising (Ruffalo Noel Levits, 2017) and that "good advising" is key to students' successful college experience (Light, 2001). The results from the Student Success Factor items show promise as to the value of the Appreciative Advising framework as an effective intervention to shape students' PSFs, which then may influence students' academic performance outcomes such persistence to degree. The exploration of the influence of the Appreciative Advising approach on student success factors and student success outcomes merits future examination.

Suggestions for Future Research

Given that this instrument is designed to examine the success of college students who interact with academic advisors who are trained in applying the Appreciative Advising theory-to-practice framework, we offer several suggestions for future research. First, a multi-site study could be conducted to increase the number and diversity of participants as well as to test the consistency of the instrument, including conducting a factor analysis. Second, a longitudinal study is advised to correlate the implementation of the Appreciative Advising framework to specific student outcomes using student records such as GPA, semester-to-semester persistence, and graduation, rather than solely relying on self-reported data. Third, a mixed-methods study would offer a depth of knowledge to understanding the student experience. Fourth, the AASI might be combined with an existing instrument such as The Thriving Quotient™ (The Thriving Project, n.d.) to explore and understand the factors, experiences, and pathways, including academic advising or coaching, that contribute to

overall student success more deeply. Finally, the AASI instrument itself might benefit from additional revision such as perhaps combining the Deliver and Don't Settle phases to improve reliability.

Implications for Practice

Given the results of this study, we offer several recommendations for practice. Each will be explored in depth next.

Invest in Academic Advisor Professional Development

In this study, the data indicated that the Appreciative Advising framework accounted for 77% of the variance in student success factors. Given that the Appreciative Advising framework focuses on building trust-based relationships with students, the findings indicate the importance of providing advisors with comprehensive professional development opportunities that include relational, informational, and conceptual components (Habley, 1987; Keech, 2021). Too often, academic advisors are only provided with information-based professional development training opportunities that focus on institutional deadlines and policies and can result in more transactional interactions between advisors and students. Although the informational components are important, advisors need to hone their relationship skills so that they can build trusting relationships with students before sharing relevant information with them. Scholars (Chambliss & Takacs, 2014; Felten & Lambert, 2020) have documented that rich relationship-building is central to college student success.

This study further underscores the importance of the academic advising relationship to student success as previously highlighted in the literature. Therefore, we advocate that those responsible for the oversight of academic advising at their institutions make a continuous and sustainable investment in academic advisor professional development. NACADA Advising Core Competencies state that advising units adopt a theoretical framework for delivery of services (NACADA, 2017). We recommend that advising teams across institutions engage in Appreciative Advising training and potentially obtain certification to increase a more congruent and consistent use of language and delivery of services by adopting this theory-to-practice framework (OAE, n.d.). Advising unit directors and supervisors may consider incorporating Appreciative Advising discussions into regular staff meetings as part of an ongoing professional development plan (Bloom et al., 2014) and/or consider developing professional development plans and challenge goals as part of annual performance plans to specifically tailor and assess the growth of each advisor within the Appreciative Advising framework. Given the results of this study revealed that the Appreciative Advising constructs are significantly connected to one another, meaning one construct of the framework strongly influences another, the intentional application of the phases in tandem can help to ensure that time spent with student advisees is optimized. Furthermore, the adoption of the Appreciative Advising framework is documented to have bolstered advisor confidence and job satisfaction (Howell, 2010; Damrose-Mahlman, 2016), which may be critical deliverables to retaining top talent in today's challenging climate in higher education (R/highereducation, 2022; Schroder, 2021).

Develop Appreciative Advising Interventions

Given the outcomes of this study, we recommend that advisors design and implement effective Appreciative Advising interventions. Through intentional approaches and Appreciative conversations, strong relationships may be established between advisors and students, which can help to communicate to students that advisors care and bolster psycho-social factors (PSFs) that is documented in the literature to contribute to student success. We encourage that interventions be developed to specifically reach out to male students, who

were under-represented in this study. Although the percentage of participants in this study were predominately White and female, 94% of participants thought it was important to meet with advisors and 80% reported they wanted to graduate from college. Given these data, conversations between advisors and their advisees may provide opportunities for advisors to engage in strategic micro-messaging (Blanchard Kyte et al., 2020; Jaimes, 2022) that can bolster student success.

Normalize Advisor Well-Being and Self-Care

The results from this study highlight how important the academic advising relationship is to student success. However, that relationship can only be as effective as the well-being of the advisor. Although we conducted this study pre-COVID, we recognize that the advising landscape has since shifted. Over the past few years, faculty and staff, including academic advisors, have experienced an increase in their workloads, which has taken a toll on their mental health and well-being (Maller & McGill, 2021). Consequently, we recommend that advisor well-being and self-care be normalized and prioritized so that advisors can bring their best selves to help students attain theirs (Harman, 2018; NACADA, 2022).

Conclusion

By highlighting the link between specific advisor behaviors to psychosocial factors (PSFs), this study helps highlight the important role of academic advisors in the academic success of their students. Academic advisors are frequently being called upon by higher education institutions to help increase student retention and graduation rates. This study provides evidence that supports that academic advisors who employ the Appreciative Advising theory-to-practice framework can positively influence students' PSFs. Given the results of this study, it is our hope that the Appreciative Advising Success Inventory (AASI) will be an effective tool for measuring the efficacy of the application of the Appreciative Advising framework to college student success for years to come.

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