FEEL MY STORY: AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF LATINX COUNSELORS-IN-TRAINING EXPERIENCES WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Felishatee Rodriguez

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FEEL MY STORY: AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS
OF LATINX COUNSELORS-IN-TRAINING EXPERIENCES WITH
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

A Dissertation
Submitted to the School of Education

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
Felishatee Rodriguez

December 2022
FEEL MY STORY: AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS
OF LATINX COUNSELORS-IN-TRAINING EXPERIENCES WITH
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

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ABSTRACT

FEEL MY STORY: AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF LATINX COUNSELORS-IN-TRAINING EXPERIENCES WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

By
Felishatee Rodriguez
December 2022

Dissertation supervised by Dr. Matthew Joseph

An interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used in the current study to examine how Latinx counselors-in-training (CITs) define and experience psychological safety in their classroom environments while enrolled in CACREP-accredited master’s degree programs in the United States. In the present study, IPA was employed to make sense of the participants’ detailed narratives and discover how Latinx CITs interpreted and made meaning of their experiences with psychological safety in classroom environments. Serving as the theoretical framework, Latino Critical Theory was used to weave together and validate the cultural components of Latinx CITs’ accounts as they orchestrated themselves through their CACREP-accredited master’s program. Eight participants engaged in semi-structured interviews consisting of Edmondson’s (1999) 7-item survey questions and six additional items supported by existing literature. Findings from the five superordinate and nine subordinate themes illustrated how
Latinx CITs defined and experienced psychological safety in their classroom spaces. The implications of the current study can pave the way for CACREP-accredited master’s programs and counselor educators to individualize, adapt, and assess classroom policies, pedagogical approaches, curricula construction, and the production standards and norms at CACREP-accredited institutions. Additionally, implications on the contribution of psychological safety to potentially improve the experiences of Latinx CITs enrolled in CACREP-accredited institutions were acknowledged. The results of the present study facilitate the opportunity to bring the representation and validation of Latinx CITs’ narratives in future research.

*Keywords:* psychological safety, Latinx counselors-in-training (CITs), interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit), Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) master’s degree programs
DEDICATION

To my grandfather, your unconditional love and words of wisdom have helped me move mountains. You have always spoken power and knowledge into my life and advocated for me to display confidence and tackle everything in my path, while humbly holding an understanding of my roots. With such warmth, you have assisted me in understanding the value of resilience and education. I admire your ability to ground me and encourage me with every conversation. You continue to weave inspiration and purpose together to help me understand the path set before me. You never considered any of my ambitions to be impractical; instead, you always wanted to ensure I had a strategy in place to achieve them. Thank you for supporting me in all of my endeavors. With your support, I became the person I am today. I love you.

To Nana, your love and warm embrace have always shined a light on my life. Your skill in storytelling and sense of humor has motivated me to seek out joyful and exciting experiences in life. Your strength has shown me never to stop fighting for my dreams and always prioritize family. Your nurturing soul has made it possible for me to laugh through the most unbearable moments, dance in the rain, and cherish extraordinary moments for the rest of my life. Your love for showing pictures, sharing memories, and telling stories has made me understand the significance of curiosity. I love you. Thank you for clapping for me through every door I enter.

As stated in Hamilton: An American Musical, “I know my sister like I know my own mind; you will never find anyone as trusting or as kind. I love my sister more than anything in this life.” Ellia, as a powerful Latina woman, I hope you always aspire to understand that your voice is valuable. I hope you can stand in academic spaces with the confidence and knowledge that you belong. From watching you dance in your princess dresses as a child, to listening to you
read me stories you wrote while I finished my homework, to teaching you how to do your makeup, to witnessing you stand up for your values, to helping you establish goals, having a sister as resilient as you has been quite the adventure. You shine brighter than any star in the sky for me. In this wondrous journey called life, I am forever thankful to have a sister like you by my side.

To my brothers, Jonathan and Joshua, you have taught me the importance of humility, patience, and forgiveness. Your kind souls have made an everlasting impression on my life. Watching you grow into the young men you are today has been a blessing and a gift. Your excitement to hear about my accomplishments has always brought me a warm smile. Witnessing you both talk about your achievements and dreams has made me very proud. I love you both so much. Thank you for always rooting for me and being my warm smiles to come home to.

Tasha, you are one of my strongest roots. Your poise and encouragement to ensure I complete my goals while remembering to take breaks along the way is quite admirable. Since the day we first met, you have been my study partner, waking me up at five in the morning to go for a walk and review material, as well as making sure I have my first cup of coffee to start the day. Throughout this journey, you have ensured that I check in with myself, engage in self-care, and remember to breathe when this journey gets difficult. You constantly want to know more about how I will put every concept and proposal into practice. You have allowed me to see each mountain as an attainable adventure that helped me grow. Your effort to cheer me on and ensure I laugh even under challenging moments has been a meaningful part of my journey. Thank you for helping me craft such a wonderful life. Your supportive words and actions have been greatly valued and appreciated.
Mom, your belief in the value of education has enabled me to invest in my education and motivate others to do the same. You have always fostered a culture of strong family values, self-assurance, and encouragement. Your prayers planted the seeds that set reminders of bravery, trust, and strength. When the road seemed uncertain, you helped me to persevere. You have set the bar when it comes to modeling resilience. Thank you for making me the woman I am today and being the loudest cheerleader in every room.

Tio Tony, my guiding light, there is a place in my heart hoping I could hug you and simply spend the day embracing the humblest pleasures of laughter and deep conversation. I know you are smiling from heaven. I hope that you are proud of your niece for accomplishing this goal. I love you and miss you every day.

To my Tio John, the value of family is evident in everything you do. You have continued to serve as a role model representing the importance of perseverance and dignity. As a pillar of strength, you have continuously supported my passion for learning and provided encouragement in all of my endeavors. I am incredibly grateful for your unwavering support and for the invaluable lessons you have taught me. I am honored to have you as an uncle.

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In her TED talk, Rita Pierson, a professional educator and licensed professional counselor, stated, “Every child deserves a champion – an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection, and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be.” Anne Marko, you are my champion. From the first day I entered your office as a practicum counseling student to this moment as a licensed professional counselor, you have fostered a supportive environment for me to thrive. You taught me the importance of vulnerability, integrity, transparency, and overcoming adversity, with professionalism and intellect. I am the counselor I am today because of your supervision practices, vulnerability, and
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Finally, for all the silenced voices, I say this: I hope you feel heard, seen, and acknowledged in the ways that you need.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a general overview of this study’s foundational components. Furthermore, this chapter addresses the problem statement, describes the study’s purpose and potential significance, presents the research questions that guide the study, outlines the theoretical framework and the research methodology, and discusses potential limitations. This chapter concludes by defining key terms.

Statement of the Problem

As the educational environments in the United States continue to become increasingly diverse, it is crucial to comprehend Latinx educational experiences to recognize the educational disparities and begin to collaborate and systematically engage in discussions on how best to support Latinx members in pedagogy, research, and clinical practice (García et al., 2021). Serving as an alternative term to Hispanic and Latino/a, Latinx includes numerous ethnic groups irrespective of race (e.g., Puerto Rican, Dominican, Mexican, Cuban) and functions as an LGBTQIA+ inclusive term (e.g., transgender and non-binary individuals) (España & Herrera, 2020; López et al., 2021). Ramirez and David (2021) classified Latinx as an “umbrella term inclusive of identity markers such as Latino, Latina, Chicano, Chicana, and Hispanic” (p. 190). In the most recent revisions of the American Psychiatric Association’s (2022) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.; DSM-5-TR), they have expressed their aim to be inclusive and representative of race and integrated the term Latinx as a gender-inclusive alternative to Latina/o. The DSM-5-TR classifies mental disorders when diagnosing clients and is integrated into counselor education classrooms for CITs to learn the criteria for diagnosing clients (American Psychiatric Association, 2022).
Over the past ten years, the Latinx population has contributed significantly to the U.S. population growth. In 2020, the U.S. Latinx population increased to 62.1 million, a 23% rise from 2010, which reported a population of 50.5 million (Krogstad & Noe-Bustamante, 2021). Additionally, in 2020, the Latinx population made up nearly one-in-five people in the U.S. (19%), a 4% increase from 2010 and a 14% increase from 1970 (Krogstad & Noe-Bustamante, 2021). Furthermore, in 2020, the Latinx population represented the second-largest racial or ethnic group, constituting 18.7% of the U.S. population (Jensen et al., 2021).

With the acknowledgment of the growing Latinx population, the gap in educational attainment between Latinx students and other racial groups is essential to recognize the educational disparities among Latinx students. In 2019, 86% of Latinx students graduated from high school compared to 96% White, 91% Black, 97% Asian, 97% Pacific Islander, and 95% American Indian (Hanson, 2021). As Latinx students navigate the educational pipeline, 31% of Latinx students earned their associate degree compared to 56% White, 40% Black, 78% Asian, 36% Pacific Islander, and 23% American Indian. In 2000, White students were 193% more likely to earn their associate degree than Latinx students (44% White, 15% Latinx). In 2019, the gap decreased (56% White, 31% Latinx), yet White students were 81% more likely to graduate with their associate degree than Latinx students. In 2019, 21% of Latinx students were able to earn their bachelor’s degree compared to 45% White, 29% Black, 71% Asian, 22% Pacific Islander, and 14% American Indian. The gap between Latinx and White students who earned this degree was 114%. As they advanced towards the end of the pipeline, 5% of Latinx students were able to earn their master’s degree or higher compared to 45% White, 9% Black, and 23% Asian. Moreover, Asians are five times more likely to earn an advanced degree than their Latinx counterparts (Hanson, 2021). In 2020, there was an estimated enrollment of 3.8 million Latinx
students in higher education institutions (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, 2021). By 2029, there will be an estimated enrollment of 4.2 million Latinx higher education students, comprising 25% of all students (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, 2021). Most scholars seem to agree that Latinx students continue to remain an underrepresented and understudied cultural group in higher education (Flink, 2018; Storlie et al., 2014). However, limited research, if any, has been conducted to better understand the classroom environments of Latinx students in higher education, specifically related to their experiences with psychological safety.

Schein (1993) believes that learners who sense that their environment is psychologically safe move from the protection of self and persona to a focus on accomplishing their set goals and solving the concerns presented to them. While previous research has examined how cultural or familial responsibilities impact Latinx students, this concept of psychological safety has not been applied to Latinx counselors-in-training (CITs) in academia. To date, no study has looked explicitly at Latinx CITs’ experiences with psychological safety. Psychological safety is defined as how individuals identify, facilitate, and engage in interpersonal risk in particular environments (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). A further definition of psychological safety is given by the Society for Simulation in Healthcare, which defines psychological safety as a participant’s ability to contribute and communicate their thoughts and seek support in an environment deprived of the risk of retaliation or humiliation (Lioce et al., 2020).

Psychologically safe environments present the possibility for enhanced learning experiences by increasing the likelihood that learners will ask for help, be open about their mistakes, and hold discussions regarding their concerns (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Kilcullen et al., 2022; Tsuei et al., 2019). Garvin et al. (2008) suggested four components
of supportive learning settings: psychological safety, acknowledging differing beliefs and perspectives, openness to take risks, and providing space for reflection before taking action. In psychologically safe learning environments, the learner is provided with the ability to ask for clarification and speak up to discuss mistakes made by their peers (Edmondson, 2014; Kilcullen et al., 2022; Roussin et al., 2018; Tsuei et al., 2019). When learners are provided with feelings of safety, they are afforded the ability to communicate their concerns and ideas, and take risks without holding space for fear of humiliation and judgment (Newman et al., 2017; Schepers et al., 2008). Edmondson (2018) suggested that leaders should encourage and value employee engagement (Edmondson & Lei, 2014; May et al., 2004) instead of fear. Fear can potentially limit learning, creativity, and problem-solving (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020). In a psychologically safe space, individuals may express their views, process their mistakes, and inquire about topics without dreading being reprimanded or humiliated by another individual in that shared space (Edmondson, 1999).

Instead of entertaining a culture of silence that does not value an employee’s voice, Edmondson (2018) suggested that workspaces should encourage candor. While Edmondson (2018) agrees that silence can be innate and serve as a protective factor, it can also be destructive to both the employee and the organization. A psychologically safe environment does not mean that specific individuals are forced to always agree with one another to showcase a sense of kindness (Edmondson, 2018). There is a possibility that the context of conversations can be unpleasant and can cause conflict, but that should be expected because people will have various views, each of which should have a platform (The King’s Fund, 2020). Similarly, psychological safety does not mean team members should offer unconditional encouragement, applause, or admiration when individuals share their perspectives (Edmondson, 2018; The King’s Fund,
In contrast, psychological safety instead supports team members’ candor when discussing topics of concern.

Numerous researchers have reported that psychologically safe environments support straightforwardness and open dialogue among different views and beliefs (Edmondson, 2018; Kilcullen et al., 2022; Pearsall & Ellis, 2011; Tsuei et al., 2019). In a psychologically safe environment, individuals are not advised to follow a low standard and become impervious to consequences from other individuals, team members, or organizations. Instead, individuals are encouraged to engage in constructive dialogue and disagreement while being honest and open about their views (Edmondson, 2018). For example, members of organizations that foster psychological safety understand that they will make mistakes, receive constructive criticism on completed projects, or may lose their job security due to their lack of expertise within their role (Edmondson, 2018).

Previous research has primarily overlooked and disregarded the role of psychological safety within classroom environments in graduate programs serving marginalized populations, specifically Latinx students. The present study’s focus is on addressing a gap in knowledge by exploring the phenomenon of psychological safety with Latinx counselor-in-training students within classroom settings, which can inform educational policies and practices on how counselor educators can better support Latinx CITs’ academic achievements, successes, and meet their needs through psychologically safe classroom environments.

**Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study is to explore Latinx CITs’ lived experiences of psychological safety in their classroom environments. Using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), the researcher’s goal was focused on how Latinx CITs
experienced and defined psychological safety within their classroom environments. Results of the current investigation aimed to build the knowledge base in counselor education concerning how Latinx CITs conceptualized psychological safety in classroom environments. The present study also intends to inform counselor educators in efforts to cultivate psychologically safe spaces and strengthen curricula and programming to meet the needs and bring representation to Latinx CITs.

Using the theoretical lens of Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) and the methodological lens of IPA, the following overarching research question guided this study:

1. How do Latinx CITs experience and define psychological safety within classroom environments while enrolled in CACREP-accredited master’s degree programs in the United States?

**Potential Significance**

According to García et al. (2021), higher education institutions have failed to support Latinx college students due to a dependence on student achievement outcomes that fail to emphasize Latinx students’ learning needs. In order to develop the ability to make modifications and promote an environment where Latinx individuals will succeed, not just function in survival mode, Watford et al. (2006) asserted that individuals should gain insight into Latinx experiences in academia. Higher education program leaders are advised to reevaluate how researchers and practitioners theorize Latinx students’ navigation of higher education institutions (García et al., 2021). However, these scholars also maintain that it is essential to identify how organizational barriers influence each student’s path. In clinical practice, the 2016 standards developed by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2015) Standard 1. K. states that counseling programs are encouraged to “make continuous and
systematic efforts to recruit, enroll, and retain a diverse group of students and to create and support an inclusive learning community” (p. 5). This standard illuminates the significance of counselor educators in designating efforts to cultivate and foster spaces that provide ethnic and racial inclusiveness within a learning environment.

Psychological safe learning environments increase the interest and retention of students of color to ensure their inclusion and presence are acknowledged in the pipeline of clinical practice and educational pedagogy (Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2020). The nature of psychological safety supports the exclusion of fear from shared spaces. Conversely, the aim of psychological safety fosters a space where individuals feel inclusivity, safety in learning, safety in presenting ideas, and may safely process their present condition without being fearful of being humiliated and ostracized (Clark, 2020). Therefore, it is critical to understand the transactional relationship within the learning environment that molds both the learner and the learners’ influence within the learning environment (Zulfiqar & Zamir, 2015).

Within newspapers, articles, blogs, and other news media, Edmondson (2018) found that the acknowledgment of the concept of psychological safety steadily increased, from being mentioned approximately 40 times in 1996, to approximately 310 mentions in 2017. Their findings reveal the interest in and establishment of psychological safety within popular media. In support of the literature’s interest in psychological safety, articles citing Edmondson’s (1999) article introducing psychological safety increased from approximately 30 citations of the term in 2001 to approximately 660 citations of the term in 2017 (Edmondson, 2018). In an adjacent discipline, serving as a contemporary example, within the current news Lee (2022) reported the experience of several nurses who had been fired for bringing up safety concerns to their supervisor. One travel nurse in Alaska, Marian Weber, was fired from PeaceHealth, a non-profit
healthcare facility, for speaking with her supervisor about patient safety concerns within the hospital region she was assigned. Although the hospital had recently extended her contract, she was advised not to come into work after raising her concerns. Five more nurses from PeaceHealth reported the consequences and fear of retaliation for discussing patient and nurse safety with their superiors. These nurses reported seeking a space within their work environment where their concerns would be listened to and heard by their supervisors, instead of being dismissed and forced to face retribution for reports they considered their ethical duty (Lee, 2022). Psychological safe workspaces provide an environment where staff can speak up about their concerns and be given a space to feel listened to, without the fear of humiliation or retribution from their supervisors, peers, or place of employment (Edmondson, 2018).

Edmondson and Lei (2014) suggested that researchers gain insight into whether psychological safety significantly influences outcomes for individuals, teams, and organizations functioning in different cultural settings. Additionally, a systematic literature review of psychological safety by Newman et al. (2017) recommended that researchers utilize qualitative methods in the form of interviews and observational practices to explore the influence of psychological safety in various cultures and cultural environments. Psychological safety is widely researched in organizational psychology (Edmondson & Lei, 2014), but to date, it has yielded limited, if any, research among socioeconomically and ethnically diverse higher education counseling students. Since the main body of research on psychological safety has utilized participants from Western countries who spoke English, Frazier et al. (2017) encouraged researchers to explore psychological safety among various cultures and multicultural dimensions, such as race, sexual orientation, gender, migration, social class, physical and cognitive ability, age, and religion. Similarly, Woods et al. (2021) suggested that because psychological safety
serves such a vital role in the academic success and classroom learning process of students of color, researchers should aim to understand how students experience both psychological safety and a lack of psychological safety within classroom environments.

Exploring Latinx CITs’ experiences with psychological safety offers the counselor education field information-rich data regarding psychologically safe classroom environments. Additionally, the results of the current investigation could help offer a knowledge base regarding how Latinx CITs conceptualize psychological safety in classroom environments, as well as downstream, to inform counselor educators’ efforts to cultivate psychologically safe spaces and strengthen curricula and programming for Latinx CITs. Furthermore, this study holds the potential to add to the limited body of research supporting the use of psychological safety with underrepresented people of color, specifically Latinx CITs, in higher education.

**Theoretical Framework Relating to Content**

Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) will serve as the theoretical framework that will guide the researcher relating to the content of the study. LatCrit is a natural fit for serving as a blueprint when engaging with this study’s design, method, analysis, and interpretation of Latinx CITs’ lived experiences (Flamez et al., 2017).

Grounded in social justice, legal policy, and procedures, LatCrit provides a lens for validating and recognizing Latinx students’ cultural experiences, histories, and advocacy in educational curriculums (Bernal, 2002). Numerous studies have recognized LatCrit as a useful framework when studying racial and ethnic groups in education (Bernal, 2002; Fernández, 2002; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Parker & Villalpando, 2007; Villenas et al., 2019). Given the unique needs and experiences of Latinx CITs, LatCrit helps recognize the multidimensional
factors of Latinx CITs, specific to “language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, and sexuality” (Bernal, 2002, p. 108).

Bernal (2002) highlights that when utilized as a framework, LatCrit has proved useful to validate the cultural elements, identity factors, and deep-rooted strengths within the experiences of Latinx individuals. Furthermore, in the present study, LatCrit helped illuminate classroom practices and curricula components inclusive of gender and race with Latinx CITs. In utilizing the LatCrit framework, the researcher could represent the voices and experiences of Latinx CITs in an intentional manner (Hernandez-Truyol, 1997; Parker & Villalpando, 2007). Additionally, LatCrit guided the researcher when identifying the relevant concepts within the literature, during the data collection and data analysis process, and in identifying ways to implement the study’s findings into practice (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Villenas et al., 2019). In this study, LatCrit served as the lens that guided the researcher’s engagement with a marginalized and underrepresented group in higher education, Latinx CITs.

**Summary of the Methodology**

After the approval of the university’s institutional board, this study utilized a qualitative approach, specifically, interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). In a content analysis of 250 qualitative dissertations in counselor education, Waalkes et al. (2021) determined that 21 (8.40%) dissertations used IPA as their methodology. Numerous studies have utilized IPA in their research to give voice to and better understand the lived experiences of people of color (Ledesma & Fernández, 2021; Noel & Green, 2021; Walker & Russell, 2020; Wagstaff & Williams, 2014; Wright et al., 2022). IPA was chosen for this study to capture the essence of the significant factors within Latinx CITs’ experiences. Additionally, the researcher utilized IPA to capture how Latinx CITs described and interpreted their experiences of psychological safety.
within classroom environments. Numerous researchers have stated that a critical portion of IPA is the double hermeneutic, which allows the participants to make sense of their experience with the phenomenon and then allows the researcher to make sense of how the participants made sense of their experiences with the phenomenon (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2004; Smith & Osborn, 2008; Smith et al., 2009). This process of sense-making lends itself to recognizing symbolic interactionism, where the researcher was able to analyze the participant’s constructed meanings of the phenomenon in relation to their personal and social world (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Furthermore, using IPA to collect a thorough and detailed interpretation of Latinx CITs’ voices can potentially inform CACREP-accredited master’s programs of the unique classroom needs of Latinx CITs.

**Potential Limitations**

Using a qualitative approach, researchers must address potential limitations when evaluating trustworthiness. In addressing trustworthiness, the researcher utilized factors that addressed the elements of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Although the researcher is using member checking to address confirmability and accessibility, not all participants may respond to the researcher and engage in the member checking process. Additionally, due to the idiographic nature of IPA, although the researcher placed value into each transcript, there is a possibility that the researcher did not relay every possible experience within the raw data. In honoring cultural humility, Latinx CITs’ experiences may not be representative of the histories and experiences of other Latinx CITs in higher education. Also, the sampling method chosen for this study, purposeful sampling, is an intentional and selective process that can warrant inadvertent bias during the selection process. For instance, this study was limited to the experiences of Latinx CITs in CACREP-accredited programs. Furthermore, although the
researcher bracketed her assumptions, researcher bias may be a potential limitation as the researcher serves as the primary method of data collection; however, the researcher used member checking when interpreting the raw data to minimize and recognize bias.

**Definition of Key Terms**

The following definitions will provide a context for specific terms utilized within the scope of this study.

*Classroom environment* is defined as “classroom norms (e.g., guidelines or working agreements), learning goals, methods, and content of the day in addition to the characteristics and moods that all students bring to the classroom” (Byrd et al., 2020, p. 139).

*Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)* exists within the counseling profession to determine the national accreditation minimal unified standards for master’s and doctoral programs (CACREP, 2015; Remley & Herlihy, 2016).

*Counselor Educator* is defined as “a professional counselor engaged primarily in developing, implementing, and supervising the educational preparation of professional counselors” (American Psychiatric Association, 2014, p. 20).

*Counselor Education Program* is defined as, “the academic department or specifically defined subsection of a department identified and defined in a college or university that has responsibility for curricular and clinical experiences for which accreditation is sought” (CACREP, 2022a, p. 2).

*Counselor Education* is defined as “a distinct academic discipline that has its roots in educational and vocational guidance and counseling, human development, supervision, and clinical practice. The primary focus of counselor education programs is the training and preparation of professional counselors who are competent to practice, abide by the ethics of the counseling profession, and hold strong counseling identities” (CACREP, 2022a, p. 2).
Counselors-in-training (CITs) are counseling graduate-level students engaged in their practicum or internship fieldwork. Practicum fieldwork requires counseling students to complete a minimum of 100 hours of direct and indirect service with clients over a minimum of a 10-week academic term. Out of those 100 hours, at least 40 hours must be directly working with clients. Internship fieldwork requires counseling students to complete a minimum of 600 hours of direct and indirect service with clients over a minimum of a 10-week academic term. Out of those 600 hours, at least 240 hours must be directly working with clients (CACREP, 2015; Kimbel & Levitt, 2017).

**Culture** is defined as “the values, traditions, worldview, and social and political relationships created, shared, and transformed by a group of people bound together by a common history, geographic location, language, social class, religion, or other shared identity. Culture includes not only tangibles such as foods, holidays, dress, and artistic expression, but also less tangible manifestations such as communication style, attitudes, values, and family relationships. These features of culture are more difficult to pinpoint, but doing so is necessary if we want to understand how student learning may be affected” (Nieto & Bode, 2017, p. 137).

**Cultural identity** is defined as “a person’s intersectional identities that could represent the following: age and generational status, disability status, race, ethnicity, gender/gender identity, affective/relational/sexual identity, religion and spirituality, social class, national origin and language, migration status, and veteran status among others” (CACREP, 2022a, p. 3).

**Culturally Alert Counseling** is defined as “a consistent readiness to identify the cultural dimension of client’ lives and a subsequent integration of culture into counseling work” (McAuliffe & Associates, 2013, p. 6).
Diversity is defined as “all aspects of intersectional and cultural group identity, including age and generational status, disability status, race, ethnicity, gender/gender identity, affective/relational/sexual identity, religion and spirituality, social class, national origin and language, migration status, and veteran status among others” (CACREP, 2022a, p. 4).

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is defined as “a qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences. IPA is phenomenological in that it is concerned with exploring experience in its own terms. The philosopher Edmund Husserl famously urged phenomenologists to go back to the thing’s themselves, and IPA research follows his lead in this regard, rather than attempting to fix experience in predefined or overly abstract categories” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 1).

Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) is defined as a “branch of Critical Race Theory that considers issues of concern to Latinos, such as immigration, language rights, and multi-identity” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 178).

Latinx embodies a multitude of concepts that are “descriptive of individuals with cultural roots in Latin American regions of the globe; many Latinx-identifying individuals trace their heritage to Central or South America. Latinx is an umbrella term inclusive of identity markers such as Latino, Latina, Chicano, Chicana, and Hispanic, and is gender nonspecific. The use of the term Latinx is a statement of advocacy against oppressive forces, such as heterosexism, gender discrimination, and intercultural racism, which marginalize minorities within the Latinx community” (Ramirez & David, 2021, p. 190).

Psychological Safety is defined as “the belief that the environments are safe for interpersonal risk-taking. The concept refers to the experience of feeling able to speak up with relevant ideas,
questions, or concerns. Psychological safety is present when colleagues trust and respect each other and feel able – even obligated – to be candid” (Edmondson, 2018, p. 167).

Students of Color and Underrepresented Groups is used in this study to replace “minorities” or “minoritized groups” when referring to non-White racial and ethnic groups since the “use of ‘minority’ may be viewed pejoratively because it is usually equated with being less than, oppressed, or deficient in comparison with the majority (e.g., White people)” (American Psychiatric Association, 2020, p. 145). Additionally, “The literature related to students of color—students of African, Asian, Latinx, or Native American heritage—in counselor education is focused on barriers to completion” (Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2021, p. 5).
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

First, this literature review will begin with a review of the literature on psychological safety that explicitly relates to the overview of psychological safety, including characteristics within psychologically safe environments, other more individual and personality-focused characteristics, psychological safety within disciplines outside of education, and psychological safety in educational spaces and classrooms. The second section focuses on Latinx experiences in the U.S. educational system, specifically relating to the broad overview of the literature on U.S. education and Latinx experiences in U.S. higher education. Next, the literature on Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) and its application to education and counseling are outlined. The fourth section broadly provides an intersection between psychological safety and Latinx experiences in the U.S. educational system, including literature on psychological safety in marginalized populations, and the absence of psychological safety in Latinx experiences. Next, Latinx CITs’ inclusion and exclusion criteria are provided, along with the description of the role of CACREP, a review of the standards for multiculturally learning in class environments, and Latinx experiences in counselor education. LatCrit will conclude the review of the theoretical framework for understanding Latinx CITs’ experiences of psychological safety. An in-depth examination of these frameworks will then be presented in chapter three.

Overview of Psychological Safety

Grace Lee Boggs, a prominent social activist who focused on community movements and marginalized populations, asserted, “I’ve come to believe that you cannot change any society unless you take responsibility for it unless you see yourself as belonging to it and responsible for changing it” (Harewood & Keefer, 2009, p. 22). Her philosophy urged her to encourage others to collaborate in small groups and create what Boggs called, “critical connections.” With this,
individuals can identify and take on a role in creating social change by sharing their thoughts and communicating the needs of the community or organization. Similarly, the literature has shown that in creating psychologically safe environments, both leaders and employees should replace fear with engagement in honest and intentional conversations towards change (Carroll, 2012; Deming, 2018; Edmondson, 2018; Edmondson, 2020; Gulati et al., 2014; Huang & Jiang, 2012; May et al., 2004). For employees and students to believe that they are psychologically safe, where they may freely speak up and share their thoughts, ideas, and mistakes, they must feel that their leaders value their voice and appreciate their contribution to the company or educational setting (Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2020; Edmondson, 2018; Edmondson, 2020; Sher et al., 2019).

The literature shows that leaders critically shape the work context in promoting psychological safety by building rapport and relationships with their employees (Edmondson, 2018; Frazier et al., 2017; Rathert et al., 2009). When employees, students, and staff can take interpersonal risks within psychologically safe environments and share possible errors or ideas, rather than focusing on protecting themselves, these individuals can focus on learning (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020). This requires that leaders invite engagement and respond productively to students and staff when they contribute their ideas (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020; Edmondson, 2018; May et al., 2004). Responding productively requires that the leader appreciate the student or staff member for their contribution. This does not require that the leader agrees with their employees’ contributions; instead, the leader welcomes their employees’ transparency with openness, understanding (Edmondson, 2018; Edmondson, 2020), and candor in their responses (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020; Catmull & Wallace, 2014; Edmondson, 2018). Research has shown that psychological safety is positively related to leaders inviting their employees to participate in
critical decision-making and asking questions (Chapman & Sisodia, 2015; Edmondson, 2018; Frazier et al., 2017). From the critical connections built from the salient discussions in Pixar’s Braintrust meeting to Google’s meetings focusing on Project Aristotle to entering the classroom space and discussing race talk, psychologically safe environments invite individuals to embrace their creativity (Duhigg, 2016; Frazier et al., 2017; Williams et al., 2016) and share information (Garvin et al., 2008; Gong et al., 2012; Frazier et al., 2017), which, in turn, contributes to responsibility and change in organizations and academic spaces.

**Psychological Safety**

According to a systematic literature review of 78 empirical studies on psychological safety published between 1990 and 2015, Newman et al. (2017) reported that most studies had utilized Edmondson’s (1999) definition of psychological safety as a collective belief to take interpersonal risks without the concern of being humiliated, dismissed, overlooked, or shut down by others. Edmondson (1999) also noted the significance of mutual trust and respect within psychologically safe spaces. Of those 78 empirical studies, 74 used a quantitative methodology, 4 used a qualitative method, 29 measured individuals’ perceptions within a team or organization or didactic relationships, 42 measured psychological safety at the team level, and 2 assessed psychological safety at the organizational level (Newman et al., 2017). In the first known quantitative meta-analytic review examining psychological safety in the workplace, Frazier et al. (2017) went further by examining the findings of 78 published studies, 21 doctoral dissertations, and 18 unpublished papers or presentations. No statistically significant differences were discovered across individual and group levels of psychological safety. The authors inferred those findings and analysis of relationships were consistent and true across individual and group levels. The following learning behaviors have been positively related to psychological safety: work
engagement, task performance, supportive work environment, information sharing (Gong et al., 2012; Frazier et al., 2017), and creativity (Edmondson, 2018; Frazier et al., 2017). Several studies have shown the impact of psychological safety on improved individual and group performance (Edmondson, 2014; Frazier et al., 2017). Describing the construct of psychological safety as an interrelated network, Frazier et al. (2017) found evidence to suggest that as leaders build a strong rapport (Kahn, 1990) with their team members and begin to trust and rely on team members for support during tasks, there is a sense of psychological safety that formulates in team members. However, the results did not provide evidence that psychological safety is significantly related to an individual’s openness to experiences.

Schein and Bennis (1965) introduced psychological safety as a critical element in teaching organizational members the importance of eradicating obstacles to stimulate change and fostering secure spaces without the fear of retribution for making mistakes. In another early seminal study of psychological safety, Kahn (1990) reported that an individual’s sense of support and trust among their other teammates is predictive of a psychologically safe work environment; in turn, individuals can showcase their true selves without retaliation on their personal and professional image. When explaining the differences between trust and psychological safety, Edmondson (2018) stated: “that trust is about giving others the benefit of the doubt, and psychological safety relates to whether others will give you the benefit of the doubt when, for instance, you have asked for help or admitted a mistake” (p. 17). Furthermore, Williams et al. (2016) defined psychological safety within an educational climate as a leader’s understanding of the following three facets: (a) student identity, (b) student perspectives, and (c) students’ valuable contributions, despite the experience or risk of discomfort or harm.
To date, no evidence has been found for interactions between psychological safety and extroversion; regardless of whether individuals are introverts or extroverts in a psychologically safe environment, it does not impact their willingness to share their views and apprehensions (Edmondson, 2018). Although Edmondson (2018) suggested that psychological safety is not related to or impacted by personality traits, Frazier et al. (2017) found that proactive personality, emotional stability, and learning orientation were positively and significantly associated with psychological safety. Individuals with proactive personalities identify problems and are intentional in their approach to solving them and potentially producing significant change. Similarly, Gong et al. (2012) found that individuals with proactive personalities participate in more information exchange, allowing them to build trusting relationships, and cultivate creativity through nurturing trusting relationships. Those individuals considered emotionally stable, viewed their environment calmly and professionally, showcasing their ability to function within their professional capacity without their responses and behaviors being tainted by their personal life experiences (Frazier et al., 2017). Additionally, individuals that focused on learning orientation perceived mistakes as opportunities that are essential in building their personal development (Frazier et al., 2017).

Psychological safety should be viewed as a construct that promotes characteristics, such as creativity (Frazier et al., 2017), which are to be embraced and immersed within workplace processes and procedures (Edmondson, 2018). Leaders should not be concerned about excessively high psychological safety within the workplace, but instead about the organization's lack of discipline in its methods (Edmondson, 2018). Leaders are not required to ensure that their employees overshare with a sheer amount of dialogue, but instead gain an understanding of what their employees want to have conversations about and need in their environment to feel
psychologically safe (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020; Edmondson, 2018; Trevail, 2020). Despite several beliefs that integrating psychological safety in work practices may be time-consuming, Edmondson (2018) argued that with a successful process in place, leaders could save time by encouraging a psychologically safe environment that honors effective and efficient discussions that clearly outline decisions.

Both leaders and employees share the opportunity to create a psychologically safe environment by asking individuals several questions and listening to their responses with a lens of curiosity and interest (Edmondson, 2018; Trevail, 2020). This shows the individual that their contributions are valued and respected (Romney, 2020). When listening to an individual intending to communicate psychological safety, the focus is not on agreeableness, but on respecting another’s thoughts and creating a space for them to express their thoughts (Edmondson, 2018; Green, 2020; Trevail, 2020). When attempting to better understand difficulties and uncertainties within an organization, it is acceptable for a leader not to have all the answers and instead seek their employee's participation (Edmondson, 2018). This shows employees that they are valued and appreciated within the company’s processes and procedures. Suppose a colleague or peer finds that their counterpart’s suggestions are not adding value or being helpful; instead of humiliating them or getting annoyed, they can use the interaction as a teaching opportunity to help that individual better align with their goal and intended impact (Edmondson, 2018). When encouraging psychological safety within a workplace, Edmondson (2018) suggests that individuals should integrate curiosity, compassion, and commitment, while utilizing these three phrases: (a) I do not know; (b) I need assistance; and (c) I made an error, and I apologize. With this, leaders and employees are taking interpersonal risks by being vulnerable, which can help enable other individuals to be vulnerable and take risks. Therefore, psychological
safety can be generated when a person exudes the willingness to ask those around them whether they require assistance or would like to share their apprehensions (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020; Edmondson, 2018).

To understand psychologically safe workspaces in greater depth, Edmondson (2018) explored the relationship between psychological safety and performance. A workplace with low standards and high psychological safety is called the *comfort zone*, where employees can work as a team, but do not feel a sense of worth in their work, which decreases a want to learn (Edmondson, 2018; The King’s Fund, 2020). A workplace with low standards and low psychological safety is called the *apathy zone* (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020; The King’s Fund, 2020). In the apathy zone, employees exhibit low effort and are not open to collaborating with their colleagues, which produces a low-spirited and low-passion social environment. A workplace with high standards and low psychological safety is called the *anxiety zone*, where leaders are unsure and unclear of their roles and expectations. Individuals in the anxiety zone fear speaking up and asking questions, which translates into discontentment and an absence of constructive dialogue and engagement among team members (Edmondson, 2018; Trevail, 2020). The *learning and high-performance zone* is a workplace with high standards and psychological safety. In this zone, individuals work as a team and share ideas to help others in their learning process, and problems are consistently solved (Edmondson, 2018; The King’s Fund, 2020).

Understanding the role of psychological safety in performance is critical because organizations and employees have the tasks of holding meetings, creating new policies, and creating group norms involving responsibility and active communication. Organizations should engage in these actions with a focus on functioning within the learning and high-performance
zone to foster creativity, employee appreciation, and psychologically safe spaces (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020; Edmondson, 2018). Psychological safety should not be confused with psychological well-being, which describes an individual’s psychological functioning and is often used to measure satisfaction from life and work (Obrenovic et al., 2020). Additionally, psychological empowerment and safety mutually signify positive motivational conditions within the organizational discipline. However, psychological safety implies perceptions within an environment and reactions toward risk-taking behaviors, whereas psychological empowerment implies perceptions of responsibilities or positions (Frazier et al., 2017). An employee’s sense of psychological safety within an organization impacts the organization’s finances, productivity levels, and the contribution and retention of employees (Edmondson, 2018). Nevertheless, Edmondson (2018) advised that the goal should focus on psychological safety, in addition to, high-quality care, excellence, and urgency.

**Psychological Safety in Disciplines Outside of Education**

The literature has supported psychologically safe learning environments as inclusive, multidimensional, and collaborative (Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2020; Clark, 2020; Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson, 2018; Frazier et al., 2017; Garvin et al., 2008; Tsuei et al., 2019). Psychological safety correlates with individual, group, and organizational learning levels (Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Frazier et al., 2017). The building blocks for an organization focused on psychologically safe learning practices include environments that foster support, create specific guidelines to implement processes and procedures, and encourage leadership (Garvin et al., 2008).

As an example of such an environment, the COO at Children’s Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota, Julie Morath, formulated a policy named “blameless reporting” to substitute the use
of the terms “errors” and “investigate” (Garvin et al., 2008). Her mission was to increase her staff’s understanding of safety within policies and procedures, encourage them to recognize risks, and report mistakes to their superiors and team members without the fear of blame. In the learning process, individuals should not be fearful of being disgraced or shamed if they have differing opinions from the appointed leader in the room. Leaders are encouraged to welcome and process various viewpoints and suggestions to meet the needs of varying worldviews and create the space for creative and critical thinking. Through processing, individuals are encouraged to come together to continue, alter, or remove policies and practices that improve better services (Garvin et al., 2008). This process should not be confused with group cohesiveness, which differs from psychological safety in that group cohesiveness has the potential to reduce an individual’s ability to take risks, offer up constructive criticism, and oppose varying group opinions. Whereas psychological safety permits individuals to take risks with the knowledge that their counterparts will not humiliate them (Edmondson, 1999). Garvin et al. (2008) encouraged internal and external knowledge sharing at the individual, group, and organizational levels. For example, an individual can complete a task, pass it on to a group to receive feedback, and then discuss the plan with consumers to gain insights on overcoming possible difficulties.

Another example of exercising the internal and external process is the U.S. Army’s After-Action Review (AAR), which uses a methodical guideline to invite soldiers to be active participants during discussions and reflect on events after they have been completed (Garvin et al., 2008; Morrison & Meliza, 1999; Sawyer & Deering, 2013). In the AAR approach, the following questions guided soldiers when reflecting on the exercise: (a) What was the original plan? (b) What were the actual events during the exercise? (c) Why did each event happen? and
(d) How can we make changes to improve? The soldiers were empowered to work together to understand what actions could be implemented in future tasks. This review process engages soldiers as active participants. The focus was placed on the sequence of events rather than the mistakes. Both the leader and soldiers were able to engage, and members were open to various ideas rather than shutting down others’ opinions. The pedagogical style is framed as guided discovery rather than a lecture, and changes are focused on objective indicators rather than subjective critiques (Sawyer & Deering, 2013). Rather than a leader receiving a detailed report on the events and making critical judgments that outline the soldiers’ mistakes, the AAR is a multidimensional process that focuses on dialogue and a holistic understanding of the events to promote learning and inclusion with their soldiers and leaders.

Similarly, Pixar Animation Studios (Pixar) participates in a process named Braintrust (Catmull, 2014). Braintrust was developed through the creation of the popular 1995 animated film *Toy Story* and comprises individuals who meet every several months to acknowledge problems at Pixar and work together to determine improvements. Within this group, individuals are encouraged to embrace candor and directly acknowledge when someone might hold the fear of making a mistake or embarrassing themselves. During Braintrust sessions, individuals are encouraged to discuss difficult topics and offer suggestions on the director’s work. The director is not required to take those suggestions or ensure that each is integrated into their work. Instead, individuals work together to understand the main problem instead of forcing a particular solution. Individuals are not there to judge the director, but to make candid suggestions on the director’s work. This removes the power struggle from the group dynamic because the focus is on the work rather than the person. Directors should enter the meeting ready to embrace everyone’s candor and understand that the group members’ suggestions stem from a helping
place, where they accumulate their expertise and provide ideas to better advance the dynamics within the film under review. Giving individuals a seat at the table and encouraging honesty and directness when offering suggestions for ways to further another individual's work while removing the competition are ways that Braintrust has embraced psychological safety at Pixar (Catmull, 2014).

Some research shows that when employees felt forced to suppress their words and not speak about their experiences within their job setting, there was a decrease in their commitment and engagement at work (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020; Benedictine University, 2018; Edmondson, 2018). However, when employees felt supported by their leaders, they were given the ability to communicate their needs clearly and understand company expectations, which contributed to an increase in their ability to showcase their creativity and candidness (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020; Kilcullen et al., 2022; The King’s Fund, 2020), which in turn, benefited the organization and fostered an atmosphere of learning (Rock, 2009). Similarly, Edmondson (2018) suggested that leaders should create psychologically safe spaces where employees are encouraged to share their ideas to honor the capacity for creativity within each team member. Employees who felt a sense of psychological safety readily reported their mistakes to the leader and their team members. Additionally, these employees readily held discussions on prevention procedures and practices, creating environments focused on improving; rather than embracing interpersonal fear when examining mistakes (Edmondson, 2018).

To understand how organizations can encourage employees to learn from failures and establish high-quality relationships, Carmeli and Gittell (2009) conducted two survey-based studies. They defined high-quality relationships as the inclusion of shared goals, knowledge, and
respect. The first study was conducted on 100 employees who worked in the software, electronics, and finance disciplines. The second study was conducted on 128 graduate students with full-time employment positions. The researchers concluded that high-quality relationships enabled the development of psychological safety, which improved an individual’s ability to learn from failures. High-quality relationships encourage others to learn from their failures exclusively by increasing psychological safety and decreasing an individual’s fear of speaking up about their concerns, thoughts, or ideas within the organization (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009).

Environments with low psychological safety can promote a norm of silence (Edmondson, 2018). The sense of invisibility felt by an individual not speaking up or sharing their concern or ideas can cultivate this norm of silence (Edmondson, 2018). Even when individuals felt that what they had to say held deep value, they still might be inclined to remain silent in an environment with low psychological safety (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020; Edmondson, 2018). Interpersonal fear can be detrimental to an organization’s finances, consumers, and employees’ responsiveness when deciding to ask questions or discuss errors (Edmondson, 2018; Trevail, 2020). When leaders and colleagues do not voice their perspectives, there is the potential for missed opportunities on ideas or strategies that could have possibly helped prevent errors or solve a problem (Benedictine University, 2018). When this norm intertwines itself into the environment, leaders are hindered from knowing their employee’s concerns and ideas, which can potentially be dangerous for the organization. Therefore, Edmondson (2018) stressed the importance of leaders and organizations fostering psychologically safe spaces. Within psychologically safe environments, Edmondson (2018) emphasized that individuals are free to focus on collective goals (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009) and problem prevention rather than on self-protection.
To this end, Edmondson (2018) created a leader toolkit to guide leaders when incorporating psychological safety into the workspace. The toolkit advises that leaders: (a) set the stage, (b) invite participation, (c) and respond productively (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020; Edmondson, 2018; Green, 2020). In setting the stage, leaders outline expectations for when mistakes are made and highlight the purpose of safety outcomes. This fosters a space where employees’ voices hold value and create meaning (Edmondson, 2018; Romney, 2020). With this, leaders should emphasize learning from mistakes and humanize the experience by focusing on progress instead of perfection (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020). When inviting participation, leaders should listen to their employees and create structures for discussions to foster a space where employees feel comfortable asking questions (Edmondson, 2018). Leaders should not insinuate that employees will come to them with their passions, questions, and concerns. Instead, they should actively ask employees intentional questions focusing on alternative possibilities, deeper thinking, and various perspectives (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020). When responding productively, leaders should express appreciation to their employees by acknowledging their contributions and listening to their concerns. With this, leaders should destigmatize failure by offering support to their employees, being honest about their limitations, and examining future steps within the organization (Edmondson, 2018). In Edmondson’s speech at the 2020 Association of American Medical Colleges Conference, Edmondson stated that in responding productively, some leaders have gone to the extent of hosting failure parties, which in turn promoted innovation and shared power, potentially leading to a decrease in the repetition of those failures (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020; Dweck, 2008).
To complement this stream of cultivating a psychologically safe space for employees, Charles Duhigg (2016) interviewed researchers, Rozovsky and Dubey, working on a project named Project Aristotle. Project Aristotle was designed to gain a deeper understanding of Google’s teams to better understand what norms created successful, high-performance teams. Researchers understood the importance of employees wanting to embrace vulnerability and bring their true selves to work without fearing humiliation or judgment. No team member wanted to enter their workspace and shield their true selves. Additionally, no team member wanted to limit their personality and instead desired the freedom to share their concerns at work (Duhigg, 2016).

In her speech at the 2020 Association of American Medical Colleges Conference, Edmondson used the term “impression management” to describe employees who shielded their true selves and focused on self-protection rather than learning and patient safety when responding to leaders (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020). Each team member wanted an interpersonal space to discuss difficult topics and be acknowledged and valued in their daily tasks for more than just increasing the organization’s productivity numbers. In summary, they found that when creating psychologically safe spaces, the following should occur: difficult conversations should be embraced (Trevail, 2020), meaning should be integrated into tasks, acknowledgment should be provided to employees, employees should be provided with a platform to speak, and mistakes should be used to initiate learning and improvement (Duhigg, 2016; Edmondson, 2018; Frazier et al., 2017).

The literature has shown that a sense of psychological safety with medical personnel is predictive of medical teams’ collaboration on a common goal, honesty in reporting mistakes (Edmondson, 2020), efforts to learn from errors, and continuous improvement in procedures (Kilcullen et al., 2022; Tsuei et al., 2019). In a multi-industry review of 360 articles on
healthcare safety culture, Kilcullen et al. (2022) suggested that psychological safety is an
enabling factor at the group level. “Enabling factors create the necessary context for norms,
values, and assumptions around safety to develop” (Kilcullen et al., 2022, p. 211). In healthcare
settings with low psychological safety, employees feared being scolded or embarrassed to report
if they witnessed a surgeon’s error (Kilcullen et al., 2022). These authors found that
psychological safety supports the candor of healthcare staff; in turn, healthcare employees feel
safe to discuss their apprehensions and mistakes without being humiliated. These results
supported Tsuei et al. (2019) proposal that in medical education, psychological safety should be
termed educational safety, which they defined as “the subjective state of feeling freed from a
sense of judgment by others such that learners can authentically and wholeheartedly concentrate
on engaging with a learning task without a perceived need to self-monitor their projected image”
(p. 532). The comfort level of healthcare staff in speaking up about their fears, questions, or
viewpoints was correlated with professional status (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). When
leaders welcome and value staff contributions, staff feel more psychologically safe and open to
taking interpersonal risks. Psychological safety does not stop with leaders. When healthcare staff
felt open to building interpersonal relationships with their team members, they begin to feel a
sense of mutual trust and respect, engaging in interpersonal risk and learning behaviors that
support task interdependency. This interdependency suggests that through leader inclusiveness,
healthcare staff members achieve goals by integrating their team members’ contributions
(Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006).

The literature has shown that hierarchy matters to employees. It can affect whether an
employee chooses to withhold information or not share their ideas, leading to a fear of taking
interpersonal risks (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020; Green, 2020; Edmondson,
During their 2020 Association of American Medical Colleges Conference address, Edmondson stated, “The psychological experience of not being able to speak up in a hierarchy is almost the same as if your vocal cords do not work. There is not a sense of, ‘Oh well, I just choose not to.’ There is a sense that it is just not possible” (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020). In spaces lacking psychological safety, leaders typically do not provide the space for employees to share their thoughts, which fosters fear and makes hiding potential creative ideas the norm (Edmondson, 2018). Often, in spaces that lack psychological safety, a nonverbal cue from the leader, such as a huge smile after the leader presents an idea, can unintentionally illicit employee agreement with the current circumstances (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020; Edmondson & Lei, 2014). That agreement from employees can serve as a risk factor and prevent employees from sharing their creative ideas if they disagree with the leader’s ideas (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020).

In an exploratory quantitative analysis between teachers and medical personnel, Edmondson et al. (2016) suggested that psychological safety can function as a group-level phenomenon. These authors found that psychological safety has disparities within hospital work environments and groups across school settings. For example, within hospital settings, employees mainly collaborate with those assigned to a specific region in the hospital. In contrast, employees in school settings communicate with the entire school staff regardless of subject or region. Each employee has the support of their counterparts throughout hospital settings, but teachers are often expected to withhold enough autonomy to lead their classrooms independently. They further proposed that those who held a higher position or had more experience in the field felt more psychologically safe in both hospital and educational settings than those with less experience and lower status in the organization.
Psychological Safety in Educational Environments and Classrooms

Learning to engage with various cultures is essential as the U.S. continues to become a more diverse nation. By 2060, underrepresented racial and ethnic cultures are projected to double from 116.2 million in 2012 to 241.3 million, making up 57% of the population (United States Census Bureau, 2014). Within educational environments, instructors are encouraged to promote open discussions on various perspectives and cultures to help prepare students when interacting with clients, patients, or consumers within their careers (Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2020). In a concept analysis of psychologically safe learning environments in nursing by Turner et al. (2018), psychologically safe learning environments were defined as “a feeling or climate whereby the learner can feel valued and comfortable yet still speak up and take risks without fear of retribution, embarrassment, judgment or consequences either to themselves or others, thereby promoting learning and innovation” (Turner & Harder, 2018, p. 49). Within 50 articles, Turner et al. (2018) identified positive behaviors in psychologically safe environments where instructors welcomed students’ input, provided explicit instruction before engaging students in-class activities, were open to student questions, provided constructive feedback, and were transparent when they made a mistake or did not know the answer to a student question. The result of psychologically safe environments allowed students to learn from their mistakes, understand how to problem solve in complex situations, and build skills that could be utilized in clinical environments. In contrast, negative behaviors were displayed in psychologically unsafe environments when leaders did not craft well-defined objectives. In psychologically unsafe spaces, instructors focused on students’ mistakes, were not respectful of students’ confidentiality, and did not provide students with feedback (Turner & Harder, 2018).
Using the psychological safety lens of Turner and Harder (2018), Chicca and Shellenbarger (2020) suggested approaches nurse educators can use with students to promote psychologically safe, inclusive learning environments. These researchers identified that psychologically safe environments lead to higher retention of students of color. Four strategies were suggested to cultivate inclusive learning environments with students: (a) instructors setting students up for success, (b) instructors cultivating a culture of safety, (c) instructors demonstrating their skills as clinical facilitators, and (d) instructors providing additional support. Regarding psychological safety, “cultivating a culture of safety,” instructors are encouraged to allow students to make mistakes without judgment or punishment. With this, instructors are encouraged to build trust and rapport with their students to foster an environment that invites participation and feedback. The researchers note that allowing students to make mistakes without punishment does not mean that students are not held to professional and ethical standards and can choose which activities to complete and engage in or not without consequences. Instead, students are expected to be competent and adhere to professional standards. Instructors should provide students with constructive feedback in their learning process and encourage students to report their mistakes and errors. The researchers note that students of color may struggle to feel comfortable when engaging with authority figures; therefore, instructors should make themselves accessible and decrease the response of entertaining hierarchies by communicating in a team manner that introduces collaboration between the instructor and the student. These authors further suggest integrating activities in learning environments that promote cultural knowledge and preparation. Therefore, instructors are advised to prepare case scenarios that help students understand how to work with various cultures.
Additionally, instructors are encouraged to serve as model leaders (Schepers et al., 2008) by admitting their own mistakes and encouraging students to discuss their errors and areas of improvement for future tasks (Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2020). Thus, instructors can collaborate with students to discover answers and encourage critical thinking. Throughout the conversational process, instructors should welcome students of color to share how their diverse perspectives and experiences can be used as a strength when working with patients. To analyze these themes collectively, the following tasks were repeated within the strategies: “admitting to mistakes and knowledge gaps” was listed in two of the four strategies, “empowering and encouraging students” was listed in two of the four strategies, and “offering support and resources in a non-judgmental manner” was listed in all four strategies (Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2020).

Comparably, Schepers et al. (2008) highlighted the importance of tutors creating a sense of community and understanding of shared values within a peer environment that allows students to not feel alone in the learning process. Similar to Chicca and Shellenbarger’s (2020) strategy of “providing other supports,” Schepers et al. (2008) found that providing students with training and practice resources increases their perception of safety and support.

Similar findings were found in Tsuei et al.’s (2019) descriptive exploratory pilot study of a peer-assisted learning program with resident and medical students throughout sixteen learning sessions. Using an inductive approach, the researchers discovered that students described psychologically safe situations as having non-judgmental and helpful leaders, mentors, and peers (Schepers et al., 2008; Tsuei et al., 2019). They also discovered that students described this environment as (a) having the freedom to learn and focus on the present moment without leaders shining a light on the consequences, (b) a space to build trusting relationships with their mentors, and (c) a space to discuss formal and informal topics. Their findings showed that student reports
on psychological safety in their educational environment were rooted in institutional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal factors. Participants reported the following when they experienced psychological safety: the ability to make mistakes and ask for help, feeling free to communicate based on knowing how their counterparts would respond, a focus on the present moment instead of the consequences, the lack of need to monitor risk in their environment, and the interconnection in their group dynamic rather than competition. When experiencing a lack of psychological safety, participants reported increased anxiety, humiliation, hesitancy in asking questions, feelings of unworthiness, and avoidance of taking risks and speaking up. This led the researchers to highlight the importance of psychological safety on students’ ability to concentrate, take risks, engage with the group, and capture the essence of the teaching lessons within a classroom context (Tsuei et al., 2019).

The literature has shown that a sense of psychological safety in educational environments fosters a supportive space where learners experience the freedom to learn without the weight of facing the consequences (Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2020; Tsuei et al., 2019; Turner & Harder, 2018). For example, Rogers and Freiberg's (1970) seminal work on person-centered classrooms aimed at improving the learning experiences of students and teachers and providing them with a sense of freedom while learning. Their work encouraged teachers to build rapport with their students, support curiosity and decision-making during the learning process, develop satisfactory attitudes in teachers, provide resources to facilitate new ideas, and increase awareness of person-centered learning. When working with students, these authors found that students desired the following: trust and respect, being a part of a family in the learning setting, helpful teachers, freedom to express their thoughts and viewpoints, an understanding that their teachers care and
want them to succeed, and being provided with the opportunity to make choices and hold responsibility within the classroom.

Studies have shown how important it is for instructors to prepare materials and create clear expectations so that students can collaborate, learn, and express themselves freely in an environment free from fear of repercussions (Park & Kim, 2021; Rudolph et al., 2014; Stephen et al., 2020; Turner & Harder, 2018). Correspondingly, McClintock et al. (2022) applied Edmondson’s (2018) three psychological safety leadership tasks to help clinician medical educators foster psychologically safe environments. Their goal was to provide case examples of how psychological safety and language principles can be utilized in medical education between educators and medical students. McClintock et al. (2022) provided a case example for each of Edmondson’s (2018) three psychological safety leadership tasks. Case example one explored setting the stage. In this task, educators identified student goals and explored how they can best support students in accomplishing their goals. Thus, these authors proposed that educators should explain the intention of the task and emphasize the importance of learning to the students while explaining that both the educator and students will learn in this process. Case example two explored inviting participation. These authors found that educators should be transparent when they do not know the answer and encourage their students to work together to help them answer the question. This case example demonstrated how educators should provide students with freedom and autonomy in the learning process by offering tasks that stimulate critical thinking processes within the students by using “why” questions and assignments that allow students to work together or alongside the educator to find a solution, in turn, creating a space where they would not feel embarrassed if they do not know the answer. Case example number three explored responding productively. These authors further advised that educators should express
appreciation and state strengths within their student’s suggestions as they work together to understand their student’s choices, in turn, providing an avenue that removes shame from failure and focuses on suggestions and resources regarding the following steps to solve the question (McClintock et al., 2022).

Several studies have shown that an increase in the sense of psychological safety within the classroom is predictive of student willingness to ask questions, build rapport with individuals in their shared space, and formulate discussions on various critical topics (Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2020; Tsuei et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2016). In classroom settings, students who experienced a sense of safety and comfort reported decreased anxiety when utilizing computer support services (Schepers et al., 2008). Concerning their work on race talk in the classroom context, Williams et al. (2016) findings proposed that a sense of psychological safety in classrooms is achieved by the following: providing a space for students to discuss their and others’ racial experiences openly, the presence of instructor vulnerability and transparency (Edmondson, 2020), engaging in risk, sharing power (Schepers et al., 2008), allowing mistakes, using terms that nurture teamwork, awareness of biases, and providing feedback that does not degrade student opinions. In the same vein, these findings are consistent with three out of the four strategies (e.g., cultivating a culture of safety, providing other supports, and demonstrating skill as a clinical facilitator) outlined in Chicca and Shellenbarger (2020).

Furthermore, Stephen et al. (2020) led a qualitative descriptive study that explored prelicensure nursing students’ perceptions of psychological safety as it existed within their learning experience. The results obtained from 86 pre-licensure nursing students found five themes: (a) faculty presence in a supportive environment; (b) a non-judgmental setting that allowed mistakes and learning without fear (Schepers et al., 2008), and trust in the students’
abilities (Williams et al., 2016); (c) faculty and students working together as a group rather than alone (Schepers et al., 2008); (d) faculty setting expectations for students (Rudolph et al., 2014; Turner & Harder, 2018), which allowed them to feel prepared; and (e) positive conversations where students felt like their voice was acknowledged (The King’s Fund, 2020; Williams et al., 2016) and debriefings were held to discuss triumphs and areas of improvement (Garvin et al., 2008; Sawyer & Deering, 2013).

To complement this stream of literature advising educators to foster supportive environments that promote candid communication and set clear expectations for student groups, subsequent work also identifies the importance of high psychological safety leading to higher knowledge development, in turn, helping moderate the unhelpful effects of conflict with student performance (Edmondson, 2018; Mu & Gnyawali, 2003). These findings suggested that instructors should set expectations for classroom tasks at the beginning of the semester, allowing students to feel free to express their viewpoints without fearing embarrassment. In addition, instructors should aim to understand and respect diverse viewpoints (Rudolph et al., 2014) and incorporate them when disentangling challenging problems (Mu & Gnyawali, 2003) in the classroom. This supports Schepers et al. (2008) finding that when students feel that their instructors and peers value their involvement in group discussions, they perceive their classroom space as a safe environment. In turn, students feel a sense of connectedness, which improves the group’s creativity (Edmondson, 2018), malleability, control in making decisions, and, ultimately, their learning (Schepers et al., 2008). Additionally, students who felt safe in their classroom environments, felt more comfortable engaging with their peers and the leader through discussion forums and chat boxes (Schepers et al., 2008).
In this vein, mistakes should be viewed as a learning process that promotes meaning rather than wrongdoing that requires a penalty (Rudolph et al., 2014). In Perrmann-Graham et al. (2022), graduate students in an MBA course on organizational behavior engaged in an in-class improvisational exercise to support students in interpreting concepts of psychological safety into behaviors they can use in the classroom setting. These authors found three aspects of psychological safety: (a) comfort in speaking up, (b) collaborating with others, and (c) experimenting with new ideas. When feeling comfortable speaking up, students were able to engage in interpersonal risks and hold mutual trust and respect for their peers’ perspectives (Rudolph et al., 2014). When collaborating with others, students trusted their teammates and embraced inclusion when engaging in tasks that felt uncertain, while also expressing their true selves to their team members without the fear of humiliation (Duhigg, 2016; Perrmann-Graham et al., 2022). When trusting their teammates, students learned new skills by modeling their teammates’ behaviors and mimicking them (Perrmann-Graham et al., 2022; Rudolph et al., 2014). Being open to experimenting with new ideas allowed students to accept the possibility of failure and helped them to engage in interpersonal risks with the trust that their team members would value their contributions and offer help without making judgments (Perrmann-Graham et al., 2022; Schepers et al., 2008). Openness to the ideas of their team members allowed students to consider others’ ideas and process their usefulness, in turn, working together to generate creative solutions (Edmondson, 2018; Garvin et al., 2008; Perrmann-Graham et al., 2022).

Latinx Experiences in the U.S. Education System

Broad Overview of the Literature in Latinx U.S. Education

The term “Latinx” has been utilized in numerous studies to explore and contextualize Latinx college students’ cultural identities (Gamez et al., 2022; Orozco et al., 2021; Salinas,
Latinx students remain underrepresented in U.S. education (Artiles, 2011; Chen, 2019; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Jackson & Knight-Manuel, 2019; Owens & Ramsay-Jordan, 2021; Marlow-McCown et al., 2021; Rincón & Rodriguez, 2021). Within their K-12 educational experiences, Latinx students lack resources in their classroom environments (Soto-Lara & Simpkins, 2020). Comeaux et al. (2021) asserted that the experiences of culturally diverse groups, like Latinx students, are impacted throughout K-12 and seep into higher education due to the oppressive structures within school structures and classroom curricula. For instance, Martinez et al. (2020) suggested that counselors integrate activities that foster hope and provide a guideline for achieving academic goals in elementary and middle school classrooms to combat the oppression found within classroom procedures. Furthermore, although the high school dropout rate for Latinx students dropped from 34% in 1996 to 10% in 2016, Latinx high school students still have the highest dropout rate among Black 7%, White 5%, and Asians at 3% (Gramlich, 2017).

Latinx students have acknowledged the importance of developing trust and connection with their teachers through conversations and information sharing within student-teacher relationships (Bristol & Martin-Fernández, 2019). Latinx middle school students were able to establish relationships with teachers whom they perceived as helpful, impartial, and who valued their efforts and abilities in multicultural learning environments (Glasser, 2017). Additionally, Seider et al. (2019) recommended that teachers support conversations in the classroom where students can express their ideas on a range of subjects and foster an understanding of social and political concerns that have an impact on the structural components of the student's education. For instance, Ramirez (2021) found that Latinx high school students valued academic community programs for their sense of intellectual, emotional, social, and cultural support.
Latinx high school students reported that the relationships and rapport built within these programs motivated them throughout their high school experience (Ramirez, 2021). Similarly, Levy (2019) found that high levels of engagement within the curriculum helped Latinx high school students build relationships with their peers. In addition, this author found that “students’ autonomy and expression of ideas are predictive of increased academic achievement over time” (Levy, 2019, p. 2).

Overview of the Literature in Latinx U.S. Higher Education

Latinx students remain underrepresented in higher education compared to other racial and ethnic groups (Aguilar & Kim, 2019). However, Sáenz (2020) asserts that due to the population growth of the Latinx community, by 2028, higher education institutions will rely on the enrollment of Latinx students within their classroom environments to fulfill enrollment quotas. Additionally, in a comprehensive review, Flink (2018) found that although there is a steady increase of Latinx students entering higher education programs in the U.S., several barriers prevent them from succeeding in the classroom, impacting their likelihood of graduation.

Due to the disparity of knowledge in the literature regarding Latinx students’ academic needs, academic institutions lack the ability to meet the unique needs of Latinx students in the classroom, which impacts students’ academic performance (Flink, 2018; Martinez, 2018). For instance, Latinx first-generation students face many challenges within the classroom environment because of the inability to lean on their families, due to a lack of experience with the higher educational system, to help them navigate the academic pathways and deeply understand how much is required in their academic journey (Flink, 2018).

First-generation Latinx higher education students are students whose parents did not attend college (Flink, 2018). First-generation students typically feel underprepared and incapable
of succeeding on classroom assignments (Ali & Menke, 2014; Flink, 2018). For example, Vega (2018) discovered four themes that influenced first-generation students when deciding to enroll in community college. These four themes are “(a) inadequate guidance from school personnel, (b) financial concerns, (c) familial factors, and (d) community college as an appropriate match” (Vega, 2018, p. 848). Likewise, Latinx students who immigrate to the United States face similar challenges as first-generation students attempting to comprehend the social and political climate of the United States. For instance, the academic and social aspects on campus leave them feeling disconnected from the campus community and out of place (Flink, 2018; Martinez, 2018). Additionally, Flink (2018) described English language learners, or ELLs, as individuals who do not speak English, immigrated to the U.S., and have little to no skill in English proficiency. ELLs often struggle with the linguistic nature of U.S. education, societal norms, financial stability, navigating family responsibilities, support of family from the origin country, and engaging in coursework embedded in the English language (Flink, 2018; Ricciardi & Winsler, 2021).

Numerous studies have emphasized the value of family in Latinx students’ educational journeys (España & Herrera, 2020; Ogbu, 1992; Nieto & Bode, 2017). For instance, Tatum (2017) stated that teens reported a desire to succeed in school so they could provide support to their family members. Similarly, Dueñas and Gloria (2020) highlighted the importance of familial support for students aspiring to achieve their college goals and graduate. For example, Latinx undergraduate students felt a deeper connection to their school environment and reported higher GPAs due to their supportive relationships with family members (Supel, 2019). Likewise, Chun et al. (2016) found that encouragement from family members and social support is associated with decreased stress levels and increased comfort and confidence. Moreover, in a
qualitative study aiming to understand components that enabled student success in Latinx STEM students, Rincón and Rodriguez (2021) found that despite educational challenges, students gained the ability to persist and navigate college by leaning on family, community support, and their cultural identities.

Feelings of exclusion have impacted opportunities for Latinx students to connect with other students and build meaningful connections in the classroom and on campus (Parris et al., 2018). In classroom and academic spaces, ELLs have reported feeling unworthy, excluded, and marginalized (Flink, 2018; Sanchez, 2019; Sáenz, 2020). España and Herrera (2020) recommended relabeling English Language Learner (ELL) to Emergent Bilingual Learner (EBL) to better describe students that are beginning their bilingual journey in classrooms. Additionally, in examining the racial and ethnic discriminatory patterns in the U.S., Findling et al. (2019) stated that Latinx students in higher education experience discrimination and have reported being underrepresented and fearful (Medel-Herrero et al., 2021; Sanchez, 2019), which has impacted their academic journeys. In a phenomenological study exploring the lived experiences of seventeen undergraduate Latina students in STEM, Rodriguez and Blaney (2020) found that within STEM environments, Latina students feel marginalized in terms of their racial and gender identities by their peers and professors, often dismissed, rejected, and treated as if they could not achieve a STEM degree. The marginalization and lack of diversity experienced within campus environments left Latina students feeling like an imposter, alone, and secluded from the STEM community throughout their college experience (Rodriguez & Blaney, 2020).

Latinx STEM students are an underrepresented group in STEM classrooms, which impacts their confidence levels in academia, isolation within classroom environments, and ability to overcome cultural stereotypes, in turn, affecting their academic performance (Kuchynka et al.,
For instance, in a review of students of color in chemistry undergraduate classrooms, Van Dusen et al. (2021) discovered that Latinx students are underrepresented in chemistry classrooms. In addition, Byrd et al. (2020) found that when Latinx students did not feel valued or respected within educational and classroom environments, they often resorted to silence and isolation. Moreover, González (2002) recognized the spaces where Latinx students felt a sense of isolation within campus spaces as “cultural starvation” (p. 214). Furthermore, Irizarry et al. (2021) highlighted the racial disparities Latinx STEM students faced within their mathematics learning environments, which forced them to navigate hostile spaces due to the presentation of stereotypes and microaggressions. To overcome challenges and resist marginalization, Latina STEM students reported their efforts to reframe their challenging narrative, embrace trailblazing, and become actively involved in identity-based STEM organizations (Rodriguez & Blaney, 2020).

With a 15% graduation rate from four-year universities, Latinx students are less likely to complete their four-year degree than Black (22% graduation rate), White (41% graduation rate), and Asian (63% graduation rate) students (Krogstad, 2016). Similarly, Sáenz (2020) reported that from 2010 to 2017, the number of enrolled undergraduate students decreased from 18.1 million in 2010 to 16.8 million in 2017. Additionally, educational institutions lack an understanding of the needs and resources of Latinx students from rural settings by failing to address their deficits in social capital, such as engagement with the community, rapport within school settings, assessment of socioeconomic barriers, and career and community support (Marlow-McCown et al., 2021).

Educators should foster spaces where Latinx students concentrate on learning in their classroom rather than being “learning-resistant” and unable to participate in classes (Byrd et al.,
According to España and Herrera (2020), pedagogical practices often do not include the unique needs and narratives of Latinx students. These authors found that Latinx students can face traumatic experiences outside the classroom, such as separation from their families during the citizenship process. They further suggest that educators aim to construct spaces that honor students’ voices and recognize marginalization to better engage students in the learning process. These researchers outline six practices to gain a better understanding of Latinx students: (a) cultural histories and experiences, (b) communication and language patterns, (c) personal and family values and traditions, (d) awareness of language and cultural identity, (e) awareness of policies and political practices that are impactful, and (f) multicultural dimensions within their identities (España & Herrera, 2020). Nieto and Bode (2017) defined language as “the primary mean by which people express their cultural values and the lens through which they view the world” (p. 184).

Various educational approaches, such as requesting students speak English or disallowing Spanish within the classroom, can be oppressive to Latinx students due to the lack of representation of their identities and cultural experiences (España & Herrera, 2020). In advocating for students, España and Herrera suggested inviting students to talk about their classroom experiences, creating goals with students on what can help them during their bilingual journeys, inquiring about supportive resources that might be helpful towards their success, understanding if the curriculum is representative of diverse language practices and groups, acknowledging student opinions and voices, understanding and engaging with school, and community programs to meet the student's needs. Similarly, in a study exploring Latinx undergraduates, Castellanos et al. (2018) recommended that educational institutions better understand how to validate students’ cultural and ethnic identities by utilizing their university
services and classroom resources. Furthermore, when students considered their classroom and university environment hostile and unaccommodating, their determination to complete their degree was impacted (Hernandez & Villodas, 2019).

Latinx students have expressed how highly they value maintaining their cultural, gender, and academic identities (Bryd et al., 2020). To this end, Ogbu (1992) recommended that educators grasp an understanding of their students’ cultural backgrounds and identities within their ethnic subgroups. These authors also found that the academic environments of students can be impacted by their gender identities, social class, and native language. Latinx students share cultural attributes; however, they differ in factors such as social class, education status, and time spent engaging in the practices and policies of the U.S., impacting their educational achievement (Ogbu, 1992). Nieto and Bode (2017) advised educators to recognize gaps in student achievement, resources, opportunities, and classroom expectations.

Latinx students continuously express their desire to see more diversity within their school and classroom environments (Rodriguez & Blaney, 2020). When cultivating environments that foster learning, educators should engage in mutual accommodation, which integrates the cultural identities of students and their families into classroom learning, allows educators to serve as role models, and collaborates with families in the learning process (Nieto & Bode, 2017). Research by Kaser and Short (1998) has shown that when “culture is defined as ethnicity and race, many people view culture as a characteristic of particular groups and as outside of the experience of everyone else” (p. 189). These authors suggested that cultural differences and students’ cultural identities should be embraced with curiosity and sensitivity within classroom environments to cultivate a community of learning. Additionally, they reported that students valued the ability to openly talk about concerns within their culture and withhold parts of their story that they deemed
sensitive (Kaser & Short, 1998). Similarly, Latinx undergraduate students have reported feeling a sense of representation and inclusivity when their culture is integrated into the academic curriculum (Capers, 2019).

Numerous studies have shown the perseverance and resilience of Latinx students, despite the challenges they face in educational spaces (Chavac, 2021; Rodriguez & Blaney, 2020; Witkowsky et al., 2018). In a study reporting the lived experiences of Latinx men in community college, Chavac (2021) reported the desire of Latinx men to earn their degree and attend classes, regardless of the challenges they faced in college. These challenges were made up of scarcity of food, displacement from home during the immigration process, challenges with finances, and lack of rapport with professors, which impacted their learning process. Students reported intentionally choosing their careers to one day be able to help those that faced similar challenges during the college experience (Chavac, 2021). Universities should comprehend the cultural, personal, institutional, and community history of Latinx students to better understand the needs and experiences of Latinx undergraduate students in the classroom (Puente & Ramirez, 2021).

Additionally, Huber and Malagon (2007) found that undocumented students in higher education institutions reported experiencing institutional neglect due to the lack of social, financial, and classroom support, which often felt like a barrier to their academic success.

By understanding the cultural assets of Latinx students, universities can act as a motivational platform for students (Cuellar et al., 2017). Latinx students have established ties with their peers and professors by participating in clubs and organizations, which serve as additional support systems in their academic settings (Witkowsky et al., 2018). Diaz-Solodukhin and Orphan (2022) assert that Latinx students' positive connections to their families, communities, and university networks are sources of support for their academic achievement and
can be referred to as funds of knowledge. Additionally, Latinx undergraduate students have described cultural centers and groups that embraced people of color as welcoming spaces on campus that allowed them to explore their ethnic identity and forge relationships with others (Cuellar, 2018). Cultural centers on university campuses can serve as safe spaces for students and bring recognition to the multidimensional components of their culture (Yosso & López, 2010). Yosso and López (2010) recognized four supportive racial and ethnic climate features: (a) inclusive of racial and ethnic students, instructors, and staff members; (b) the inclusion of historical experiences of racial and ethnic groups; (c) campus programs that support racial and ethnic students’ retention, recruitment; and (d) graduation rates and the institutions’ mission statement pledging to integrate policies and practices that meet the needs of racial and ethnic groups.

Faculty, staff, and peer support have been predictive of greater comfort, engagement, and inclusion for Latinx college students in the classroom (Crisp et al., 2015; Huber & Malagon, 2007; Mireles-Rios & García, 2019; Salinas, 2017). Latinx community college students' motivation and self-confidence have been impacted by the inclusion of Latinx faculty members in programs because they saw them as role models (Herrera et al., 2017). In addition, Latinx students expressed greater self-confidence when they perceived their teachers as supportive, encouraging, and willing to assist them (Mireles-Rios & García, 2019). In a workshop held on campus, Mireles-Rios and García (2019) found that Latinx undergraduate students desired to build relationships and engage with graduate student mentors who understood their challenges and provided direction on academic success. These interactions with graduate students served as a culturally relevant support system for Latinx undergraduate students, which made them feel less isolated on campus (Mireles-Rios & García, 2019).
Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit)

Definition of Theory and Seminal Works

The researcher utilized a LatCrit theoretical framework to better understand Latinx CITs’ experiences with psychological safety in classroom environments. Within education, LatCrit has been used in qualitative research to understand and explore the social, cultural, and political journeys of Latinx students (Bernal, 2002). LatCrit acknowledges the voices of Latinx students and views students as creators and holders of knowledge (Bernal, 2002). When students are seen as creators and holders of knowledge, students’ journeys and experiences are told and understood from the student’s perspective. In educational spaces, students “often feel as if their histories, experiences, cultures, and languages are devalued, misinterpreted, or omitted” (Bernal, 2002, p. 106).

In the 1970s, Critical Race Theory (CRT) was first acknowledged in law, and then, during the 1990s, it began to be utilized within education (Acevedo-Gil, 2016). CRT is recognized as a movement made up of a group of individuals that identified as scholars, lawyers, and activists that aimed to study the connections between power, race, and racism (Delgado et al., 2017). CRT focuses on the following: (a) the racism of people of color within organizations and institutions, the inequalities of the dominant group over people of color; (b) interest convergence which involves the self-interest of elite Whites over aiding people of color, and the invisibility of characteristics of people of color within society; (c) racialization of people of color through stereotypes and discriminatory practices and labels; (d) lack of acknowledgment of the multiple identities people of color hold; (e) and the lack of acknowledgment of the voices and histories of people of color (Delgado et al., 2017).
In their discontent with anti-discrimination policies and laws, Latinx law professors launched small groups focused on creating LatCrit theory, in order to address the Latinx racial component and the civil rights of the Latinx population (Stefancic, 1997). Although LatCrit is rooted in CRT, which allows LatCrit to share the same tenets as CRT, LatCrit specifically relates to the distinctive needs and traditions of the Latinx community (Bernal, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Villalpando, 2004).

It is imperative to understand how LatCrit is distinct from CRT. LatCrit identifies specific concerns relating to language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, and sexuality (Bernal, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). For example, Stefancic (1997) highlighted themes in the literature related to the Latina population, such as the Latinx cultural traditions of counter-storytelling, to discuss power within their histories and experiences. Counter-storytelling is “a method of telling the story of those experiences that are not often told…and a tool for analyzing and challenging the stories of those in power and whose story is a natural part of the dominant discourse-a majoritarian story” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 475). The Black/White paradigm within policies and laws fails to recognize and serve the Latinx community and its oppressive and discriminatory practices toward women. The Black/White paradigm overlooks the role of subordination, Spanish as the unifying language, the lack of attention on bilingual education curricula and educational concerns and learning styles of Latinx students, and the stereotypes of the Latinx population described in the media and various literature. Additionally, Latinx students may encounter oppression within educational environments due to race, sex, class, disability, or other components relating to their multidimensional identities (Bernal, 2002).

When utilizing this framework with Latinx populations, LatCrit is not just CRT for a particular subpopulation of people of color. Delgado and Stefancic (2013) describe the Black-
White racial binary as a “paradigm as the conception that race in America consists, either exclusively or primarily, of only two constituent racial groups, the Black and the White” (p. 458). To avoid the reproduction of the Black-White racial binary, Delgado and Stefancic (2013) suggested that scholars should focus on the voices that exist within other races and understand that other racial groups should not function under the same paradigm of the Black-White binary. When scholars solely focus on the Black-White binary, Delgado and Stefancic (2013) assert that “other racialized groups like Latinos/as, Asian Americans, and Native Americans are often marginalized or ignored altogether” (p. 459). LatCrit acknowledges the restrictions of the Black-White racial binary in CRT and focuses on the unique needs and experiences of the Latinx community due to the invisibility of their lived experiences within society, organizations, and institutions (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018).

LatCrit has been used in studies to understand the experiences and unique struggles of undocumented Latinx college students who feel isolated and underrepresented in campus settings that are distinct from other marginalized groups of color (Shelton, 2018). Additionally, Shelton (2018) illuminated the fear of Latinx college students concerning their immigration status, financial limitations (e.g., not eligible for specific funding or grants), and limited opportunities that support the development of their professional identities. However, some policies, such as the California DREAM ACT, allow undocumented Latinx college students who are residents of California to be eligible for financial aid when enrolling in public colleges and universities (Shelton, 2018). Moreover, the National Conference of State Legislatures (2021) reported that 19 states had approved undocumented students to pay in-state tuition rates. To further highlight the limited educational experiences of Latinx students, the National Conference of State Legislatures (2021) reported that seven states (e.g., California, Colorado, Minnesota, New Mexico, Oregon,
Texas, and Washington) permitted undocumented students to receive state funding. Three states (e.g., Arizona, Georgia, and Indiana) do not allow in-state rates for undocumented students. Furthermore, two states (e.g., Alabama and South Carolina) do not permit undocumented students to enroll in public universities (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2021).

The complementary nature of LatCrit and CRT allows LatCrit to lend itself to the five tenets of CRT: (a) focus on race and racism, (b) challenging the dominant ideology, (c) focus on social justice and social justice practices, (d) acknowledging experiential knowledge, and (e) focus on historical context (Solórzano, 1998).

The first tenet, aimed to identify race and racism within institutional structures, policies, and practices (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Villalpando, 2004). In addition to race and racism, the multicultural identities of Latinx individuals can be subjected to oppression relating to language, gender, sexuality, and class. The marginalization of Latinx students can be based on one factor of their identity or multiple factors (Bernal, 2002; Villalpando, 2004). For example, a Latinx student can be facing oppression due to identifying as female and being economically marginalized, along with identifying as Latinx. Furthermore, LatCrit acknowledges the microaggressions that professors might use within classrooms or the exclusion of resources within the Latinx community from campus programs (Villalpando, 2004).

Regarding the second tenet, which challenges the dominant ideology, LatCrit uncovers the acts of power and privilege of dominant groups in American educational spaces (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Villalpando, 2004). For example, curricula and educational structures that possess color blindness operate with the belief that White and Latinx students have equal opportunities (Villalpando, 2004). Additionally, LatCrit suggests that programs should focus on equity and design services that focus on the needs of Latinx students. Programs and policies that
are functioning to meet the needs of the dominant culture are creating a disadvantage for Latinx students with varying unique needs (Villalpando, 2004).

The third tenet focuses on social justice and rejects policies that target multicultural identities related to sexual preference, class, gender, language, and race (Villalpando, 2004). With this, students are empowered and provided with individualized services based on their intellectual, emotional, and social needs. Programs are designed to commit to social justice advocacy for students of color and remove microaggressions and stereotypes held against students (Bernal, 2002).

The fourth tenet, acknowledging experiential knowledge, Latinx students’ “experiential knowledge is viewed as an asset, a form of community memory, a source of empowerment and strength, and not as a deficit” (Villalpando, 2004, p. 46). Thus, professors and program directors learn about Latinx students’ histories, narratives, counter-stories, experiences of oppression, and factors of persistence and resilience that enable success within education by learning from the student (Villalpando, 2004). Counter-stories acknowledge a meaning-making process for advocacy and policy change by functioning as “a pedagogical tool that allows one to better understand and appreciate the unique experiences and responses of students of color through a deliberate, conscious, and open type of listening” (Bernal, 2002, p. 116). Experiential knowledge is rooted in students’ familial backgrounds, traditions, narratives, and personal stories (Villalpando, 2004). With this, Latinx students are not viewed as disadvantaged because of their multidimensional identities, but due to the programs and institutional services that fail to meet their unique needs, instead of promoting and nurturing systems that encourage their success (Villalpando, 2004).
The fifth tenet, focused on historical context and aimed to understand how “policies and practices in higher education be viewed through a historical lens in order to understand how they will affect Latinos and other students of color” (Villalpando, 2004, p. 47). As a result, institutional programs and services are based on the historical and present needs of Latinx students to ensure they are not utilizing a one-size fits all approach, but rather an individualized approach based on equity to meet Latinx students’ needs (Villalpando, 2004). For example, schools can acknowledge students’ socioeconomic status, family origins, and experiences before entering college and provide services based on students’ present needs weaved into Latinx students’ histories (Villalpando, 2004).

For the purposes of this study, the researcher utilized LatCrit to acknowledge and improve the educational structures of CACREP-accredited programs by enhancing the understanding of Latinx CITs’ experiences of psychological safety within classroom environments. The researcher aimed to center on Latinx CITs’ histories and stories of educational experiences specific to psychological safety in classroom environments.

**Application of LatCrit in Education and Counseling**

Numerous studies in the education and counseling discipline have utilized LatCrit to validate and empower students as they share their experiences within institutional and classroom settings to provide approaches that counselors and teachers can implement in their practice (Capper, 2015; Farrington, 2018; Gaytan-Morales, 2016; González, 2022; Yosso & Solórzano, 2005). In a content analysis exploring the role of qualitative inequity in Latinx populations, Delgado-Romero et al. (2018) suggested that LatCrit serves as a theoretical framework to understand that “the voices of Latinx people are uniquely competent to speak on race and racism because of their historical and contemporary experiences with oppression, White supremacy and
the racial binary (White-Black) in the United States that often renders Latinx people invisible” (p. 320). Within higher education, LatCrit has been used to address the educational disparities of community college counselors working with Latinx students and gain a better understanding of the challenges they face regarding institutional oppression and expectations within the classroom curriculum (Gaytan-Morales, 2016). Gomez and Huber (2019) used LatCrit with DACAmented college students to assess their experiences through the component of LatCrit, which include: immigration, ethnicity, culture, language, phenotype, and sexuality. Furthermore, to assess Latinx students’ multidimensional identities, González (2022) utilized a LatCrit lens to better understand the voices of his students and the multidimensional experiences within campus organizations serving Mexican students.

Additionally, in an analysis of undocumented Latinx college students in the U.S., Shelton (2018) utilized LatCrit to bring forth the voice of undocumented students and reflect on factors of racism that impacted their social realities and the meaning of their experiences in relation to university practices and resources. Similarly, Farrington (2018) utilized LatCrit to immerse himself into the community of Latinx college students to better understand their educational journeys and validate their voices. In acknowledging and celebrating Latinx student voices, Bernal (2002) integrated LatCrit to conceptualize their students’ experiences and saw their students as creators of knowledge that have the ability to resist racism in school settings.

**Intersections Between Psychological Safety and Latinx Experiences in the U.S. Educational System**

**Broad Overview of Psychological Safety With Marginalized Populations**

Leaders cannot see the “thought bubbles” of their students; however, it is still their responsibility to intentionally engage the student and understand what makes up that thought
bubble (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020). The voices of people of color in multicultural work teams are often overlooked, dismissed, and overpowered by majority voices (Fujimoto & Presbitero, 2021). As a way of honoring diversity and culture, Fujimoto and Presbitero (2021) completed three quantitative studies to examine multicultural workspaces, which consist of “employees who are different in terms of race, ethnicity, language, religion, values, norms, social classes, and roles” (p. 408). To better understand multicultural work relationships, Fujimoto and Presbitero (2021) used cultural intelligence (C.Q.), which is defined as “a set of intercultural capabilities that facilitates an individual’s functioning in a culturally diverse environment involving cross-cultural interactions,” to examine supervisor C.Q. and their impact on inclusion within teams (p. 408). Their results showed that in cultivating inclusive multicultural workspaces, supervisors should exercise role-play of inclusion effort by valuing the cultural diversity of their employees and creating an environment that is not based on fear. In order to respect their identity, these authors found that diversity was extended into the workgroup’s policies, practices, and informal norms and values. When C.Q. supervisors modeled psychological safety, these leaders constructed an environment of inclusion, inhibiting their employees’ cooperation in offering up their thoughts and from engaging in risk (Fujimoto & Presbitero, 2021).

To this end, creating environments not based on fear is vital to undergraduate nursing students. Psychological safety has displayed gender differences among undergraduate nursing students (Roh et al., 2022). For instance, a 30-hour course with third and fourth-year nursing students comprised of 97 women and 95 men showed that female nursing students reported lower academic psychological safety than male nursing students due to an increased fear of humiliation when interacting with their instructors (Roh et al., 2022). Similarly, on the basis of
gender, to better understand how female Black teens ages 15-18 made sense of their speech when they conceptualized their spaces as not being psychologically safe, Woodson (2020) found that Black females did not feel psychologically safe expressing their racial identity and gender during their speeches. However, they also experienced feelings of “nothing to lose” when directly speaking to the crowd (Woodson, 2020, p. 576). Furthermore, Ely et al. (2012) found that women and team members of color, which were classified as “low-status identity” groups, often reported feelings of unsafety when engaging in interpersonal risks within environments where leaders exercised psychological safety and invited their ideas (p. 355).

Absence of Psychological Safety With Latinx Experiences

During a guest speaker appearance at Benedictine University (2018), Amy Edmondson encouraged leaders to create spaces for their employees to voice their opinions because “if we are not hearing from people, we are missing a game-changing idea or missing an early warning.” To not miss opportunities to validate students’ experiences, leaders are encouraged to create psychologically safe spaces that honor their voices (Edmondson, 2018). Although other ethnic and racial groups are sparsely studied regarding psychological safety, the literature on psychological safety fails to address the impacts of psychological safety, specifically and comprehensively, on the Latinx population. No studies have been completed that solely focused on the Latinx population and psychological safety. Therefore, the researcher relied on the broader literature regarding underrepresented groups and students of color.

Edmondson (2020) emphasized that a common misconception of psychological safety is that it means the same as “safe space.” However, psychological safety does not mean a space where students will consistently feel comfortable and is representative of a trigger-free atmosphere. Instead, psychological safety can be understood as a “brave space,” where students
can communicate their questions and concerns without fearing embarrassment or retaliation from their professors and peers. As a result, students challenge themselves and others, increasing learning and performance (Edmondson, 2020). During conversations on race, students may not feel a sense of comfortability (Buckley & Foldy, 2010). However, when embracing a lens of psychological safety, Buckley and Foldy (2010) suggested that students felt the ability to engage in risk and be transparent about their feelings regarding race, despite moments when others in the classroom disagreed with their perspectives. Additionally, Ely et al. (2012) discovered that in team learning environments, women and employees of color did not feel psychologically safe communicating various topics within group dynamics. Similarly, when exploring the relationship between team racial diversity and psychological safety, Buckley and Foldy (2010) suggested that students of color felt less psychologically safe within classroom environments than White students.

To gain an understanding of the Midwestern U.S. production organization diversity climate, Singh et al. (2013) explored the relationship between psychological safety, diversity climate, and employee performance in 165 employees and supervisors. Participants were made up of 61% White, 48% Hispanic, 7% Black, 4% Asian, 2% multiracial, and 4% other underrepresented groups. Their findings showed that supervisors and leaders should ensure that they are fostering psychological safety by supporting diverse climates within the organization. Leaders can do this by ensuring that people of color hold various roles within numerous levels of the organization and by integrating trainings on diversity. Additionally, their findings showed that race plays a vital role in influencing employees’ psychological reactions to the diverse climate of their organization. For instance, when employees of color felt that their organization
held a supportive diversity climate, they reported feeling psychologically safe to express their identity, which impacted employee performance levels (Singh et al., 2013).

Latinx and Counselors-in-training (CIT)

**Definition of the Population (Exclusion/Inclusion Criteria) of CITs**

Kimbel and Levitt’s (2017) *A Guide to Graduate Programs in Counseling*, an official publication of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), stipulates that counselors-in-training (CITs) are counseling students engaged in their practicum and internship fieldwork. Practicum fieldwork requires counseling students to complete a minimum of 100 hours of direct and indirect service with clients over a minimum of a 10-week academic term. Out of those 100 hours, at least 40 hours must be directly working with clients. Internship fieldwork requires counseling students to complete a minimum of 600 hours of direct and indirect service with clients over a minimum of a 10-week academic term. Out of those 600 hours, at least 240 hours must be directly working with clients (CACREP, 2015; Kimbel & Levitt, 2017).

CITs comprise various racial and ethnic groups, including oppressive and oppressed groups, and carry varying multidimensional identities (Chan et al., 2018). CITs are encouraged to reflect on their cultural background and identity within counselor education programs to increase their self-awareness (Skovolt, 2012).

**Council for Accreditation and Counseling Related Educational Programs (CACREP) in the United States**

*Description of the Role of CACREP in the Structure/Delivery of Counselor Education*

In 1981, the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) developed CACREP for the accreditation of counseling programs (CACREP, 2015; CACREP, 2022a).
CACREP (2015) states that the process and status of their accreditation procedures “indicates to the public at large that a program is fulfilling its commitment to educational quality” (p. 3). CACREP exists within the counseling profession to determine the national accreditation minimal unified standards for master’s and doctoral programs (CACREP, 2015; Remley & Herlihy, 2016). CACREP (2022a) defines accreditation as “the setting of minimal standards which training programs must meet,” which include “institutional settings, program mission and objectives, program content, practicum experiences, student selection, and advising, faculty qualifications and workload, program governance, instructional support, and self-evaluation” (p. 1). The CACREP standards outlined for master’s level students to attain their degree are as follows: a minimum of 60 semester credit hours, often completed by a full-time student in two to three years (CACREP, 2015). Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Program’s (2015) goal for setting specific requirements is to cultivate a strong counseling identity within their students. In 2018, CACREP reported 871 accredited counseling programs in 405 institutions containing 53,000 master's and doctoral students (CACREP Annual Report, 2019).

**CACREP Standards and Multicultural Learning in Classroom Environments**

CACREP (2022a) defined inclusive learning environments as “an educational setting where students of every ability and background receive training in the same place, are supported intellectually and academically and are extended a sense of belonging regardless of identity” (p. 4). Within a draft of the expected 2024 standards, CACREP (2022a) stated their intent to emphasize diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging within all components of their programs. Nieto and Bode (2017) define multicultural education as:
A process of comprehensive school reform and primary education for all students. It challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms the pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, gender, and sexual orientation, among others) that students, their communities, and teachers reflect. Multicultural education permeates the school’s curriculum, instructional strategies, interactions among teachers, students, and families, and the same way schools conceptualize the nature of teaching and learning. Because it uses critical pedagogy as its underlying philosophy and focuses on knowledge, reflection, and action (praxis) as the basis for social change, multicultural education promotes democratic principles of social justice (p. 32).

As outlined in the CACREP (2015) core curricular experiences, instructors are required to review the following content for the core area of social and cultural diversity: national and international needs, multicultural trends, experiential learning to understand self and other cultural experiences, theories of multicultural counseling, identity development, and social justice, strategies for advocacy and counseling with diverse populations, multicultural competencies, cultural self-awareness, social justice and advocacy, roles in eliminating bias, prejudices, and processing intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination (Kimbel & Levitt, 2017). The current study is particularly interested in section one, the learning environment, and section two, professional counseling identity, of the CACREP (2015) standards. Within section 1. A, “the academic unit is clearly identified as part of the institution’s graduate degree offerings and has primary responsibility for the preparation of students in the program” (CACREP, 2015, p. 5). Within section 1.K., “the academic unit makes continuous and
systematic efforts to attract, enroll, and retain a diverse group of students and to create and support an inclusive learning community” (CACREP, 2015, p. 6).

Another organization that has a fundamental interest in the learning process of CITs is the American Counseling Association (ACA). ACA (2014) provides the framework that shapes the ethical behavior of counselors, counselor supervisors, and counselor educators. Haskins et al. (2022) noted that the word diversity is mentioned in the ACA Code of ethics 22 times. Similar to CACREP section 1.K., the ACA Code of ethics (2014, Section F.11.b) states that counselor educators should “actively recruit and retain a diverse student body” and “commit to multicultural/diversity competence by recognizing and valuing the diverse cultures and types of abilities that students bring to the training experience,” as well as “provide appropriate accommodations that enhance and support student well-being and academic performance” (p. 15). For example, counselor educators send brochures to universities with a high diversity rate and provide information to students about the campus disability office and international student offices to ensure students understand the services available to them on campus (Herlihy & Corey, 2014). Also, the ACA Code of ethics (2014, Section F.11.C) states, “Counselor educators actively infuse multicultural/diversity competency in their training and supervision practices. They actively train students to gain awareness, knowledge, and skills in the competencies of multicultural practice” (p. 15). For example, counselor educators work together to better understand how to integrate multicultural awareness and community tools into their teaching content. They also advise students about the importance of increasing their multicultural awareness (Herlihy & Corey, 2014).

Additionally, the ACA Code of ethics (2014, Section F.7.c.) states that counselor educators should “infuse material related to multiculturalism/diversity into all courses and
workshops for the development of professional counselors” (p. 14). For example, counselor educators may hold workshops for students that focus on diversity in supervision and teaching and engage their students in activities, such as role-play and focus groups, to hear their perspectives on meeting the needs of various cultures (Herlihy & Corey, 2014). Within institutional and societal levels, the ACA Code of ethics (2014, Section A.7.a) states that “Counselors advocate at individual, group, institutional, and societal levels to address potential barriers and obstacles that inhibit access and/or the growth and development of clients” (p. 5). For example, counselor educators work with their students to find ways to better assist them and provide them with community and campus resources to ensure they have the material to succeed in classroom environments (Herlihy & Corey, 2014).

In a systemic review of 27 articles, Thacker and Minton (2020) discovered two central categories (e.g., overt microaggressions and isolating consequences) that included eight common themes experienced by masters and doctoral racial and ethnic students of color and instructors of color within counselor education. These findings suggested that students of color experience microaggressions in the form of stereotyping, tokenism, and erasure. Additionally, feelings of seclusion and invisibility in education caused students to feel underrepresented, disconnected, discouraged, and experience a lack of connection with their mentors. Furthermore, the intersectionality of identities (e.g., race, gender, and ethnicity) students and faculty identified with, held additional challenges and barriers within their educational settings (Thacker & Minton, 2020).

Chan et al. (2018) viewed multicultural education courses as collaborative, where the counselor educator and the CIT work together to challenge their biases and assumptions to better serve their clients. Within the classroom, these authors found that learning concentrated on the
topic of multiculturism should be paired with the transparency of the counselor educator. With this, counselor educators are advised to build rapport with their students by being transparent about their cultural backgrounds and gaining a better understanding of their students’ cultural backgrounds to minimize invalidating the cultural experiences of their students in the learning process. Counselor educators’ transparency and willingness to learn about their students have impacted the student-professor power relation (Chan et al., 2018). In classroom environments, counselor educators are advised to build the critical thinking skills of CITs to develop an atmosphere of reflection on the various complexities of culture within themselves and their clients and how they impact one another. When working with clients, these authors further suggest that the reflection and transparency of social and cultural biases will help students conceptualize client cases and better understand their clients’ experiences with oppression and marginalization. The multicultural learning experiences that CITs have in their CACREP program can impact their work and interactions with clients (Pester et al., 2020). Discussions in the classroom that involve the in-depth conceptualizing of social and cultural identity equip students with the ability to engage and advocate for their clients as they share their lived experiences with CITs within the counseling space (Pester et al., 2020). CITs gained skills and increased their awareness of cultural identity and development to be equipped to address the oppressive voices of their clients and understand dimensions of privilege and social justice advocacy within the counseling space (Feather et al., 2019).

In the most recent annual review of the counselor education and supervision discipline, La Guardia (2021) reviewed 139 published articles on counselor education and supervision and found that diversity and inclusion in higher education have become one of the central foci. Specifically, within the teaching literature, racial justice and advocacy topics have highlighted
the importance of integrating these foci within the curriculum of CITs (La Guardia, 2021). The qualitative studies highlighted in La Guardia’s (2021) review addressed topics of social justice, lived experiences of CITs’ engagement with international and cultural immersion, counselor educators’ focus on multiculturalism in courses, diversity in the curriculum, CITs’ anxiety with religion and judgment, Latina CITs’ experiences of counselor educators teaching models, and experiences of female African Americans in doctoral programs (La Guardia, 2021). In another comprehensive review of multicultural courses in CACREP-accredited counselor education programs, Pieterse et al. (2009) found that when reviewing the 47 required textbooks in 57 courses, only 26 courses and 45% of the syllabi covered people of color (e.g., Asian/Pacific Islander, Latinx, Black, White, Native American, Arab American/Middle Eastern, Appalachians, and Multiracial). The central focus of multicultural training examines specific groups, African Americans, Arab Americans, and Asian Americans, which does not include a comprehensive review and focus on the Latinx population (Pieterse et al., 2009). In another review of multicultural textbooks utilized in CACREP-accredited programs, Sawyer-Kurian et al. (2017) found that many textbooks used in classrooms lacked content addressing cultural competence and people of color.

Several studies have revealed that Latinx CITs felt underprepared within their clinical expertise and multicultural competence (Barden et al., 2017; Cavazos et al., 2009; Dickson et al., 2010; Seward, 2019). In a phenomenological study using in-depth interviews, Vela et al. (2019) investigated Latina CITs’ experiences with their instructors’ teaching models. These researchers found that when instructors displayed passion and care for their students, engaged students in the learning process through meaningful activities dedicated to CITs’ reflection and awareness, held an accountability of content through the use of assessments as a way to apply knowledge learned
during class lessons, and presented on main components of the textbook content, instructors were able to build meaningful connections. A longitudinal study by González-Voller et al. (2020) of master’s level CITs’ perceptions of multicultural competence within their CACREP-accredited counseling programs suggested that as students’ multicultural competence increased, they engaged in more social justice and advocacy activities.

**Latinx Experiences in Counselor Education and Related Fields**

Scholars have recommended that CACREP-accredited counselor education programs incorporate a Latinx counseling concentration to better serve the needs of Latinx clients and meet a section of the CACREP multicultural standards (Locke, 2021; Ramirez & David, 2021). In the most recent vital statistics survey completed by CACREP (2018), there were 7.89% Latinx master’s level students compared to 59.75% White students and 5.71% Latinx doctoral level students compared to 55.33% White students enrolled in CACREP-accredited programs. In counselor education programs, Locke (2021) argued that Latinx doctoral students feel marginalized, ignored, isolated from others, misunderstood by their peers, and marginalized. These authors found that Latinx doctoral students felt that their faculty tended to dismiss topics on race and did not reflect on privilege within classroom environments. At times, Latinx doctoral students felt like quitting, but they began resisting oppression, discovering the value of their voice, and integrating their culture into their professional counseling work (Locke, 2021). Several Latinx doctoral students described feeling angry due to their invisibility. However, they were able to turn those emotions into power and invest in their profession to make significant contributions to the counseling field. Latinx doctoral students felt their professors did not expect them to succeed and did not create a space of belonging, so they functioned in survival mode and continuously reminded themselves of their academic goals (Locke, 2021). Furthermore,
Hipolito-Delgado et al. (2021) reported additional sources of support in their grounded study on graduate students of color in counselor education. Their findings suggested that support from faculty, peers, family, mentors, and friends was integral to their academic success. Similarly, Lerma (2010) discovered eight themes Latinx doctoral counselor education graduates shared in a qualitative study. The eight themes were familial encouragement, identification of good examples within the family system, a sense of support with academic success, the role of parental expectations, cultural identity, perseverance despite obstacles, resilience, expectations within the culture and acculturation, and elements of intrinsic motivation.

Within the discipline of counselor education, Dominguez et al. (2020) asserted that programs responsible for the clinical training of counseling students should better prepare students to work with the Latinx community. Counseling programs should be engaging counselors in classroom activities that help them build a knowledge base for the cultural, political, and historical complexities of the Latinx community. By representing the Latinx community within the counselor education curriculum, counseling students were able to develop an understanding of their needs through cultural classroom activities, workshops held off-campus, community service, and take part in cultural study-abroad trips that immersed the counselor education student within the Latinx culture, which developed their skills and offered strategies to work with Latinx clients (Ramirez & David, 2021).

Theoretical Framework: Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit)

LatCrit as a Framework for Understanding Latinx CIT Experiences of Psychological Safety

Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) is the theoretical framework adopted in this qualitative phenomenological study. LatCrit helps recognize themes and patterns of the marginalization and
inequalities of people of color that could be woven into practices, policies, and curricula within schools and organizations (Villalpando, 2004). Vales (1996) outlined the four functions of LatCrit as follows: (a) to produce knowledge, (b) social transformation advancements, (c) connecting and expanding on critical struggles, and (d) fostering community engagement and partnership within and outside of academia.

In the present study, the researcher utilized LatCrit as a theoretical framework and the prominent components of Latinx CITs’ racial and ethnic identities (West-Olatunji, 2022) to better understand Latinx CITs’ experiences with psychological safety in classroom environments. Using LatCrit, the researcher was able to intentionally thread together the racialized experiences (Connors, 2022), educational classroom practices (Shelton, 2018), and capture CITs’ voices (Connors, 2022) by embracing their narratives, acknowledging that they are the knowledge creators (Ezell, 2018), and validating components of their multidimensional identities (González, 2022).

LatCrit is a natural fit for examining Latinx CITs’ experiences of psychological safety. For instance, Giordano et al. (2017) asserted that psychological safety impacts the learning environment of CITs’ religion, spirituality, and political beliefs (Giordano et al., 2017). For instance, CITs who were older felt that peers and faculty members did not value their thoughts or ideas (Giordano et al., 2017). Regarding their political views, 16.3% of CITs reported their political beliefs not being acknowledged, 25% of CITs reported not being transparent about their political beliefs, and 37.1% of CITs reported not sharing their political beliefs with their peers or professors (Giordano et al., 2017). Regarding CITs’ religious views, 18% felt their religious views were ignored or dismissed, 24.2% of CITs reported not being transparent about their
religious beliefs, and 32.6% reported not sharing their religious beliefs with their peers or professors (Giordano et al., 2017).

Scholars have stressed the importance of integrating practices to reduce the underrepresentation of Latinx students in various graduate school programs (Gándara & The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, 2015; Ramirez, 2013). Latina CITs have described ineffective classroom learning environments as instructors being disorganized, disengaged with students and their academic growth, and not integrating humor and storytelling within lessons (Vela et al., 2019). Additionally, Vela et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of instructors building rapport with their students and showing CITs that they are invested in their learning process and value input. This action made students feel respected and encouraged, which increased their trust in their professors. Similarly, in a recent study on the lived experiences of Latinx and Asian CITs, Haskins et al. (2022) utilized IPA to identify four superordinate themes: (a) illuminating hegemonic structures, (b) identity challenges, (c) increasing competence through awareness, and (d) varying connections. The first superordinate theme, illuminating hegemonic structures, revealed CITs’ experiences of being taught counseling theories that were rooted in the dominant White culture, and specific topics such as White privilege were excused as a norm instead of being thoroughly discussed and conceptualized, which left CITs feeling as if they were omitted from the group and perceived differently in the classroom. In addition, participants shared the challenges of “navigating racial blinders” with their clients, peers, and professors, which were often in the form of microaggressions and microinsults, such as being mistaken for another classmate within their ethnic group, remarks placed on their accent, or perceived judgments that they would have an accent. The second superordinate theme, identity challenges, revealed CITs feeling alone, facing discrimination, and
wanting to see their culture represented among faculty members. Several participants reported a desire that they could identify as White to cope with their challenges by imagining feelings of experiencing the anticipated ease and joy of life within the White culture. The CITs shared their presumptions about working with White clients and their journey to becoming more competent when working with all cultures, including their ability to recognize privilege and oppression within each culture, which was revealed by the third superordinate theme, increasing competence through awareness. The fourth superordinate theme, desiring and embracing varying connections, revealed their experiences of being able to talk with their peers and professors about topics they were struggling with. However, participants also revealed the desire to be able to connect, trust, and feel validated by faculty members (Haskins et al., 2022). Similarly, Nelson and Jackson (2003) found seven themes that Latinx counseling interns reported as vital to their professional identity development: “knowledge, personal growth, experimental learning, relationships, sense of accomplishment, costs, and perceptions of the counseling profession” (p. 11). These themes highlighted the importance of understanding students’ identities in academic spaces.

For the current study, LatCrit was chosen to serve as the theoretical framework for the study to provide a voice, produce knowledge, academic engagement, and consideration of the issues of Latinx CITs’ experiences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Researchers have been able to focus on the unique needs and experiential knowledge of the Latinx population through their lived experiences (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Villalpando, 2004). In addition, Villalpando (2004) emphasized that experiential knowledge is often passed onto Latinx individuals by their families through the following: storytelling, family histories, biographies, scenarios, parables, stories, chronicles, and narratives. In the present study, the researcher used
the experiential knowledge of Latinx CITs to generate transformative and empowering narratives and construct opportunities for social action within their educational environments.

**Summary of Chapter Two**

In summary, this chapter systematically identified relevant research on the significant components of this study. A comprehensive review of the literature was conducted to outline elements that highlight the research question. Additionally, weaving together the study’s fundamental components allowed the researcher to develop an argument showcasing how this study is part of a broader conversation. In chapter three, the researcher thoroughly expanded on the methodology, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations selected for this study.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Overview of the Methodology

The previous chapter provided an in-depth review of the literature concerning the primary components of the study: psychological safety, Latinx experiences in the United States educational system, application of LatCrit in education and counseling, intersections between psychological safety and Latinx experiences in the U.S. educational system, Latinx CITs, a review of the role and multicultural learning within CACREP, and the application of IPA and LatCrit to the current study.

For this chapter, the researcher provided a detailed description of the methodology utilized within this study. The purpose of this chapter was to introduce the research methodology, interpretive phenomenological analysis, regarding Latinx CITs’ experiences of psychological safety within their classroom environments in CACREP-accredited master’s programs in the United States. First, a review of the research question will be provided. Second, an explanation of the rationale for an interpretive phenomenological analysis will be comprehensively discussed in this chapter. Third, a description of the researcher’s role in this study will be outlined. Fourth, information will be provided on sampling procedures and participants. Finally, an outline of other primary components will be described, such as data collection and procedures, data analysis, considerations to enhance research quality, and ethical considerations.

Research Question

This study sought to add to the knowledge base of counselor education programs utilizing the following guiding research question:
1. How do Latinx CITs define and experience psychological safety within classroom environments while enrolled in CACREP-accredited master’s degree programs in the United States?

**Research Design and Rationale**

A qualitative design would be utilized for this study. In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Pajo, 2017; Terrell, 2015). Qualitative research is conducted using an emic perspective, where the researcher holds an insider perspective due to her collaboration with the participants (Terrell, 2015). In the current study, the researcher had direct involvement with the participants through interviews. Qualitative research aims to understand and interpret how the phenomenon under study is meaningful to the participants under investigation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Pajo, 2017). For the present study, psychological safety is the phenomenon under study, and the participants under investigation are Latinx CITs. Qualitative researchers are highly interested in the distinctive process of how individuals richly describe and interpret their worlds and make meaning of their experiences to construct their worlds (Patton, 1985). A qualitative approach was the most appropriate choice for the current study since the researcher aims to examine how Latinx counselor-in-training students richly describe, experience, and define psychological safety.

**Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)**

This qualitative study was performed using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). Smith (2011) described IPA as “the detailed examination of personal lived experience, the meaning of experience to participants and how participants make sense of that experience” (p. 9). Wagstaff and Williams (2014) went further by describing, “the aim of IPA is to explore the sense
that participants make of their personal and social worlds, while recognising the contribution of the researcher in interpreting the participants’ interpretations of their experiences” (p. 8). This study utilized interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) to thoroughly examine how Latinx CITs made meaning of their experiences of psychological safety within classroom environments. In this study, the researcher used IPA to interpret and conceptualize the embedded meanings within Latinx CITs’ experiences of psychological safety. The focus was placed on how Latinx CITs, this study’s population of interest, experience, describe, and make sense of the structure of their experiences with psychological safety within classroom environments. The researcher’s role was to richly interpret the significant meanings Latinx CITs gave to their experiences. Given the scarcity of information in the counseling literature regarding Latinx CITs and psychological safety, IPA will aid in building a foundational knowledge base to the field of counselor education.

IPA was first mentioned in Smith (1996), which discussed the importance of a qualitative approach grounded in the discipline of experimental psychology (Smith et al., 2009). Initially utilized in psychology, IPA has extended its roots in fields such as counseling, health psychology, occupational therapy, and educational psychology (Smith et al., 2009). Smith et al. (2009) encouraged researchers to recognize the influential perspectives of IPA to better understand its multifaceted components. The significant theoretical perspectives of IPA are grounded in Heidegger’s hermeneutics (e.g., double hermeneutic, where the participant makes sense and meaning of their experiences and the researcher decodes and interprets the participant’s meaning and sense-making process, interpretation process of the hermeneutic circle to uncover meaning, analysis of narrative and language usage of participant, detailed analysis of participant making sense of their experiences); idiography (e.g., idiographic commitment to
focus on specific statements within one experience and comparisons across experiences rather than generalizations for larger populations, value placed on each individual case, rigor in research and an individualized analysis of themes); and Husserl’s phenomenology approach (e.g., examination of lived experiences, meaning of experience within their environment, unique meanings embedded in experiences, social and historical influences, bracketing assumptions, and reflection of raw data) (Noon, 2018; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009). Larkin et al. (2006) suggested that IPA’s core concepts are the following: (a) The element of phenomenology describes how the participants understand the phenomenon; (b) The element of interpretation, where the researcher makes sense of what the participants’ experiences mean to the participants in their cultural, physical, and social context; and (c) The researcher gains insight into the phenomenon under investigation through the participants’ experiences.

When using IPA, the researcher integrated the philosophical underpinnings of IPA to represent and give voice to the first-person experiences of Latinx CITs (Moustakas, 1994; Smith et al., 2009). Additionally, IPA’s interpretative nature invites the description of the participants’ lived experiences and the researcher’s interpretation of the participants’ lived experiences. The interpretations are based on the literature and the participant’s meaning-filled accounts (Smith et al., 2009). Through the lens of the participants, the researcher explored the constructed meanings of their experiences with psychological safety in the classroom (VanderStoep & Johnston, 2009).

Using IPA, an emphasis was placed on exploring the lived experiences of Latinx CITs and the meaning they make of their experiences with psychological safety (Smith et al., 2009). Exploring the hierarchical nature of experiences means being consciously aware of all aspects that make up the overall experience (e.g., the temperature during the experience, language use, pauses when discussing experiences, present emotions while discussing experience) and
engaging in meaning-making when analyzing the raw data (Smith et al., 2009). To reveal meaning, the researcher was keenly aware that when engaging in interviews with Latinx CITs, the aim was to immerse herself in the raw data to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the participants’ experiences (Smith et al., 2009). In addition, the researcher was interested in how each participant made sense of their experience and what significance those units provided to that participant (Smith et al., 2009).

*Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* by Smith et al. (2009) shaped the basis for this study. Smith et al. (2009) outlined IPA theoretical foundations, data collection, data analysis, the researcher’s role, generation of codes and categories, creation of themes, and assessing validity. Together, the comprehensive steps used in IPA assisted the researcher during the iterative process of data collection and analysis. This allowed the researcher to critically examine and carefully interpret the data collected through interviews by the repeated analysis of raw data (e.g., interview transcripts), codes, categories, and memos. The researcher documented possible connections through a theoretical and multicultural lens (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Pajo, 2017; Smith et al., 2009; Suter, 2012).

To determine the principal characteristics of high-quality IPA, Smith (2011) assessed 293 studies that employed IPA published in major databases from 1996-2008. With this, Smith (2011) was able to establish the core features of IPA studies as: mentioning and understanding the theoretical roots of IPA (e.g., phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography), constructing the methods section in a detailed manner so that the reader understands what was done, including a comprehensible and detailed analysis that is both interpretive and descriptive, and including participants’ extracts to support each theme.
To expand on Smith’s (2011) quality assessment of IPA studies, Nizza et al. (2021) established four markers to achieve a high-quality IPA study. These four markers are “constructing a compelling, unfolding narrative; developing a vigorous experiential and/or existential account; close analytic reading of participants’ words; [and] attending to convergence and divergence” (Nizza et al., 2021, p. 369). To establish the first marker, the researcher intentionally articulated a credible and comprehensible narrative in chapter 4, supported by participants’ extracts. Next, to establish the second marker, the researcher focused on the meaning and sense-making of the participants to interpret their experiences. Additionally, to establish the third marker, the researcher spent sufficient time analyzing the participants’ shared experiences using the six IPA steps discussed later in this chapter. Furthermore, to establish the fourth marker, the researcher integrated the philosophical idiographic principle to discover differences and similarities between participants’ shared experiences.

Within counselor education, IPA has been used to illuminate the social dynamics and systemic institutional factors that impact students (Miller & Minton, 2016). IPA was paired with LatCrit to better understand and recognize patterns of discrimination, practices, and racial inequality policies that Latinx CITs have encountered in classroom environments (Villalpando, 2004). LatCrit supported the researcher’s decision to employ IPA in an effort to honor Latinx CITs’ multidimensional identities and address their experiences and realities of psychological safety within classroom environments. When LatCrit is utilized with IPA, LatCrit “allows for careful attention to the minutiae of everyday experiences often overlooked” (Cameron & Greenland, 2021, p. 773). By highlighting and reporting these discriminatory practices, LatCrit aims to disassemble and eradicate the barriers Latinx students have faced in educational spaces (Villalpando, 2004). Understanding the historical and cultural journeys of Latinx students helps
to advocate for removing policies and procedures in the curriculum that are connected to people of color (Villalpando, 2004). LatCrit and IPA work together to explore the lived experiences of Latinx CITs as they navigate their educational experiences in CACREP-accreditation programs and potentially highlight any inequalities and significant moments of underrepresentation within classroom environments (e.g., curriculum or pedagogical practices). Working together, IPA and LatCrit allowed the researcher to focus on the meaning-making components Latinx CITs made of their experiences with psychological safety within classroom environments.

In this study, using the IPA method, the researcher selected a population of interest, Latinx CITs (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009). Then, the researcher identified a gap in the literature within the population of interest and the phenomenon, psychological safety. Next, the researcher articulated a research question that encouraged participants to invite the researcher into how they made sense of their individual experiences with the phenomenon (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009). The researcher used interpretative phenomenology analysis to gain insight and interpret the richness of Latinx CITs’ experiences with psychological safety in classroom environments (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Additionally, using IPA, the researcher intentionally examined how Latinx CITs understood, described, and assigned meaning to their experiences of psychological safety within classroom environments. Furthermore, the researcher investigated each experience to better examine how Latinx CITs made sense and assigned meaning to their experiences (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Smith et al., 2009).

**Description of the Researcher (Researcher Reflexivity)**

West-Olatunji (2022) recommends a description of the researcher’s statement to be included within a study to explore the researcher’s credibility in working with their participants.
In a content analysis of 250 qualitative dissertations in counselor education, Waalkes et al. (2021) determined that 200 (80%) of dissertations used a researcher statement as a trustworthiness strategy. The researcher's statement models transparency in a similar manner that researchers request transparency when asking their participants to share their experiences (West-Olatunji, 2022). West-Olatunji (2022) considers research to be a form of advocacy. In this study, the researcher aims to advocate for an underrepresented group, Latinx CITs, in CACREP-accredited master’s programs.

The researcher is a female, Latinx, licensed professional counselor, and doctoral candidate in the Counselor Education and Supervision Ph.D. program at Duquesne University. Additionally, the researcher has experience as a master’s and doctoral counseling student in a CACREP-accredited counseling program for six years, a clinical supervisor and adjunct professor to master’s counselors-in-training in CACREP-accredited programs for one year, and has served in the counseling field for seven years.

In qualitative research, the researcher is considered the data collection instrument (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Within the IPA literature, several scholars agree that counselors possess skills that blend into IPA methodology. Within counselor education, IPA has been used to illuminate the social dynamics and systemic institutional factors that impact students (Finlay, 2011; Miller & Minton, 2016; Smith et al., 2009). These skills are organization (e.g., client cases, documentation for licensure and notes, treatment plans, discharge notes), flexibility (e.g., responding to the needs of various clients with diverse backgrounds), and sensitivity (e.g., honoring each client’s background and responding in a multicultural and theoretical manner) (Finlay, 2011; Miller & Minton, 2016; Smith et al., 2009). Additionally, counselors use unconditional positive regard when engaging with clients to provide acceptance, build rapport,
and listen to each client’s history in a non-judgmental manner (Finlay, 2011; Miller & Minton, 2016; Smith et al., 2009). To efficiently communicate data collected from Latinx CITs’ lived experiences during interviews, the researcher was intentionally aware of her viewpoints and biases, which have the potential to impact the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Pajo, 2017). The researcher approached the topic of Latinx CITs’ experiences as a Latinx student currently enrolled in a doctoral program. The researcher’s experiences as a Latinx woman in several academic settings and the enmeshment of Latin cultural values, traditions, and social and educational opportunities were continually assessed and evaluated through self-reflection and dialogue shared with advisors and clinical supervisors. Being a Latinx doctoral student and supporting other Latinx students offered the researcher first-hand knowledge on cultivating and facilitating a safe and welcoming space for the participants to share their lived experiences.

The researcher has held positions that have allowed her to develop critical thinking skills and respond in the moment (Pajo, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), which was beneficial during interviews when the researcher had to be flexible, remain present and attentive, and analyze rapport within the interaction. As a counselor, the researcher has experience being able to remain neutral and serve as a reliable observer, being aware of her verbal and non-verbal cues (e.g., facial expressions and body language), and determine the next steps based on the client’s cultural lens (Pajo, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In addition, the researcher has experience thinking theoretically by utilizing seminal and central theories to analyze data (Pajo, 2017). Moreover, the researcher has several years of practice using fundamental theories to guide her when teaching (e.g., Bloom’s taxonomy of educational objectives, social constructionism, and postmodern pedagogical and deep learning), counseling (e.g., client-centered, narrative, solution-focused,
cognitive-behavioral, and gestalt therapy), and supervising (e.g., the integrative reflective model of group supervision and the discrimination model).

Similar to the category and coding formation in IPA, the researcher has experience understanding connections and interpreting stories with her clients. When working with clients, the researcher consistently uses theory to understand their behaviors and thought patterns and connect parts of the clients’ stories using their worldview and culture. The researcher views this process as aiding clients in better understanding the puzzle pieces of their life. With her counseling experience, the researcher can aid in bringing awareness to those puzzle pieces that are present, working with the client to understand if they want to leave some pieces to the side, work on fully connecting the entire puzzle or some parts of the puzzle, or whether they have other puzzle pieces in their pile they could return or discard, or maybe they want to work on a new puzzle or combine various puzzles, which embraces the holistic nature of working with clients. This experience helped the researcher when using IPA for data analysis.

As a culturally responsive licensed professional counselor and social justice advocate, the researcher puts much effort into understanding a problem’s source and route. When researching culturally and socially marginalized individuals, families, and communities, West-Olatunji (2022) recommended that researchers understand the language in terms of descriptive interpretations from the participants’ worldviews and various components that make up the cultural identities of the participants. In this IPA study, the researcher focused on understanding the language Latinx CITs used when describing their experiences with psychological safety in the classroom environment. Based on cultural context, the researcher was interested in what psychological safety meant for Latinx CITs when placing culture at the center of inquiry (West-Olatunji, 2022).
The researcher has experience thinking critically by viewing documents, interactions, experiences, and ideas from various perspectives (Pajo, 2017). Serving as a researcher, adjunct professor, supervisor, and counselor, the researcher consistently reflects upon her biases and checks in with her clinical supervisor to ensure best practice. Moreover, the researcher consistently and intentionally sets aside time bi-weekly to examine and become aware of her cultural identity, biases, and stereotypes. In addition, on a bi-weekly basis, the researcher meets with her supervisor to discuss her weekly reflections. When interacting with her clients and students, the researcher is responsible for assessing her biases and assumptions to ensure she is culturally alert in her responses and verbal and non-verbal cues. Within the supervision space, the researcher places a strong emphasis on multicultural competence and encourages each supervisee to continuously assess their biases, stereotypes, and belief systems on gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion, disability, family system, and socioeconomic status and its impact on the client. Furthermore, Pajo (2017) explores the importance of researchers considering diversity, various perspectives, and increasing awareness when engaging in research, such as culture and ethnicity, racial group, religiosity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender and sexual identity, and education level.

The researcher describes the counseling and teaching space (e.g., virtual, in-person) as a safe space and encourages her students and clients to be vulnerable and transparent. As a counselor, she places the therapeutic relationship and the safety of the client as her top priority. Building rapport with her clients has allowed them to feel safe to share information and understand that they are being listened to with a non-judgmental lens. In the present study, when interviewing the participants, the researcher collaboratively engaged with Latinx CITs, which
allowed the researcher to assess Latinx CITs’ experiences by utilizing the participants’ language and critically facilitating the interaction and knowledge-building process (West-Olatunji, 2022).

Using IPA, the researcher needs to set aside, and “bracket” (Husserl, 1970) her personal experiences, Merriam and Tisdell (2015) describe this process as Epoche. The researcher engaged in Epoche to be able to be conscious of how Latinx CITs were making sense of their experiences with psychological safety. West-Olatunji (2022) suggests that when the researcher reveals her biases, she implements a component of responsibility to the participants, society, and herself. The researcher examined her experiences with Latinx CITs and the components of psychological safety. She engaged in self-reflection and self-interrogation to increase her awareness of her personal biases, perspectives, and assumptions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). To fully embrace the phenomenological attitude, Husserl et al. (2012) advised that the researcher bracket or separate and place to the side her biases and judgments to be able to be conscious of the essence of the participants’ experience.

As advised by Smith et al. (2009), in using IPA, the researcher took on a research persona and bracketed: “sharing one’s own experiences and knowledge; exercising one’s therapeutic capacity; academic authority or clinical judgment, and steering participants toward new and more positive appraisals of their difficulties” (p. 97). The assumptions below outline the researcher’s prejudgments regarding the study’s central components.

1. **Assumption 1:** CACREP-accredited counselor education programs lack a deep understanding of how Latinx CITs experience psychological safety within classroom environments.

2. **Assumption 2:** CACREP-accredited counselor education programs can integrate services and curricula that better serve and meet the diverse needs of Latinx CITs.
3. **Assumption 3**: Latinx CITs have experienced both psychological safety and a lack of psychological safety in their classroom environments.

4. **Assumption 4**: Latinx students are an underrepresented group in higher education.

5. **Assumption 5**: Understanding Latinx CITs’ experiences of psychological safety can illuminate factors that may help inform counselor education programs to integrate into their curriculum and decrease the marginalization of Latinx CITs.

**Sampling Procedures and Participants**

Before collecting data, approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects at Duquesne University was obtained to safeguard that the study would be done ethically and protect the participants.

Adhering to the sampling guidelines of IPA, purposeful sampling was employed by the researcher to select this sample (Larkin, 2006; Miller et al., 2018; Noon, 2018; Smith et al., 2009). Purposeful sampling allowed the researcher to intentionally and purposefully select a homogenous group of participants that met the study’s criteria and provided an in-depth perspective of their experience concerning the phenomenon under study (Flamez et al., 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Pajo, 2017; Patton, 2014; Smith et al., 2009). Using purposeful sampling, Smith and Osborn (2008) has suggested that IPA allows the researcher to select participants who will provide the necessary information to answer the research question and provide a knowledge base with participants’ shared insights. In the current study, the researcher aimed to understand psychological safety within classroom environments from the lens of Latinx CITs.

Numerous studies employing IPA have determined the sample size through saturation (Boros, 2019; Bootsma et al., 2021; Cooper et al., 2012; Emiliussen et al., 2017; Kumar et al.,
The researcher relied upon saturation as the primary criterion for determining when the researcher should stop recruitment and data collection within this study. When saturation or redundancy was reached, and no new insights were being collected, the purpose of maximizing information was met (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In addition, Hale et al. (2008) suggested that when using saturation as the primary criterion in a study employing IPA, “then the method of (constantly) checking when this is achieved (and deciding whether to continue or terminate the series of interviews) should be transparent in the final report” (p. 91).

When studies are conducted using IPA, sample sizes are relatively small, between three and six participants, which the researcher can choose to interview one or more times (Smith et al., 2009; Wagstaff & Williams, 2014). The reason for this is because of the idiographic commitment to analysis, which is the thorough and in-depth analysis of the individual transcripts, comparing and contrasting the meanings participants attribute to their accounts, and the detailed accounts of the participants’ perceptions and understandings of their experience with the phenomenon (Larkin, 2006; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009; Smith, 2011). The recommended sample size for a dissertation using IPA is six to eight participants (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). In support, Smith et al. (2009) suggested that it “is more problematic to try to meet IPA’s commitments with a sample which is ‘too large,’ than with one that is too small” (p. 75). Additionally, Smith et al. (2009) argued that due to the in-depth analysis and the researcher’s aim to build a deep connection with the data, as few as a single participant can provide the necessary information to conduct an IPA study. Smith and Osborn (2008) stated that small sample sizes allow the researcher to thoroughly analyze each transcript.
and gain a deeper understanding of how the participants constructed the meaning of the phenomenon in their personal and social world. The researcher committed to a “detailed interpretive account of the cases” (Smith & Osborn, 2007, p. 56). The recruitment measures (see Appendix A, B, C, and D) grasped the attention of seventy-one potential participants; however, several participants did not complete the necessary forms described below. The research sample for this study included: eight Latinx CITs from seven universities, which fell within the range suggested for IPA studies.

The recruitment process occurred through the following methods: Facebook, counseling listservs, and counselor education programs. The researcher posted the Recruitment Flyer to Potential Participants (see Appendix A) and Social Media Recruitment Announcement (see Appendix B) six times on the following Facebook groups: Latina Completing Doctoral Degrees, Minority Doctoral Network, Latinx Counselors & Therapists, Chicanx/Latinx Ph.D. & Ed.D. Students of Education, and Qualitative Research in Education. Additionally, the researcher shared the Participant Outreach Email (see Appendix C) to three counseling listservs: Counsgrads Digest, CESNET, and DIVERSEGRAD. Furthermore, the researcher contacted sixty program directors/chairs from CACREP-accredited counselor education programs using the Email to Potential Participants via CACREP Programs (see Appendix D) and asked if they would be willing to share the recruiting email with students.

Ten Latinx CITs met the primary inclusion criteria. These potential participants completed the informed consent form (see Appendix E) and brief demographic information questionnaire (see Appendix F) on Google forms. Within the brief demographic information questionnaire, participants were notified to click on the Doodle link to schedule the 45–60-minute semi-structured interview with the researcher. The researcher reviewed the seventy-one
completed forms from potential participants to ensure that they met the primary inclusion criteria and provided a foundation for representing Latinx ethnic groups in this study. Of those seventy-one google forms, eight Latinx CITs signed an informed consent form, completed a brief demographic questionnaire, and attended the 45–60-minute interview with the researcher. All participant names were de-identified and provided with pseudonyms (fictional names), which were chosen by the participants within their brief demographic questionnaire. To conceal the participants’ identity and protect their confidentiality, all signed documents that listed identifiable information about the participants were kept in a password-protected computer and filed in a password-protected digital folder.

Participants were eight Latinx counselor-in-training students who agreed to participate in this voluntary study. Using purposeful sampling to recruit participants, the primary inclusion criteria for selecting the participants were as follows: (a) currently be enrolled in a CACREP-accredited counselor education master’s program in the United States, (b) currently in the practicum or internship stage or have completed practicum/internship, (c) at least 18 years old, (d) identify as Latinx, and (e) must be willing to participate in a 45–60-minute interview about their experiences with psychological safety in the classroom. It was explicitly noted that participants would not be asked about their immigration status and that the interview would be conducted in English. Latinx CITs from CACREP-accredited master’s programs were chosen because CACREP master’s programs adhere to unified training standards for CITs in their coursework and clinical practice and set specific standards for instructors and clinical supervisors (Kimbel & Levitt, 2017). Participants were required to currently be enrolled in the practicum or internship stage within their program to meet the CACREP criterion for CIT. The final sample of participants was eight, as determined by saturation.
Each of the eight participants included in this study were Latinx CITs currently enrolled in a CACREP-accredited counselor education program in the United States. To protect anonymity, only the geographic location of the CACREP programs was reported (see Table 2). This sample consisted of eight Latinx CITs who identified as female. Two participants identified themselves as lesbian during their interviews. The ages of participants ranged from 25 to 45 years, with a mean age of 35 years (SD = 10). The participant demographics can be found in Table 1. The participant program status can be found in Table 2.

Table 1
Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Pseudonym &amp; Pronouns</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Parent’s Country of Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jesica She/Her</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Latinx/Latina</td>
<td>Mexico/United States</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Carlita She/Her/Ella</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Latinx</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Belize and Guatemala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Moon Rivers She/Her</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Latinx/Latina</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Maria She/Her</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Not Reported</td>
<td>Latinx/Latina</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>El Salvador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Susana Macario She/Her/Hers</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Not Reported</td>
<td>Latinx/Latina</td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Josefina She/Her</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Latinx</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Argentina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Linda She/Her</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Latinx/Latina</td>
<td>United States/Puerto Rico</td>
<td>Raised in Puerto Rico, a United States territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Cathy She/Her/Hers</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Latinx</td>
<td>Dominican Republic/Ecuador</td>
<td>Dominican Republic/Ecuador</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

88
Table 2

Participant Program Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Pseudonym &amp; Pronouns</th>
<th>Status in CACREP Program</th>
<th>Program Concentration</th>
<th>Region of CACREP program</th>
<th>Years in CACREP Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jesica She/Her</td>
<td>Internship</td>
<td>School Counseling</td>
<td>Pacific Northwest, Private University</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Carlita She/Her/Ella</td>
<td>Ending the Practicum stage, thinking about Ph.D. program</td>
<td>Marriage and Family Therapy</td>
<td>Pacific Coast, Public University</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Moon Rivers She/Her</td>
<td>Program has 3 practicums, starting third practicum</td>
<td>Clinical Mental Health Counseling</td>
<td>Pacific Northwest, Public University</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Maria She/Her</td>
<td>Beginning of Practicum stage</td>
<td>Clinical Mental Health Counseling</td>
<td>Mid-Atlantic, Public Historically Black University</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Susana Macario She/Her/Hers</td>
<td>Has completed practicum/internship but still enrolled in CACREP master’s program, 2 weeks from end of program</td>
<td>Clinical Mental Health Counseling</td>
<td>Pacific Coast, Public University</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Josefina She/Her/Hers</td>
<td>Internship, 2 weeks away from end of program</td>
<td>Clinical Mental Health Counseling</td>
<td>East Coast, Private Catholic University</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Linda She/Her</td>
<td>Internship</td>
<td>School Counseling</td>
<td>East Coast, Private Catholic University</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Cathy She/Her/Hers</td>
<td>Practicum</td>
<td>Clinical Mental Health Counseling</td>
<td>East Coast, Public University</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection and Procedures

Before collecting data, approval from the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at Duquesne University was obtained to safeguard that the study would be done ethically and protect the participants.

Once IRB approval was provided to the researcher, the researcher contacted CACREP-accredited counselor education program chairs using the Email to Potential Participants via CACREP (see Appendix D) as a request to share the recruiting email with students based on their communication mechanism. Additionally, the researcher sent the Participant Outreach Email (see Appendix C) to counseling listservs. Furthermore, the researcher posted the Recruitment Flyer to Potential Participants (see Appendix A) and the Social Media Recruitment Announcement (see Appendix B) on Facebook groups.

To be able to provide representation and provide a voice to the participants’ culture and history, potential participants were screened using the brief demographic information questionnaire, as shown in Appendix F. Due to the sensitive nature and potential harm, the researcher decided not to ask participants about their immigration status. Based on the response to the brief demographic information questionnaire, the researcher selected the first eight participants that signed up for the semi-structured interviews. Before engaging in the interviews, each participant was required to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix E).

This study used a semi-structured interviewing method (see Appendix G), where the open-ended interview questions served as the primary instrument in the data collection process (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Various studies using an IPA research design have used semi-structured interviews (Miller & Minton, 2016; Smith, 1999; Smith & Osborn, 2007; Wagstaff & Williams, 2014). A systematic literature review on published papers utilizing IPA by Brocki and
Wearden (2006) found that in 52 articles, 48 articles utilized interviews as a method of data collection. Semi-structured interviews were selected for this study so the researcher could obtain detailed descriptions of Latinx CITs’ experiences of psychological safety in classroom environments. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were a suitable method of data collection because this method invited the researcher into the participants’ perspectives, where she was able to obtain detailed accounts, build rapport, and provide space for the Latinx CITs to share their stories as the experiential experts of their experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2007; Smith et al., 2009). Using semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to modify the interview questions dependent upon the participants’ responses and utilize probes to engage in dialogue when seeking clarification or to expand on a core statement from the participants’ responses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Miller & Minton, 2016). In qualitative inquiry, the primary goal of the analysis relies upon the interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Pajo, 2017). The interviews provided the researcher with knowledge considered transferable (Pajo, 2017; Patton, 2014) during the data analysis stage, which offers valuable and insightful information on the phenomenon in this study, psychological safety.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher utilized interview questions inspired by Edmondson’s (1999) psychological safety scale. Several studies have utilized Edmondson’s (1999) scale in an interview format (Britto et al., 2016; Demirkesen et al., 2021; Grailey et al., 2021; Hennel & Rosenkranz, 2020; Roos & Nilsson, 2020). In addition to revising Edmondson’s (1999) 7-item survey questions to meet the purposes of this study, the researcher included six additional items based on the literature presented in chapter two. All thirteen interview questions were focused on answering the research question. An interview protocol (see Appendix G) was developed to serve as a guide that adhered to the interview guidelines of IPA (Smith et al., 2009).
IPA researchers typically use an interview protocol and schedule to outline the content of the interview for participants (Smith et al., 2009). The following components are typically included in an interview schedule: interview agenda, interview questions, and order in which the questions are asked. Smith et al. (2009) recommend that an IPA researcher begin with a question that aims to obtain a detailed analysis so the participant can freely share their experience and ease them into the interview. The interview schedule served to better prepare the participant by providing them with an outline of the interview questions, potential probing statements such as, “Can you tell me more about…?” and then stated the length of the interview (Pajo, 2017; Smith et al., 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The IPA researcher used several additional probes to obtain further information when asking questions: “What do you mean by…?” “What are the main differences/similarities between…?” “How did you feel?” and “Tell me what you were thinking?” (Smith et al., 2009). The researcher used open-ended questions (see Appendix G) to prevent the participant from responding with “yes” or “no” responses, which allowed the participants to provide an in-depth response to the interview questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Pajo, 2017; Smith et al., 2009). In order to build rapport and ensure the participant was comfortable during the interview process, the researcher used her clinical experience and her knowledge obtained from the literature to prepare for any questions the participants might have (Pajo, 2017).

In this study, eight Latinx CITs met the primary inclusion criteria for the phenomenon under study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted over Zoom. Semi-structured interviews followed the interview protocol (see Appendix G) with thirteen interview questions and took between 45 to 60 minutes (Noon, 2018; Smith et al., 2009).
Before the interviewer engaged in the interview process, the researcher explored her experience with the elements that made up the phenomenon and engaged in self-reflection and self-interrogation to honor cultural humility and increase awareness of her personal biases, perspectives, and assumptions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The researcher avoided leading questions that could potentially illicit bias, judgment, or disregard for the participants’ responses (Pajo, 2017). As participants responded, the researcher was mindful of her verbal and non-verbal cues and kept an approach that embraced neutrality (Pajo, 2017). During the interview, the participant was seen as the experiential expert, which allowed the researcher to place her preconceptions and assumptions to the side and focus on the detailed descriptions of participants accounts of their experiences through their lens (Smith et al., 2009). The researcher treated each response with equal value and gauged each question with a lens of sensitivity and curiosity. During the interview, the researcher ensured that she was fully engaged, which allowed the researcher to seek additional information, if necessary, through follow-up questions (Pajo, 2017).

Before the interview began, the researcher reviewed the signed informed consent with the participant to confirm the participant’s verbal consent before moving forward with the interview. The researcher introduced herself and provided the time, date, and location of the interview. Each interview with the participant took place during a single scheduled interview session. The interviews were recorded electronically using the zoom recording platform and a password-protected voice recording application on the researcher’s laptop. The researcher did not have a prior relationship with the participants before the interview. Furthermore, only the researcher and the participant were present during the interview to protect their confidentiality and create a safe space for the participant.
During the interview, the researcher served two roles (Larkin, 2006; Smith et al., 2009). The first role allowed the researcher to share the space with the participant as another human being and place themselves in the participant’s shoes. With this, the researcher listened to the participant to make sense of the experience by gaining an insider’s perspective without the researcher’s interpretation. Interpretive endeavors are the researcher’s efforts to hear their participant’s experience and then interpret that experience through the lens of the participant, which provides an understanding of the participant’s experience (Smith et al., 2009). In the second role, the researcher asked questions and interpreted the participant’s experience (Smith et al., 2009). With this, the researcher critically and multiculturally attempted to examine and conceptualize the participant’s experience (Smith et al., 2009). Smith et al. (2009) summarized the IPA process as the researcher distinguishing and understanding “the key ‘objects of concern’ in the participant’s world, and the ‘experiential claims’ made by the participant in order to develop a phenomenological account” (p. 68). Additionally, the researcher’s role was to investigate the phenomenon, not to serve as a counselor, professor, or supervisor, or offer suggestions that may alter the experience (Noon, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

**Transcription**

Each interview was video, audio recorded, and transcribed immediately after meeting with a participant. With this, the transcript included verbatim what the researcher and participant said during the interview (Pajo, 2017; Smith et al., 2009). Promptly transcribing the interview allowed the researcher to readily recognize patterns and themes that emerged within the interviews (Pajo, 2017).

The researcher utilized a transcription service, Otter.ai, to transcribe each interview. In addition, the researcher used the voice memo function on the computer as a backup in the
instance that the zoom recording was lost. Otter.ai required the researcher to create an account that required a secure login to store and retrieve audio files. Additionally, the voice memo function on the researcher’s computer was password protected to ensure privacy and confidentiality. To ensure accuracy, the researcher played the video/audio recording as she read over each transcribed interview, in the case that Otter.ai failed to include any word or phrase from the video/audio recording (Smith et al., 2009; Terrell, 2015). This process allowed the researcher to familiarize herself with the raw data to ensure she accurately presented what was said during the interview and helped build a deeper connection with her participants’ experiences (Smith et al., 2009; Terrell, 2015).

During the transcription process, the researcher removed any names and identifying information in the raw data and replaced them with the assigned pseudonyms. This process allowed the researcher to adhere to the confidentiality guidelines and protect the participant’s identity. When analyzing the transcriptions, the IPA researcher focused on interpreting the meaning Latinx CITs’ attributed to their experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2007; Smith et al., 2009).

After the interviews were transcribed, the researcher read over each transcript and engaged in the memoing process. Memoing allowed the researcher to annotate the transcription with recognizable patterns and themes and document any thoughts or ideas that arose as she read the transcription (Creswell, 2017; Pajo, 2017; Strauss & Corbin, 2015). Theoretical memos allowed the researcher to relate the excerpts in the transcribed interviews to IPA and LatCrit theoretical concepts (Pajo, 2017). Hypothetical memos allowed the researcher to document potential patterns, themes, or predict relationships during the interview as participants shared their lived experiences (Pajo, 2017). Reflexive journaling allowed the researcher to reflect on the IPA qualitative inquiry process to minimize bias (Pajo, 2017). During reflective journaling, the
researcher was able to document her observations, thoughts, and feelings that arose when working with participants and analyzing the data. In addition, the researcher took note of non-verbal cues such as long pauses, laughter, fidgeting, and lack of eye contact (Smith et al., 2009). Following the guidelines of IPA, the researcher began with an in-depth analysis of each case to identify themes before conducting a comparison and identifying patterns between all cases involved in the study (Smith & Osborn, 2007; Smith et al., 2009).

**Data Analysis**

An IPA researcher aims first to understand what it is like for the participant to experience the phenomenon and specifically places a focus on the participant’s view of the experience just as it is (Larkin, 2006; Smith et al., 2009). Then, the IPA researcher provides an interpretation that weaves into the social, cultural, and theoretical content and meaning embedded within the participant’s accounts (Larkin, 2006; Smith et al., 2009). Using IPA, the researcher’s role was to understand how Latinx CITs made sense of their lived experiences of psychological safety in classroom environments. The researcher interpreted the participants’ experiences as each participant described it, ensuring to consistently reflect on the transcripts to ensure that the researcher was viewing the raw data through the lens of each participant. Throughout the interpretation process, the researcher frequently assessed her biases and assumptions to ensure she honored the participants’ stories and formed themes based on the participants’ excerpts. The six steps listed below follow the IPA steps outlined by Smith et al. (2009).

**MAXQDA 2022 for Qualitative Data Analysis**

As a tool to organize, manage, categorize the data, and view the data from multiple perspectives, the researcher utilized MAXQDA 2022, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) (Merriam & Tisdell, 2009). MAXQDA 2022 was recognized as a tool in the
approach to analysis because “the computer program only helps as an organizing or categorizing tool and does not do the analysis for the researcher” (Bogdan & Biklen, p. 187). Using MAXQDA 2022, the researcher was able to read each transcript and assign codes to the fragments of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2009). Data fragments were then coded into multiple levels to form categories to sort those codes.

IPA Step 1: Initial Reading of The First Interview

This step aimed to help the researcher to engage with the raw data and view the meaningful essence of the participant’s experience as if standing in their shoes. The researcher listened to the audio recording and transcribed the interview using Otter.ai. To immerse herself deeper into the content of the interview and ensure the focus was placed on the participant, the researcher listened to the interview a second time while reading the completed transcript. Smith and Osborn (2008) described this process as an interpretive relationship with the data. The researcher carefully considered what the participant said and how they described their experiences to ensure that the participant’s voice was highlighted. With this, the researcher engaged in an interpretative analysis, placing the participant’s voice as the focus of the analysis (Noon, 2018). This interpretative analysis functioned as an introductory level of analysis that allowed the researcher to immerse herself into the participant’s experience without attempting to formulate meaning or create themes.

IPA Step 2: Initial Coding of The First Interview

This step aimed to build a deeper connection and make sense of the meaningful content in the first transcript. The researcher re-read the transcript, carefully addressing each word or phrase that signified a deeper meaning for the participant.
Next, the researcher prepared to code the data by revisiting the purpose of the study, the research question, and the tenets that made up the theoretical framework, LatCrit (Merriam & Tisdell, 2009). Saldaña (2015) defined a code as “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 4). With this, the researcher was prepared to highlight the patterns and insights in the data, guided by the purpose of the study, research questions, and the LatCrit theoretical framework (Merriam & Tisdell, 2009).

For the first step of the coding process, the researcher constructed codes that were formed through descriptive comments (e.g., unfolding the content). With this, the researcher thoroughly read the transcript and made notes based on what Latinx CITs identified as significant characteristics, traits, values, events, places, objects, relationships, feelings, and experiences. Additionally, the descriptive comments allowed the researcher to focus on what mattered most to the participant and the meanings they attributed to those important dynamics as they shared their experience.

Second, the researcher constructed codes that were formed through linguistic comments (e.g., language use). With this, the researcher focused on the language the Latinx CIT used to describe and make sense of their experience. Moreover, the researcher made notes based on the participant’s non-verbal cues, hesitations, pronoun usage, pauses, moments of laughter/humor, use of metaphors, symbols, and analogies, and repetitive statements or behaviors (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). These metaphors can serve to connect the descriptive comments to the conceptual comments. Additionally, the linguistic comments served to reflect the LatCrit lens by acknowledging the “Traditional Latinx oral traditions like testimonios [testimonies], dichos [folk sayings], refranes [proverbs/sayings], and cuentos [stories] are cultural practices that involve
storytelling and lend themselves toward semi-structured interview data collection methods” (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018, p. 320).

Third, the researcher constructed codes that were formed through the conceptual comments (e.g., interpretation and interrogation). Conceptual comments focused on how Latinx CITs explicitly understood and interpreted psychological safety in their classroom environments. Additionally, the researcher focused on interpreting the deeper meaning of the Latinx CITs’ experiences within the classroom environments, such as the participant’s role within their experiences and within their own identity, difficulties or high rapport in relationships, awareness of time frames (e.g., past, present, and future experiences), and possible comparisons within those time frames. The researcher ensured that the interpretations were based on the content within the transcript.

Fourth, the researcher engaged in the deconstruction of the transcript to understand the context of the participant’s experience as a whole in relation to the parts. With this, the researcher read each transcript line backward to thoroughly appreciate the deeper connections, word choice, and grasp the embedded significance of the participant’s experience.

**IPA Step 3: Developing the Emergent Themes of The First Interview**

This step allowed the researcher to engage in the double hermeneutic or the “two-stage interpretation process,” where the researcher is thoroughly exploring the participant’s making sense of their experiences with psychological safety while also interpreting and making sense of the participant’s meaning-making process (Smith & Osborn, 2007). With this, the researcher focused on all the diverse parts of the experience, keeping a keen eye on the experiential (e.g., temperature, textures of objects around) vs. comprehensive parts (e.g., parts in the experiences
that were greatly meaningful to the participant)—interpreting the parts and the whole along with the relationship they share provided a path for identifying the emergent themes.

To do this, the researcher transformed her notes from the initial coding process in step two to formulate emergent themes. This allowed the researcher to shape and ground her notes from the participant’s view into more concise descriptive phrases (Noon, 2018). Saldaña (2016) defined a theme as “an extended-phrase or sentence that identifies what a unit of data is about and/or what it means…Themes can also consist of descriptions of behavior within a culture, iconic statements, and morals from participant stories” (p. 199). When creating the emergent themes, the researcher used the following strategies: (a) reflected on the purpose of the study and asked herself, What is it that am I attempting to find out? (b) How am I focusing on how the participant experiences psychological safety through a LatCrit lens? (c) How can I identify the “trees” in my data? Do the “trees” represent the descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual codes? (d) What is the answer to my research question? How can I think about the “forest” in my data? The “forest” represents the main themes that emerge from the trees (codes) (e) The researcher revisited the “trees” and asked herself, Do the “trees” (individual codes) support what she sees in the “forest”? and (f) The researcher then developed the emergent themes by combining the codes (“trees”), into fewer, more comprehensive themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In step 6, several of these emergent themes will become subthemes, called subordinate themes. The emergent themes were chronologically ordered by the order they appeared in the transcript and embedded in the first participant’s words to reflect a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

IPA Step 4: Examining the Connections Across Emergent Themes

The aim of this step allowed the researcher to take the chronologically ordered emergent themes and examine how those emergent themes were connected to create superordinate themes.
The researcher engaged in this process by typing out all the emergent themes in chronological order as they appeared on the transcript and connecting those emergent themes to form clusters of themes that appeared to connect and draw patterns to one another. Some of these emergent themes were deemed unnecessary to report based on the research question, the scope of the study, and not having enough evidence to support the theme (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009). Some of these emergent themes held hierarchical relationships with one another, which became the superordinate themes.

The researcher used abstraction to identify patterns and connections between the emergent themes. Using abstraction, the researcher was able to connect the clusters of emerging themes and formulate categories with new names, called superordinate themes.

Another strategy the researcher used was contextualization. Using contextualization, the researcher arranged the emergent themes based on Latinx CIT’s critical life events. The life events were based on specific cultural or location-based events.

A third strategy the researcher used was numeration. Using numeration, the researcher arranged the emergent themes based on the number of times they appeared in the transcript to understand the significance of the pattern.

IPA Step 5: Moving to The Next Case

To honor individuality, the researcher moved on to the following transcript and repeated steps one through four with each transcript. Using IPA, much significance and meaning were placed on each participant’s case, allowing new themes to emerge with each case and bracketing what the researcher found in the previous case.

IPA Step 6: Identifying Patterns Across Cases
This step aimed for the researcher to find patterns and connections across all transcripts. Once the researcher was able to examine all cases, using the idiographic component within the IPA method, the researcher identified convergence (similarities between cases) and divergence (differences between cases). With each transcript, the researcher utilized MAXQDA 2022 to organize the emerging themes listed under the participants’ pseudonyms. This allowed the researcher to identify emerging themes and consistencies across all the transcripts. The researcher asked herself, What are the connections across all transcripts? How are themes different or similar across transcripts? Which themes are most meaningful to the participants? Which themes allow the researcher to consider diversity and begin “thinking multiculturally,” honoring the participants’ different perspectives and backgrounds? (Saldaña, 2015) Which themes are consistent across all transcripts? Do participants share superordinate themes? Do themes need to be relabeled and reconfigured to comprehensively analyze the patterns?

To honor the process of the double hermeneutic, grounded in IPA’s theoretical perspectives, the researcher asked herself, what is the participant attempting to accomplish with their shared statements? Do I, as the researcher have a sense of what is unfolding in the shared responses that the participants are unaware of?

The final analysis will be presented in chapter four of this study, which will include the relabeled and reconfigured superordinate themes and their subthemes, along with extracts from the interview and the researcher’s detailed interpretation comments. To align with the methods of IPA, the final analysis will be written in a narrative form. The researcher reviewed her assumptions and biases to ensure that she was fully representative of the participants’ accounts. Excerpts of raw data from the participants’ interviews were included in the narrative to ensure the researcher is honoring each voice and their contextualized experiences.
The completed analysis of all transcripts is displayed in a master table of themes (see Table 3), which will include the relabeled and reconfigured superordinate themes and their subthemes that were present in at least half of the sample. With this, at least 4 participants were represented for each recurrent theme.

In chapter five of this study, the researcher will take those narrative accounts and themes and weave them through the existing literature regarding Latinx CITs’ experiences of psychological safety in classroom environments.

**Member Checking**

Member checking helped to ensure that the researcher was accurately interpreting the participants’ lived experiences and highlighting any misunderstandings, along with the researcher’s biases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Member checking was conducted by emailing the participants the researcher’s interpreted data analysis. Upon reviewing the interpretations, each participant was asked if they would like to add, alter, clarify, or remove content to ensure the researcher accurately represented their experiences (Patton, 2014). Four out of the eight Latinx CITs responded to the researcher and expressed that the demographic information and assigned themes were accurate. Member checking was also conducted during the interview. The researcher sought clarification on all eight participants’ responses and ensured to seek additional clarification when necessary.

**Saturation**

When saturation was achieved, the researcher no longer obtained new information through interviews and the observations of participants’ non-verbal and verbal behaviors (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Pajo (2017) described saturation as “a
sponge that can no longer sop up any more liquid; you as the researcher are not able to absorb
any fresh information” (p. 260). Saturation was reached in this study after the eighth interview.

**Memo Writing**

Memo writing occurred throughout the study to minimize potential bias (Merriam &
Adhering to the IPA guidelines, the researcher engaged in reflexive journaling to minimize her
bias during the data collection, analysis, and reporting process (Pajo, 2017; Smith et al., 2009).
Additionally, during regular meetings with the researcher’s chair, the researcher was able to
engage in a reflexive process of identifying and minimizing bias during the data collection
process.

**Considerations to Enhance Research Quality**

**Trustworthiness**

Demonstrating trustworthiness is crucial because it suggests the credibility of the
researcher’s process and findings (Flamez et al., 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Suter, 2012;
Waalkes et al., 2021). The trustworthiness of a study demonstrates why others should trust the
researcher’s data collection, analysis, and results (Pajo, 2017). Lincoln and Guba (1985) focused
on the trustworthiness of a study, including the following elements: credibility, transferability,
dependability, and confirmability.

**Credibility**

The credibility of a study allows the results of the study to be recognized as accurate,
credible, and believable representations of the participants’ perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985;
Pajo, 2017; Suter, 2012; Terrell, 2015). Credibility was enhanced in this study by engaging in the
following: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, understanding of her role as a
researcher, audit trails, and member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). To achieve prolonged engagement, the researcher immersed herself in the literature on psychological safety and Latinx CITs; and followed the IPA and LatCrit theoretical framework to immerse herself in the raw data until saturation was reached (Patton, 2014). Persistent engagement allowed the researcher to explore critical details and characteristics of the raw data related to the research question using the six IPA steps previously outlined (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2014; Terrell, 2015).

Member checking allowed the researcher to share her emerging findings with the participants to ensure that the researcher skillfully conceptualized the essence of the participants’ accounts and captured the meaning of the participants’ lived experiences. The emerging findings are made up of the researcher’s interpretations; however, they originated from the Latinx CITs’ experiences. Member checking occurred in two forms: during the interview and after the IPA analysis process. During the interview, the researcher sought clarification on the participants’ accounts to ensure the researcher was accurately grasping the entire narrative. Furthermore, during the analysis process, the researcher emailed the participants an analysis of their accounts, using the IPA steps described above, to obtain their feedback and ensure it was representative of their experiences and cultural worldview. Participants could also notify the researcher if they wanted to expand upon or alter the final report (Patton, 2014).

**Transferability**

Transferability allowed the researcher to show that the current study’s findings can be applied to other settings, groups, or participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Suter, 2012). With this, the researcher was able to provide a thick description of her results by delivering an in-depth analysis using IPA and cross-case comparisons that found similar results (Suter, 2012),
displaying that these results can be transferable in other settings and used with a different population (Terrell, 2015).

**Dependability**

Dependability suggests that the research findings can be replicated and produce the same results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Terrell, 2015). To enhance dependability, the researcher provided a rich description of the data procedures and collection processes (Suter, 2012). With this, the researcher followed the IPA data analysis plan, used the same interview guidelines, and documented and reviewed the research process with her committee members. When familiarizing herself with the interviews, the researcher ensured that she transcribed the interviews using the same process for each interview, following the six steps of IPA listed above (Terrell, 2015). To ensure dependability, the researcher provided detailed and thorough explanations of the data collection process (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

**Confirmability**

In order to connect with the participants, the raw data, and provide an accurate interpretation of the participants' experiences, the researcher had to be aware of her biases and set them aside to remain neutral, which is referred to as confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 2015; Suter, 2012; Terrell, 2015). The researcher bracketed her biases and documented her assumptions. The researcher understands that bias cannot be avoided entirely; however, bias can be minimized in qualitative research using bracketing, prolonged engagement, and member checking (Patton, 2014). The researcher engaged in reflexive journaling throughout the investigation to consider her methods, reduce bias, and maintain transparency (Miller & Minton, 2016)
Triangulation focuses on the systematic process of cross-checking information and conclusions through particular methods and sources to interpret and describe the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this study, the researcher engaged in prolonged participation, immersing herself in the data and interacting with her participants; she conducted member checks to ensure she was representing her participants’ experiences accurately, addressed negative cases that did not fit the pattern observed in the majority of participants’ experiences, and continued to reflect on her biases throughout the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

_Yardley’s (2000) Four Principles for Assessing Quality Using IPA_

The first principle to assess quality is sensitivity to context. Adhering to IPA, the researcher displayed sensitivity in the following ways: purposeful sampling, engaging with the literature, understanding Latinx CIT’s culture and language usage, and interpretation and providing verbatim extracts of the raw data (e.g., transcripts and observations). The idiographic nature of IPA allowed the researcher to immerse herself into the individual transcripts, unfold the meaning participants attributed to their experiences, and interpret the detailed accounts of the participants’ perceptions and understandings of their experience with psychological safety (Smith et al., 2009). During the interview process, the researcher embraced sensitivity by emphasizing the importance of rapport with the participants and appreciating their willingness to share their experiences.

The second principle to assess quality is commitment and rigor. Adhering to IPA, the researcher displayed commitment in the following ways: attentiveness to the raw data, thoroughly following the detailed steps in IPA, and ensuring the participants were comfortable during the interview process with frequent check-ins. Adhering to IPA, the researcher displayed rigor in the following ways: allowing the research question to guide the study, engaging in an in-
depth analysis during and after the interview, following the six steps in the IPA data analysis to support interpretations of participant accounts, and reporting results that displayed a representation of how the participants made sense of their lived experiences.

The third principle to assess quality is transparency and coherence. Adhering to IPA, the researcher displayed transparency in the following ways: providing a description of the researcher, the interview schedule, and a detailed description of the six stages in the research process. Adhering to IPA, the researcher displayed coherence (e.g., consistency in IPA principles and analysis) in the following ways: ensuring to follow the interpretive nature when engaging in the steps that make up an IPA study and ensuring to make sense of the participants’ experiences during the interpretation of the findings.

The fourth principle to assess quality is, impact and importance. Adhering to IPA, the researcher displayed impact and importance in the following ways: ensuring that the study addressed a gap and added to the knowledge base of counselor education.

**Ethical Considerations**

In considering the risks and benefits of this study, the researcher obtained IRB approval before beginning the data collection process. Institutional review boards (IRBs) function to protect human subjects involved in research studies (Remley & Herlihy, 2016). According to the ACA Code of Ethics (2014, Section G.1.a.) states that when counselors are engaged in research, they should “plan, design, conduct, and report research in a manner that is consistent with pertinent ethical principles, federal and state laws, host institutional regulations, and scientific standards governing research” (p. 15).

Following G.1.a, the researcher checked in with the participant throughout the interview process and allowed time at the end of the interview to answer any questions and provide
resources if support was needed (Herlihy & Corey, 2014). Stake (2005) advises, “Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict” (p. 459). Honoring the participants’ space, safety, and vulnerability is of utmost importance to the researcher. Before the interview began, the researcher reviewed the signed informed consent with each participant, which outlined elements such as the purpose of the study and the role of their participation thoroughly and received their verbal consent. The researcher informed each participant that if any parts of the interview were too sensitive and the participant would not like to display the data extracts from their accounts, the participant could notify the researcher (Smith et al., 2009). When presenting the results, the researcher informed participants that she would remove any identifiable information and provide each participant with pseudonyms (false names) (Pajo, 2017). Each participant was reminded that the study was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study without any consequences or pressure from the researcher. Furthermore, the researcher acknowledged the goal of the study with each participant.

Before the start of the interviews, the researcher informed participants what information would be collected in the study (see Appendix E) so that participants could decide if it was appropriate to opt out of the study before the start of the interview questions. The researcher provided time for each participant to ask questions and address concerns before, during, and at the end of the interview. All participants were over 18 years of age and did not report any impairments to their mental health that would increase their vulnerability to participate in this study. Possible risks that could have resulted from this study were very minimal. Potential benefits from this study are that the results may add to the knowledge base of counselor
education programs, give representation, and give voice to the participants’ experiences (Smith et al., 2009).

In this study, true anonymity is not possible because the researcher will meet her participants during the interview process; however, the researcher will use pseudonyms to protect the identities of her participants.

According to the ACA Code of Ethics (2014, Section G.1.b.) states that counselors “are responsible for understanding and adhering to state, federal, agency, or institutional policies or applicable guidelines regarding confidentiality in their research practices” (p. 15). Regarding data security, the data collected was kept in a password-protected laptop, files were kept in password-protected folders, and sign-in to the computer and files required two-factor authentication. Recorded interviews and member checking emails will be erased after the completion of the study, and final approval is given by the committee members and university, which would minimize future risk to the participants’ confidentiality.

**Summary of Chapter Three**

In summary, the goal of this chapter was to provide a detailed description of the methodology and how it was utilized to answer the research question. The focus of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Latinx CITs and how they made sense of their experiences with psychological safety in classroom environments. Next, the researcher recruited the participants through purposeful sampling and utilized semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method. Using IPA, the researcher was able to analyze the data and produce themes.

Each Latinx CIT contributed to the current study’s purpose by sharing their experiences of psychological safety within classroom environments. Additionally, the researcher developed
five superordinate themes and nine subordinate themes to answer the research question.

Furthermore, the researcher described considerations to enhance research quality and ethical considerations. In chapter 4, the researcher thoroughly and richly described the study’s findings using the IPA and LatCrit blueprints.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore how Latinx counselors-in-training (CITs) enrolled in CACREP-accredited master’s programs in the United States defined and experienced psychological safety in their classroom environments. This chapter illustrates the results of the interpretative phenomenological analysis conducted through a Latino Critical (LatCrit) theoretical lens to answer the following research question:

1. How do Latinx CITs experience and define psychological safety within classroom environments while enrolled in CACREP-accredited master’s degree programs in the United States?

Adhering to the guidelines of IPA, Table 3 portrays the five superordinate and nine subordinate themes generated during the data analysis stage, along with identifying participants’ presence within each theme. In this chapter, the researcher provides an in-depth interpretative analysis of the superordinate and subordinate themes that represent the lived experiences of eight Latinx CITs, along with the corresponding supporting segments from participant interview transcripts. The five superordinate and nine subordinate themes, see Table 3, emerged through the participants’ rich, descriptive responses to the thirteen interview questions, see Appendix G, which encompasses the revised Edmondson’s (1999) 7-item survey questions, and includes six additional items based on the current literature presented in chapter 2. With the participants’ rich, descriptive narratives, the researcher ensures to capture Latinx CITs’ awareness of time frames (e.g., past, present, and future experiences) and comparisons within those time frames. The researcher acknowledges convergence (similarities between cases) and divergence (differences between cases) within each theme. To examine the themes, the researcher focuses on the philosophical foundations of IPA (e.g., Heidegger’s hermeneutics, Idiography, and Husserl’s
phenomenology approach), which allows the researcher to highlight each theme and contextualize the meaning, value, and sense-making participants attributed to their experiences. Using Smith et al. (2009) recommendations for an IPA analysis, the researcher portrays the iterative process of the current study’s IPA Analysis in Table 4.

To honor the nature of qualitative research, the detailed accounts of Latinx CITs’ experiences with psychological safety in their classroom environments served to help the researcher understand how to make sense of the findings from the lens of the participants. Engaged in how Latinx CITs made sense of their experiences of psychological safety, the researcher presents the five superordinate themes and nine subordinate themes in a narrative format, supported with verbatim extracts from participants. The first theme thoroughly describes how Latinx CITs defined psychological safety. The second theme portrays Latinx CITs’ attitudes concerning the influence of openness on their psychological safety. The third theme acknowledges the role of racial microaggressions related to low psychological safety, which often served as a source of separation within interpersonal relationships. The fourth theme highlights the influences of high psychological safety, which often allowed Latinx CITs to prevail in their CACREP program despite the challenges they experienced. The fifth theme indicates the suggestions and recommendations of participants to counselor educators, peers, and CACREP-accredited institutions in hopes of creating psychologically safe environments.

Table 3

*Master Table of Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superordinate Themes</th>
<th>Subordinate Themes</th>
<th>No. of participants within the theme</th>
<th>Present in over half of the sample? (Y/N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Psychological safety defined</td>
<td>(8): All participants</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Attitudes toward openness</td>
<td>(6): Jesica, Carlita, Moon Rivers, Susana, Linda, and Cathy</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Acknowledgment of racial microaggressions related to low psychological safety</td>
<td>• 3A: Influence of multidimensional identities</td>
<td>3A: (8) All participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 3B: Recognition of “being the only one”</td>
<td>3B: (5) Jesica, Carlita, Moon Rivers, Susana, Linda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 3C: Lack of access to multicultural components within program instructional content and resources</td>
<td>3C: (7) Jesica, Carlita, Moon Rivers, Maria, Josefina, Linda, Cathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 3D: When is it my turn to speak? Deciding when to enter the conversation</td>
<td>3D: (7) Jesica, Carlita, Moon Rivers, Susana, Josefina, Linda, and Cathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 3E: Broken Foundation: Lack of supportive outlets</td>
<td>3E: (7) Cathy, Josefina, Susana, Moon Rivers, Carlita, Jesica, Linda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 3F: Dismissed and Isolated</td>
<td>3F: (5) Cathy, Linda, Josefina, Moon Rivers, Carlita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Staying in the ring despite the obstacles: The influences of high psychological safety</td>
<td>• 4A: The development of leader alliances</td>
<td>4A: (7) Jesica, Carlita, Moon Rivers, Maria, Susana, Josefina, Cathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 4B: Peer support and collaboration</td>
<td>4B: All 8 participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4
Iterative Process of IPA Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPA Strategy (Smith et al., 2009, p. 114–115)</th>
<th>Researcher’s Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Superordinate and subordinate themes are present in at least half of the participants.</td>
<td>1. Each superordinate and subordinate theme was present in four or more participants, (see Table 3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. “The close, line-by-line analysis of the experiential claims, concerns, and understandings of each participant.”</td>
<td>2. Using MAQXQA, the researcher engaged in the first two steps of IPA outlined by Smith et al. (2009) for data analysis: Step 1: Initial Reading of The First Interview and Step 2: Initial Coding of The First Interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. “The identification of the emergent patterns (i.e., themes) within this experiential material, emphasizing both convergence and divergence, commonality and nuance…usually first for single cases, and then subsequently across multiple cases.”</td>
<td>3. Using MAQXQA, the researcher engaged in the next four steps of IPA outlined by Smith et al. (2009) for data analysis: Step 3: Developing the Emergent Themes of The First Interview, Step 4: Examining the Connections Across Emergent Themes, Step 5: Moving to The Next Case, and Step 6: Identifying Patterns Across Cases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. “The development of a structure, frame or gestalt which illustrates the relationships between themes.”</td>
<td>4. A representation of the results is presented with a table displaying the superordinate and subordinate themes, (see Table 3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. “The use of supervision, collaboration, or audit to help test and develop the coherence and plausibility of the interpretation.”</td>
<td>5. The researcher engaged in member checking during the interview, sent participants member checking emails after developing the themes, and continuously bracketed assumptions and biases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. “The development of a full narrative, evidenced by a detailed commentary on data extracts, which takes the reader through this interpretation, usually theme-by-theme, and is often supported by some form of visual guide.”</td>
<td>6. In narrative form, a detailed and thorough interpretation of the results is supported by excerpts from participants’ narrative accounts, presented in chapter 4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. “Reflection on one’s own perceptions, conceptions and processes.”</td>
<td>7a. Description of the Researcher (Researcher Reflexivity) statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7b. Memo Writing (e.g., theoretical memos, hypothetical memos, reflexive journaling)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. Participants’ Suggestions and recommendations</th>
<th></th>
<th>Y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4C: The responsibility of advocacy</td>
<td>4C: All 8 participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8): All participants</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Superordinate Theme One: Psychological Safety Defined

This superordinate theme encompassed the accumulation of experiences related to eight Latinx CITs that shaped their definition of psychological safety. During the interview, the researcher asked the participants, “How would you define psychological safety as a Latinx counselor-in-training?” After the Latinx CITs defined psychological safety, the researcher provided the Latinx CITs with Edmondson’s (2018) definition presented in chapter two, “the belief that the environments are safe for interpersonal risk-taking. The concept refers to the experience of feeling able to speak up with relevant ideas, questions, or concerns” (p. 167). Additionally, the researcher noted examples of interpersonal risks such as asking questions and voicing concerns, without the fear of being humiliated, dismissed, overlooked, or shut down by others, whether that be peers, instructors, tutors, mentors (Edmondson, 2018). Furthermore, the researcher inquired if Edmondson’s definition of psychological safety represented the needs of the Latinx CIT community.

All eight participants shared their definition of psychological safety and responded to the revised Edmondson’s (1999) 7-item survey questions, and the six additional items based on the current literature presented in chapter 2, see Appendix G.

Earlier in the interview, Jesica mentioned the importance of language, specifically having the space to express herself in Spanish in the classroom, a space she was not provided in her CACREP-accredited master’s program. When defining psychological safety, Jesica felt more comfortable defining psychological safety in Spanish and asked the researcher if she could proceed in defining the term in Spanish. Remembering what Jesica expressed earlier about language and exemplifying a psychologically safe space in the interview, the researcher
requested that Jesica proceed with defining the term in Spanish. When defining psychological safety, Jesica included elements of physical and mental health related to well-being:

I think for me, it’s…the health and well-being of individuals, you know, mental health and well-being right, like, where are they? Health wise…Igual como se cuidan el cuerpo la salud del cuerpo y con el doctor, tomar su resposas, tener su salud de mente. Verdad? Salud de cuerpo así tambien tenemos la salud y la seguridad de su, de su mente… I don’t know. It’s, it’s hard, right? Because it’s, it’s key. It’s looking at the mental, the health and mental well-being. To, to feel safe, right. And I don’t know how to describe it. To be honest, I’m stuck. I’ll be honest with you.

[English Translation] I think for me, it’s…the health and well-being of individuals, you know, mental health and well-being right, like, where are they? Health wise... Just as you take care of your body, you greet your body and with the doctor, take your rest, have your mental health. Right? Body health, so we also have the health and safety of your, of your mind ... I don’t know. It’s, it’s hard, right? Because it’s, it’s key. It’s looking at the mental, the health and mental well-being. To, to feel safe, right. And I don’t know how to describe it. To be honest, I’m stuck. I’ll be honest with you.

After being provided with Edmondson’s definition of psychological safety, Jesica expressed concern about how the term “environment” will be interpreted in Spanish to be presented to her clients and her family and preferred the term “space” or defining the space with “classroom,” instead of environment. Jesica expressed the “shame and stigmatization” that are “high” in “Latinx communities” and preferred to use “a space for you to feel safe, to share, to process, to not be judged by others, for your mental health and well-being” when describing this term to individuals in the Latinx community.
Similar to Jesica, Carlita described the importance of weaving Latinx cultural elements, specifically “familismo” and “personalismo,” into the definition of psychological safety. Additionally, Carlita emphasized the importance of professors helping students “learn” and “grow” from mistakes. With this, Carlita shared:

I think having those cultural values, especially the familismo, personalismo. I think those are the things that create safety…When the professor or like my colleagues get to know me, I get to know them. Like, we’re building community, this understanding that we’re all learning and growing. And it’s okay to make mistakes, and advocate for ourselves. I guess you could say, like, when we make mistakes, like, it’s okay to help, you know, correct that as well. Like, as a community, like we’ll learn together and grow together. And like, if mistakes are made, we’ll learn from each other, and like, we’ll grow within that.

Familismo is defined as “one of the most important values for normal development and adjustment on the Latino individual…comprises close bonds with one’s family, cohesiveness, interdependence, fulfilling familial obligations, and holding strong perceptions of familial support” (Ortiz, 2020, p. 421). The second term, personalismo, is defined as a Latinx individual’s “preference for connectedness with others and for interpersonal relationships based on trust” (Ortiz, 2020, p. 423).

Carlita expanded on her definition of psychological safety by stating the differences and similarities of what psychological “unsafety” and psychological safety felt like to her by using “climbing up the fence” to serve as a metaphor and expressing emotions such as “scary,” “dumb,” and “afraid” when describing the “big classroom.” Additionally, Carlita explored the differences she sees in her “big classrooms” and “Latinx-focused classrooms.” Carlita’s
counseling program offers a “Latinx-focused” concentration, alongside of taking classes with those students not in the “Latinx-focused” concentration, labeled the “big classrooms” and “broader classrooms” by the participant. The name of the concentration was changed to respect the participant's anonymity.

And so, essentially, that’s what I’m afraid of. If I am in the big classrooms like, will I be laughed at? Will I be mocked? Or like, will I [get] all these things [right]?... That’s my definition of unsafety. I guess the safety of it would be like the complete opposite where I feel like I won’t be judged, where I won’t be snickered at when I have something to say or like when I’m in my feelings…So, I think that for me, psychological safety is knowing that like I, I don’t feel like that barrier to, or like, I don’t feel like there’s a fence that I have to go over to...on one side of the fence is my safety. And then the other side is like the unsafety. And I don’t feel like I have to cross to the unsafe side in the [Latinx-focused] classroom. But I guess being in the broader classroom, I have to [pause], like, I have to climb up that fence and go into that unknown side or that unsafety side. And that’s scary.

After hearing Edmondson’s definition, Carlita was captured by the “belief” section of the definition and shared her reaction to why she “loved” the definition:

Yeah, I think, [pause] I absolutely love it. And I say that because it’s, I like the belief part, like, whether it’s, whether the threat is actually there or not like, in my head, I do believe that. Like, sometimes in the [Latinx-focused] classes, like I do believe that I can take interpersonal risks, such as asking questions, voicing my concerns, my fears…I know, I will not be humiliated, dismissed, overlooked, shut down, and so forth, by either my colleagues, my peers, and my instructors…I love that aspect of it, because I do feel
that way…However, like in the major big broad classes, like I do have this belief that if I 
speak up, I am taking a risk. And I am like, I do have a risk of fear of being humiliated, 
dismissed, shut down.

Similar to Carlita and Jesica, Moon Rivers wanted to be able to “voice disagreements” on 
the Latinx community, without “repercussions.” Unlike the other seven participants, Moon 
Rivers requested that the researcher share Edmondson’s definition of psychological safety before 
she shared her response. Although Moon Rivers expressed that she “liked” Edmondson’s 
definition, she suggested that psychological safety should include being able to “bring up” 
“racial topics” in the classroom related to the Latinx population, without others being “angry or 
defensive,” leading to her defending or arguing about a topic she raised, nor finding a way to 
“tiptoe” around these “often ignored” and “overlooked” Latinx concentrated topics.

Something that I would definitely add is just [pause] let me find the words for it. Um, 
being able to voice disagreements without feeling like there will be repercussions, related 
to things that are Latinx. Like [the classroom] should be a safe environment to bring up 
any of these topics, especially racial topics that I think are often ignored, or they want to 
be seen overlooked. These topics are topics that we have to tiptoe around, and you have 
to, it’s almost like walking on eggshells, where you have to be careful what words you 
use to talk about these topics. Because if you say the one wrong thing, somebody is going 
to be upset or somebody is going to become angry or defensive. And then, out of 
nowhere, this conversation that you were hoping to have, as just a regular conversation, is 
now something that you’re having to defend or argue about. And it’s like, I don’t want to 
argue about it. I just want to be able to have a calm conversation about these topics.
Maria shared that she did not know how to define psychological safety directly, but would attempt to discuss what it “will look like” for her. Maria emphasized “acceptance,” being “allowed to share,” and being heard by members outside of the Latinx community. Like Carlita, Jesica, and Moon Rivers, Maria discussed the inclusion of the Latinx community as her “personal experience” and “personal community.”

I think that for me, psychological safety as a Latinx counselor-in-training would be, I guess, just a general sense of acceptance. Like, that my narrative, my community is, is accepted and valued, in this space, in this counselor-in-training space, we’re talking about. We’re talking about academia; we’re talking about master’s-level learning…I can add my experience, my personal experience…It’s not just my upbringing, my family, my personal community…I guess this like [pause], healthy cross-section [laughs] of experience within my own community…Psychological safety means that whatever part of that experience I’m drawing on, I will be heard, accepted, and somebody who is not a part of our community or somebody who is, and maybe has a different experience, is not going to belittle or dismiss what I am saying when sharing ideas, feelings, thoughts, whatever they may be…I think psychological safety has a lot to do with, um, just that acceptance. And that um, feeling of, like, safety overall…But, um, that overall feeling of whatever I share, I’m allowed to share. Whatever I feel comfortable sharing, this is an okay place to do that. Um, and I think that we have a long way to go with that.

After hearing Edmondson’s definition, Maria shared some insights into the influences of “taking risks” and “real change” that exist within psychological safety.

So, I think what jumps out to me is just that [pause] the risk, feeling safe enough to take a risk…If you’re not safe enough to take a risk, then you’re not safe…Safety without risk
isn’t really safety. [laughs] You know what I mean? And then there won’t be change, without, without risks. And there are people that have to be the ones to put themselves out there, to take those interpersonal risks, professional risks, all of that, to create real change.

Similar to six of the other Latinx CIT study participants, Susana expressed the importance of being open-minded to various perspectives in the classroom by seeing through a “cultural lens.” Additionally, she expressed psychological safety relating to her professors and peers being “curious” and not “imposing [their] own beliefs” that may be “stereotypical.” Furthermore, she shared the importance of both her peers and professors being able to invite her experiences into the discussion, even if they might have been different.

Making it [pause] okay to share your experiences. And from your cultural lens, being curious, you know, [others] being curious to know our experience. And, that it might not be just that one typical kind of stereotypical narrative…Asking those questions, welcoming those questions, shutting down, you know, other people that are kind of just coming from things from one way…Being curious and being open to hearing what people have to say without imposing your own beliefs on, on it. Or, even coming from a place of, How has your experience been? How has it been different?

Like Carlita, after hearing Edmondson’s definition, Susana discussed the importance of including “personalismo.” However, Susana shared how others can use “personalismo” to possibly create a guideline of what a psychologically safe space would resemble. In contrast to Carlita, Susana extended the definition outside of the classroom, when creating psychologically safe spaces when working with clients, and then discussed bringing it back into the classroom to “create a safe space” for Latinx CITs.
I think, I could see that [definition] working really well. With the Latinx community, I don’t know when you talk about [psychological safety] with like clients like in a therapeutic setting like, personalismo is big. So how do you use that personalismo first to kind of create, like a space, an opening? And then, and then utilize all the things that she talked about? Right? Like those are safe. That’s kind of like signals. It’s safe here. Yeah. How do you create that safe space? I think we need to include, [these are the] kind of things that you kind of can do to create a safe space… How do you create that safe space that she talks about? And that’s what I think would be important for the Latinx [CITs].

Similar to six of the other Latinx CIT study participants, Linda shared that her definition of psychological safety was shaped by the discussions on culture. In addition, similar to Moon Rivers, Linda expressed that psychologically safe places allowed her to have the “freedom” to “bounce ideas off” of her peers, without the discussions leading to “arguments.” Furthermore, Linda mentioned being an “outlier” and discussed the microaggressions that occurred to her when having conversations related to race and ethnicity, specifically to being labeled as “Mexican” when her peers and professors brought up the topic of “immigration.”

A space where you can speak your mind and not be judged or humiliated. Also, not be embarrassed to speak and having the space, the environment to just be open and honest. Why is it that we can’t talk about these particular situations? Why can’t we have a discussion about these situations? So, for me, it is having that freedom, you know, to be able to, to, bounce ideas off of your peers, even if it becomes a heated conversation, heated being angry and argumentative, it is a conversation that needs to happen to be able to understand others perspectives and disappointments. Having a space where I am included. These conversations don’t need to be based on the Latinx population, but I
shouldn’t be excluded in conversations. I am an outlier. When I say outlier, I mean, I am interested in having conversations, you know, on African Americans, and Asians, and Caucasians, but do people have conversations on Hispanics, Latinx folks, without bringing up immigration or classifying everyone as Mexicans?

Responding to Edmondson’s definition, Linda expressed concerns about being silenced in the classroom related to her gender, ethnicity, and “last name.”

I want to be able to talk to my peers and professors about difficulties I may be having with content or with a client in this learning stage, and, um [pause] not feel judged. I want to be able to have the opportunity to talk in the classroom, without seeing others make comments on a culture, they, [pause] haven’t even tried to learn or ask about. I like how [Edmondson] lays the definition out. I feel like as a Hispanic woman, as a Latinx woman, we are very much silenced, in the classroom, in educational spaces. I feel like sometimes, I have to stay silent. Also, why does my culture and my last name change the way that someone perceives me? I just have this hesitancy with being myself in the class. But, for the most part, [Edmondson’s] definition aligned.

Similar to six of the other Latinx CIT study participants, Cathy expressed the importance of her peers and professors respecting her “culture.” Like Linda, Cathy described feeling “excluded,” “isolated,” and “alone” in psychologically unsafe spaces.

For me as a Latinx counselor-in-training, I guess, I would define psychological safety as feeling that space to have my voice heard and like, feeling safe and not feeling embarrassed or judged. Or maybe even feeling like I’m included. Like being a part of the group. Sometimes, I feel like if I don’t agree with my peers or professor, then my perspective doesn’t get the space to be listened to. I feel excluded and discouraged…In,
in some classrooms, I feel like I am part of the group. In some classrooms, I feel isolated and alone. I just stay quiet…So for me, the classes that make me feel psychologically safe are the ones where [peers and professors] respect my culture and want to have conversations on diversity. I begin to feel more engaged. I want to talk more, I want to, you know, participate more. I want to be more part of the group discussions. And, then in the classes where I don’t feel supported or like, psychologically safe, I don’t want to talk. I kind of just like, I’m stay to myself. I kind of want to work alone. I don’t want to work with anybody else. I, I don’t really voice my opinions, even when [my peers and professors] ask for them. It’s like, I just stay quiet to get [pause] get the conversation over with, because [my peers and professors] are not open to my views. I feel like just staying quiet, even when I want to take up space and talk about my perspective. But, will they care? Or pretend to listen and move on. I rather stay quiet.

Similar to Linda, Cathy felt that Edmondson’s definition aligned well with her definition. Additionally, she discussed the importance of the professor creating a space for her and her peers to bring up topics.

The definition is great. I think it aligns a lot of like what I said earlier with, like, having a voice and feeling heard and you know, not feeling embarrassed or humiliated, or dismissed like I just feel I feel like it aligns well. And I feel like there’s, there’s always something that can be added. It is important that the professor creates a psychologically safe space where conversations about any topic can be discussed and a student does not feel, um, judged or embarrassed.

In contrast to the seven other Latinx CIT study participants, Josefina shared that the term
psychological safety made her reflect upon the conversations she had with her Latinx peers, specific to the self-described post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) she experienced in her counseling program, with professors, peers, and administrators. Conversely, Josefina shared that psychological safety is a space where Latinx CITs do not “experience trauma” and don’t have to “defend their identity and who [they] are” both inside and outside of the classroom. Similar to Moon Rivers, Josefina mentioned that a psychologically safe space did not make her defend her identity. In addition, she shared the element of being tokenized for being a Spanish speaker at her site and in the program, which will be discussed further in superordinate theme three.

Psychological safety…I was talking with some of my peers, who are Latinx. And we were talking about how we almost feel like we’re leaving our program with like PTSD [pause] in a lot of ways, and it’s kind of like [long pause], a lot of it, is kind of traumatic. Because it is a lot of…we’re valued in a lot of ways for our language, especially with internship because sites want Spanish speakers. So, they specifically ask, and so it’s kind of like the school is getting something from us. But then, [pause] our needs are too much. And when we need, you know, when we’re like, “Oh, we’re being tokenized.” They’re like, “Oh, no, not really.” Like, um, so I guess it’s kind of, that it’s having a space where you’re not going to be experiencing trauma. And you’re not going to have to continually defend your identity and who you are.

After the researcher shared Edmondson’s definition, Josefina focused on the trauma she experienced in her counseling program. She began to explain how Edmondson’s definition didn’t include an individual’s “basic needs” of safety, but instead held a “positive” stance, which failed to consider those that are being “physically” and emotionally harmed. Additionally, Josefina questioned how a person might take an “interpersonal risk” when their “basic needs” of
safety are being “threatened.” Similar to Susana and Moon Rivers, Josefina did not want to have to consistently “defend” herself in the classroom.

So, my first thing is, I agree with [that definition], but I feel…I went directly to like trauma and [Edmondson] is talking about, oh, taking interpersonal risks and stuff like, it’s almost like. I don’t know, it’s almost like what we were asking was a much lower bar. And [long pause] yeah, it’s [laughs] it’s kind of funny. I mean, I guess it’s, it’s kind of sad. But I think that’s it’s like, that would be nice, too…I think we’re not even close to that yet. So, I think we need to, like focus more on like, bare minimum, then worrying about taking risks. And being overlooked or shut down, stuff like that. Like, I think, [pause] there’s a lot of ways that we’re actively being harmed. And so, this is a lot more, positive…I think I would add something is safe enough to, but something about, people not being actively harmed. Not having to defend [long pause] themselves all the time…I like to take the interpersonal risks part, but I think I would include it the end. So, I think I would add, making it, having an environment that is safe enough where people don’t feel threatened, don’t feel like they’re, they have to [pause] be protective of who they are of their [pause] identities… I think interpersonal risk should be a part at the end. But first include, make sure that the basic, like, safety actual, like physical safety that people are not actively being harmed in, very simple. You’re talking about interpersonal risks and stuff, but it’s like, how can you be taking interpersonal risks, when you are in a situation where [long pause] you’re being, other more basic needs are not being met. So, it’s like, if you’re in an environment where it’s very evident that you’re not wanted, like, taking a personal risk is not on your mind, it’s gonna be like, just showing up, it’s kind of a big deal. So, you know, starting to talk about interpersonal risks, is kind of high up…I think,
psychological safety should be more like, includes [basic needs] that her definition doesn’t include.

Superordinate Theme Two: Attitudes Toward Openness

The second superordinate theme included the Latinx CITs’ responses to the question, “How would you describe the influence of psychological safety on your openness within the classroom?” Six participants shared their attitudes toward the influence of psychological safety on their openness within classroom environments.

Jesica expressed her increase in “awareness” about the influence of psychological safety on her openness in classroom environments and stated “how psychological safety could change things for [the] Latinx community? I just feel like there, there’s pieces missing. In order to have that.” When expressing her understanding of the influence of openness on her psychological safety, Jesica also mentioned a component of exercising “silence” and being unable to be open when placed in a classroom space that made her feel psychologically unsafe. Regarding the “missing pieces,” Jesica sees herself as an agent of change. Although she can grasp an understanding of what psychologically safe spaces could potentially do to influence the openness of the Latinx community, she is still deliberating where to place the “pieces” together to figure out “how” psychological safety can be implemented to meet the needs of Latinx CITs.

Similar to Jesica, Moon Rivers shared that psychological safety influences her openness within the classroom, with peers and professors, but stressed that there is “room for improvement” in research when understanding their correlation.

For Carlita, she described how having a lack of psychological safety in the “big classrooms” with “White students” resulted in her not speaking up in class discussions, which impacted her ability to be open with both her peers and the professor in the classroom space.
Additionally, Carlita highlights the challenges “minoritized individuals,” struggle with when attempting to exercise openness in classroom spaces.

Okay, I think psychological safety has a huge influence on openness with the classroom. And I think like, similar with the experience that I’ve had in the bigger classrooms with all these students, especially White students, like I’ve, I have not been safe, or like I’ve had experiences where there have, not been the best…So I’d no longer like to talk in those big classrooms. I no longer like, like to speak my mind in those classrooms…I do feel like psychological safety has a huge impact on how an individual, especially a Latinx student…I think not just a Latinx student, right, like a lot of minority individuals or minoritized individuals…I think like that can play a huge role in discussing what [Latinx CITs] want to discuss about or like the things that are meaningful for us, like it’s important to me, and I think this is important that folks should know, however, will you care for it? Or, like, right, you don’t have to agree with it, but just respect it because this is my experience, and this is just as valid as your experience.

Throughout the interview, Susana discussed that her openness changed daily depending on how she felt her professor and peers would be open to hearing and discussing her ideas. At times, Susana shared that the professor’s non-verbal behaviors would cause her to understand the professor’s perspective, and if it was different from hers, then she did not “want to risk” being open about her ideas. Additionally, Susana contemplated the impact sharing in the classroom would have on her professional future, in the case that she might work with one of her peers in a professional space one day.

Yes!...If I know, the professor or I gauge, like, if someone says something, like, really radical and the professor’s like, really, you know, like the, like, you’ve talked about, like
the nodding, or the smile, there’s something. I’m like, oh, so really not safe space, open space, you see this. And I take the risk of alienating my peers and professors probably in the future. Do I really want to do that? And like I said, if I’m in a place where I’m like, I am totally feeling safe…[and others can] be supportive of me, then I’ll do it….On a professional level, like, I don’t want to, um, alienate potentially future people that I am going to be in the field with.

Similar to Susana, Cathy shared that her ability to be open and “take those risks” in the classroom was dependent on her professors. In addition, like Carlita, Cathy wanted to know that her ideas would be “valued” and “respected” in the classroom space before deciding to be open.

I feel like psychological safety has a lot to do with my openness in my Latinx professor’s classroom compared to my other classroom. I just feel more open to take those risks and be more bold with ideas. It is more valued, accepted, and expected with my Latinx professor.

For Linda, she described how although she would like to be more open, “biases” and “judgments’ from both her peers and professors cause her to isolate herself during class discussions.

I feel like I want to be more open. I want to be able to engage with others. I want to be, be a part of this program. But then other times, I’m just like, it’s like stressful. The biases and the judgements, I want to just stick to myself and get through the program. I can’t be vulnerable, and I can’t be myself.

Superordinate Theme Three: Acknowledgment of Racial Microaggressions Related to Low Psychological Safety
Through the use of metaphors and descriptive examples, all eight participants described experiencing racial microaggressions in the classroom, which impacted their sense of psychological safety. For the purposes of this superordinate theme, racial microaggressions are defined as,

brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group. They are not limited to human encounters alone but may also be environmental in nature, as when a person of color is exposed to an office setting that unintentionally assails his or her racial identity (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273-274).

All eight participants expressed physical and emotional reactions to experiencing racial microaggressions. When acknowledging their experiences with racial microaggressions from their peers and their professors, all eight participants described feeling a lack of psychological safety during those instances in the classroom space. In addition, all eight participants were hesitant to bring up their microaggressions and initially paused or checked in with the researcher to understand if discussing these topics in the interview space was okay. Once the researcher told the participants that they were free to share their experiences as Latinx CITs, all eight participants expressed less hesitancy when responding to questions. All eight participants paused when bringing up their White peers and professors and stated that there was “no mal-intention” towards their peers, but their peers lack of understanding of the Latinx community.

The following subordinate themes were included in this superordinate theme: (3a) Influence of multidimensional identities, (3b) Recognition of “being the only one,” (3c) Lack of access to multicultural components within program instructional content and resources, (3d)
When is it my turn to speak? Deciding when to enter the conversation, (3e) Broken foundation: Lack of supportive outlets, and (3f) Dismissed and Isolated.

**Influence of Multidimensional Identities**

All eight participants described microaggressions that were directed towards their multidimensional identities, which influenced their psychological safety when interacting with peers and professors. Five participants stated that their peers and professors clustered all Latinx individuals into one group. For example, Carlita, Linda, and Josefina strongly emphasized that “not all Latinx folks are the same” when describing the importance of their peers and professors learning more about the different ethnicities that make up the Latinx culture. Similarly, Susana shared, “I’m from Guatemala, certain words are different…Don’t just always lump everybody into one category.” Moon Rivers stated, “Just because we’re Latinos, that doesn’t mean that we have the same experiences.”

For Jesica, she held pride in being a U.S. Citizen and a native of Mexico, which she considered “from both worlds.” In addition, Jesica stressed the challenges of being a first-generation student and learning to navigate the college application process with the help of her “Latinx community and friends.” The participants’ supports will be discussed in further detail in theme four.

Regarding her identity, Jesica discussed the microaggressions she experienced due to her skin color and the assumptions being made by those in the classroom that she does not know how to speak Spanish, due to not having an accent.

I’m in the Pacific Northwest…And although my skin is lighter brown…I acknowledge the shades of brownness, from Latinx communities. I feel like sometimes people get confused, and they don’t, especially… I don’t have an accent…So they don’t think that either one, I
speak Spanish or two, that I am from a Latinx, Latin community, or background…So there’s that like a shock, kind of like, “Oh, you speak Spanish? Whoa, I didn’t think that you did.” Like, “I didn’t think you were Latina or, or Latinx.” So, there was that shocked aspect.

With this statement, Jesica explored microaggressions related to language, stereotypes of what a Latinx person looks like, and issues with colorism. For the purpose of this subordinate theme the concept of colorism is described as a “subtype of racial phenotypicality bias in which skin tone is used as a metric by which to discriminate against those outside or within one’s own racioethnic group” (Marira & Mitra, 2021, p. 103). With this, participants often described their skin color as influencing how they were treated as part of the Latinx community. For example, Josefina described an element of privilege that is associated with physical features such as “blue eyes and light skin.” Like Jesica, Josefina discussed the influence of colorism, language, and the challenge of being forced to prove her racial and ethnic identity to her peers and professors.

I think, I think it’s a double-edged sword. I think in a lot of ways, I’ve been afforded a lot more privileges. And like, in a lot of ways, I am seen as more acceptable. You know, it’s like when they’re like, “Oh, immigrants,” no, but like, “You don’t count, like, you’re fine.” Like, and it’s like, I’m like, well, then, let’s actually call it what it is. Like, you’re fine with me because I’m blonde, like, I have blue eyes, and light skin. Like it’s not because…Spanish is my first language. I speak Spanish all the time. Like, it’s not. It’s not because you’re bothered by people speaking Spanish. It’s because you’re bothered by people speaking Spanish, who like look different. And also, because I can pass very well, like [pause], my English for the most part, it’s pretty good [laughs]. It comes out sometimes. But people are like, “Oh, where are you from? The Midwest?” People assume it’s somewhere else in the United States…But at the same time, I do get a lot more,
where they’re like, “No, you don’t count.” So, like, “we don’t actually want to hear your experiences. We don’t want to.” So that’s why it’s like, it’s very much a double-edged sword. It’s like, I get positives, and I get negatives.

Josefina elaborated on how draining it can be to consistently be challenged and challenge back those who question her identity, along with the isolation and “trauma” of being seen as a foreigner. For Josefina, she shared her experience of being told that she does not count as a Hispanic nor an immigrant, although she identifies herself as an immigrant to both her peers and professors.

I’ve had a professor be like, “No, you don’t count as Hispanic.” And I’m like, “But, I’m from there.” And she was like, “No, but you weren’t born there.” I was like, “Yes, I was.” And she was like, “Well, your parents weren’t.” And I’m like, “Ahh, they were!” And she was like, “Well, your grandparents.” Um, “Yeah, like they were born there. They’re all from Argentina.” It was something shocking to me, I think. So, coming from Argentina, I lived in Miami, and then I came here, to Pennsylvania. So, I was always in like a very, like Latinx community and world. So, that was never something that was questioned, until I got to this program. And all of a sudden, people were like, “No, you don’t count.”… Oh, I’ve gotten so many times people are like, “Oh, you know, these immigrants and stuff.” And I’m like, “Guys, I’m an immigrant.” Like, people, don’t seem to understand that you like, when people are talking about like, immigration. It’s very like, “Oh, Mexicans,” and Mexicans look brown. And it’s, people, just have a really hard time understanding, you know, or they’ll, they’ll sit and talk to me about like, “Oh, all these immigrants coming to United States and blah, blah.” And I’m like, “I’m an immigrant.” They’re like, “Well, you don’t count.”
Susana expressed how during class discussions on immigration, professors labeled “undocumented immigrants” as “uneducated” and of “low socioeconomic status.” She described being unable to connect with the challenges of migrating from another country since she was born in the United States and her mother was able to achieve her master’s degree; in two weeks of the interview, Susana would have achieved her master’s degree, as well. However, during class discussions, she felt that the immigration process was tied to the Latinx identity, which left her questioning her own ethnic identity and attempting to figure out where she belonged since she had a very different upbringing. Like Susana, Cathy shared that when working with groups in the classroom, her peers perceived her as an immigrant and consistently questioned “if English was [her] first language.”

Similarly, Cathy shared that she felt “judged” by her peers and professors during class discussions. During the interview, Cathy shared that she felt “humiliated” when her peers and professors talked about “culture” and “immigration” because they would highlight “only their stereotypical negative views.”

I guess they lack a level of understanding about my culture and my views on certain issues. The way that the topic of immigration is talked about in my class is really upsetting. I would say disappointing. I, I didn’t expect this from the counseling profession.

Two participants identified as parents and shared the lack of support they received from their professors and peers. For Moon Rivers, she shared how “being the only parent in the program” felt very isolating for her. Her peers’ lack of support for her identity as a mother, which she labeled as “ignorance, not in the way of …intentional ignorance,” led her to be treated like an “inconvenience” and sense a “judgment.” For example, when she could not meet at
specific times outside of the classroom, her peers suggested “why” she could not attend the meeting and “just leave her [four-year-old child] in the lounge, while [her and her peers] were in the meeting,” which was located inside of the school clinic. When the researcher asked Moon Rivers to describe how she felt regarding her peer’s response to her identity as a mother and her ethnic identity, she shared:

I felt angry. I felt angry. Because I feel like I’ve tried to be, I, I tried to be very open-minded. And, um, [pause] I feel like they’re just like, there’s so much hate and disrespect towards people of color. There’s also a lot of times where people are like, well, White. There’s this general view of White people. And there’s, they’re seen as so many people see them as just racist and all these things. And I don’t want to do that. I tried to give them the space of showing who they are. And so, I felt anger…. I’m over here trying to be as respectful and as open-minded as I can be with you guys and to not have realized that there was these microaggressions towards me. Um, and these like overgeneralizations of who I am, as like a Mexican. It was just like that annoyance of, I’m giving the respect, and I thought I was getting that respect as well, and it turns out I’m not.

Similar to Moon Rivers, Susana stated that although professors encouraged students to talk about their needs and “if [students] have things going on in [their] life,” when explaining to her professor that her “yawning in class” was due to her pregnancy and not her boredom, as an effort to, bring respect to her professor, he responded with “Well, if you can’t handle it…maybe it’s better for you to drop out of the class.” Susana stressed that although her need didn’t have anything to do with her ability and more to show respect to the professor for “yawning in class,” the professor questioned her ability to remain in his class. Due to her experience with that
professor, Susana shared that within one week after given birth, she was back in the classroom. She shared,

I can make a baby and come back and finish the semester…I’m not going to use my pregnancy as an excuse. This is a choice I’ve made, knowing that, yes, it would be more difficult, but that was just my journey. I can do both.

Conversely to the other participants, Maria described how being a Latinx CIT attending a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) had a “profoundly positive” impact on the influence of her multidimensional identities. However, Maria stated that she understood from discussing with her peers that being enrolled at an HBCU set her apart from a non-HBCU CACREP-accredited counselor education program. Maria stated that due to this understanding, she “specifically sought out a diverse community” when choosing a master’s program because she wanted to “be embraced as a Latina student.”

All eight participants shared emotions of “disbelief,” “shock,” and “hurt” when they experienced microaggressions in a counseling program that was supposed to emphasize “diversity” and “multicultural competence.” Sue (2001) defined multicultural counseling competence as:

The counselor’s acquisition of awareness, knowledge, and skills needed to function effectively in a pluralistic democratic society (ability to communicate, interact, negotiate, and intervene on behalf of clients from diverse backgrounds), and on an organizational/societal level, advocating effectively to develop new theories, practices, policies, and organizational structures that are more responsive to all groups (p. 802).

When working with a professor on a peer-reviewed article, Maria shared that she was reading the comments and feedback on the margin of the article and read, “This person had a
Mexican last name, so I didn’t even read it because it probably had a lot of broken English.” She described her face as “turning red” and being shocked that “somebody had the audacity” to include that in the comments and “send it back.” She questioned why someone in the field would be “comfortable doing this” and wondered why there were “no repercussions” in the counseling field. This experience allowed her to brainstorm how she could be an agent of change.

Similarly, Josefina shared an experience with a racial microaggression from a peer in the classroom. “I had a peer come up to me and they’re like, ‘I heard you speak Spanish. You want to get tacos?’ I’m like, ‘What?!’ Like, I laughed because…Who says that? When the researcher asked her how she felt at that moment, Josefina expressed experiencing feelings of “shock” and “thought [the comment] was a joke” because this peer often vocalized being supportive of people of color, which led her to believe that “multicultural competence” in the classroom was “performative.”

I was just like, completely, like, shocked…I thought it was like a joke. I don’t know. And like, and then they were being serious. And they didn’t believe me that I had never been to, Taco Bell…Multicultural competence is more, more than you know, one race or one thing. Like, it’s, um, that’s why it’s like, a lot of performative….Yeah, they were like, “Oh, this is nice. I am inviting you to Taco Bell.” And… I think that’s the real issue. Is that, it’s an environment where [pause] people are not held accountable and more things like that are allowed to be said. People say things, and there is no; it’s acceptable. Like, you know, at the very least, in most places, it’s like, being a bigot is not acceptable. Like, so people can be bigoted, but they try to hide those beliefs. And it’s the fact that, like, people will get up and do a presentation and say all sorts of horrible things. And the program’s response when anybody complains is, “Well, people are allowed to have their
own beliefs.” Um, [pause] Yes, but the program also has a responsibility [pause], to be molding multiculturally competent people. And so, if you have that many people saying things like this towards the end of their program, clearly, you’re failing and so many other, other ways… And it’s, it creates very, like unsafe spaces for everybody else…What you’re essentially saying is that you care more about somebody’s [pause], like freedom to be a bigot, than everybody else in the class feeling safe. Because if a professor allows those kinds of things going on in their classroom, you’re essentially just saying [pause]…you’re essentially agreeing with them. And you’re essentially, like, creating the kind of environment where that’s accepted. Like, that’s okay. It really is not that hard to, like, quickly check somebody. You know, like, when people say something, and be like, “Hey, by the way, I know you don’t mean to, but like, that just sounds really like.” You know, like not even shaming somebody. You can easily be like, “Oh, you’re nervous because you’re presenting” you said something that, like, might, and you can just check it and nip it in the bud right there. And, like, you make sure that the world, like the whole class, knows it’s not acceptable and things like that. Instead [pause], the program [pause] just allows it to go on, and people complaining are seen as the problem.

Recognition of “being the only one”

Five out of the eight participants expressed being the only Latinx woman in the classroom and feeling the burden of being the only one to bring up topics on race and culture during classroom discussions. The underrepresentation of students of color in the classroom left participants feeling socially and physically “separate” from their peers and professors.

Jesica expressed that being the only Latinx CIT felt “isolating” and mentioned a desire to see “other BIPOC folks” in the classroom. Additionally, she describes the pressure to discuss the
influence of “cultural components” during classroom discussions as a way to represent the community by “bringing those seats in” and preparing her peers as future counselors.

Or sometimes for me, I would love to express something in my own culture, right, or research that I’ve done of certain communities. And I do share that, but it’s just, I don’t know, I feel like I’m the one always discussing cultural components, right, in all of our classrooms. Bringing the cultural aspect to it, bringing the cultural lens or, and not that I’m the only the speaker of the all of my community, but bringing those seats in, because you have a cohort of almost twenty folks that are going to be clinical-mental health workers or school counselors, and they’re going to be exposed with communities of color, at some point, Spanish speakers…I don’t know…The opportunities are not there. And we have limited time, and it just feels isolating. I wish that I was in a program where there were a few other [pause] even a handful other BIPOC folks.

Similar to Jesica, Moon Rivers described how at the start of her program, she tried to ignore being the only Latinx CIT in the classroom and not having professors of color in her program, however by the “third quarter” of her practicum, that began to feel “lonely.” In addition to being the only Latinx CIT in the classroom, she is the “only parent in the program.”

In the program, there are nine of us and I am the only Latina in the program…I tried to not think about it too much in the beginning…And by [the] last, the third quarter, I ended up realizing [laughs] that it was actually like affecting me more than I thought it was [pause] um. It’s very lonely. And the other thing is, I have a daughter. So, I’m the only Latina and I’m also the only parent in the program. And none of my professors are parents and none of my professors are people of color. So, it’s been [pause] weird. I don’t
think I’ve ever been around that many White people before...And again, I am the only Latina in the class.

Similar to Jesica, Carlita expressed how being the only one to bring up race left her feeling fearful of being “humiliated,” “dismissed,” “shut down,” or pointed out for being “labeled as that girl” that brings up race “again” during classroom discussions. Similar to Jesica, during the interview, Carlita shared how it was vital for her to serve as an advocate for her community because she wanted others to understand the Latinx cultural roots. However, she did not want to be the only person inviting those cultural topics.

And I think it felt like a lot less, it felt a lot less comforting being in [the big] classrooms, then the not. And so, I think it did make me [pause] it did, it was harder for me to speak up. And then when I did want to speak up, and I said something. For instance, like at one point, we’re talking about death and grief and loss and how, you know, how our, our views on death have shifted and changed, like over the years, like through generations and then culturally. And that, I remember, I really had this gut feeling. I want to talk about how colonization, indigenous folks, they had their own forms of healing and talking about grief and, like, processing grief. However, like that was all erased when, like, colonization happened. So, I wanted to get really into that...And so, I said it and then like [long pause], like it felt…I don’t know if you’ve ever been in a classroom, and it’s like, “oh, that person, they’re talking about race, they’re talking about, like, colonization.” I felt like that. Where I felt like I saw some people’s heads nod. And then I saw some other like [pause] White folks. And at this point, we were like via zoom. And so, I saw their screens, and they’re like, you know, like the brows all squinting...So it felt very, like, unsafe. And now, after that, I was just like, ooh, like, I’m gonna be labeled.
Like if I keep going at this, right, like this route, like, I’m going to be labeled as that girl that always talks about race, you know?

Like Carlita, Moon Rivers was hesitant to bring up cultural topics because she did not want to be “the person that is going to be bringing racial topics up” but did feel like she was often “ignored” or “overlooked” by her professors and peers.

When the researcher asked Linda to expand on how she feels about being the only Latinx CIT in the room and bringing up cultural topics. Similar to Carlita, Linda feels “dismissed” and “looked down upon” when she does present these topics to her peers and professors.

It is a struggle. I feel like, hmm. I want to be able to talk about my cultural roots and I am highly interested in others cultural roots, but [pause] I feel like the only one who is bringing up these cultural topics. I feel like people in the program have looked down upon or dismissed the Latinx culture. I want to be able to share, but I am looked down upon. I am supposed to feel, like, comfortable speaking about these things, and I, I feel completely uncomfortable speaking about them.

In contrast to the other participants, Susana shared that although there are other Latinx CITs of color in the classroom, she still feels like the only one “in the room, sometimes” that wants to bring up cultural topics, but considers if it is worth bringing those topics up when she perceives her professors and peers have different views.

*Lack of Access to Multicultural Components Within Program Instructional Content and Resources*

Seven participants described having a lack of access to multicultural components within the CACREP-accredited master’s program instructional content and resources. Additionally, seven participants described various ways that their historical and cultural journeys
are being ignored in classroom spaces, as well as the histories of other students of color. Within class content, seven participants identified that the focus of class discussions, textbooks, curriculum, and other resources was embedded in the dominant ideology of the “White culture.”

Jesica shared that her anxiety was impacted due to the lack of access to multicultural components in her program as a whole and her “internship program.”

With supervision in the classroom, I feel like our program and the internship program itself has very little supervision, guidance, tools, resources...I also personally struggle with anxiety, and being in a classroom setting or presenting is, is, it’s hard.

When the researcher inquired about what program components caused her anxiety, Jesica shared that she felt “shoved” into a class presentation without being prepared by her professor on the material needed to present. The lack of resources felt “stressful” and “scary,” but that did not stop Jesica from witnessing her peers “overwhelmed” and creating activities that would help them present. Additionally, she was left to translate “someone else’s information into Spanish and [read] it” to be able to craft materials together to prepare her when working with Latinx youth and parents at her internship site. When she knew the material, Jesica reported feeling more confident and less impacted by her anxiety. In addition, she felt that the procedures for her program to keep its CACREP accreditation were “very White-centered” and lacked the inclusion of “experiences rooted in” the Latinx culture. However, Jesica does not believe that these particular policies are intentionally “White-centered” but believes that CACREP and the “DSM-5” lack the understanding of the needs of the “Latinx community,” and “research” and “advocacy” might help change that.

And then with the CACREP Accreditation, I feel like it’s similar…a lot of this process is very Anglo-Saxon, very White-centered, right? A lot of the language, a lot of the
requirements...are very aligned to what people who have had the privilege of education can understand, right? Because sometimes some of these components, ahh I feel like are things that I don’t even know how I could explain to my family, right...And I wonder who’s at the table, right? Because like, let’s say, the DSM-5, right, it’s very, has a lot of issues still, even though they have worked on revisions and things like that, and cultural components. But if you read it in the way, it’s it, it, the way it’s made, created, I wonder who’s at the table, creating these, these textbooks creating these, you know, accreditations, these rules for someone to achieve and get...their master’s degree. Where does it come into play? Some of the experiences that we have rooted in our culture and our family and our backgrounds that are part of these, this process, that should be maybe taken, you know, accounted for when, when you have these accreditations these, these requirements, right?

When highlighting the lack of access to multicultural resources, Jesica shares the underrepresentation of professors of color and cultural pedagogical practices. She was confused why her “Caucasian” professor would not want to invite speakers from the community to share their diverse experiences with the class and prepare her and her peers to work with diverse clients. In addition, Jesica desired to show a session in Spanish, but was not presented with the opportunity to do so within her internship class.

We briefly talked about...We’ve had a multicultural class where we talk about, you know, working with different clients, different populations as counselors. Like I said, this program is accredited...But it’s very weighted in clinical work, right, and therapeutic work, and psychoeducational work with communities. But the person at the table, no offense, I love him very much as my advisor. He’s a White Caucasian male, right? And
who taught this class. [Took a deep breath] And I was advocating…it’s not malicious, right? This is who you have, and it’s limited staff. But why don’t we have, let’s say, presenters or community folks coming in, to share experiences and also educate us in different ways…because it could be [diverse] rather than traditional education that you bring in. And that is a component that you can bring…[and] experience in a multicultural class, right for school counselors, or for clinical therapists, but that wasn’t part of it. So, then you lose that component. You lose that [pause], that aspect of being able to, to have that in a classroom setting… I think [CACREP program] hired maybe one Latinx professor for clinical, for the clinical side, which is great, um, but I think they could do better… I would love to show a session in Spanish. But how would that work, because my requirement is a recording for my peers and my advisors to view and critique and give feedback for my growth. But then, I don’t have that experience, right? I don’t have that experience.

Similar to Jesica, Moon Rivers shared how she talked with a peer of color, and they mutually desired seeing at least one professor of color in their program. In addition, she added that having a professor of color would have increased her feelings of psychological safety because they would have had some “understanding” of the Latinx culture. Since the professors in the program did not include Latinx material or texts, Moon Rivers reported having to translate English counseling terms into Spanish “on [her] own” and figure out how to pronounce both English and Spanish words. When she did mispronounce a word in class, she mentioned her peers laughing, which caused her to feel “embarrassed” and “uncomfortable.”

When Josefina mispronounced a word, she shared that her professor “implied that
mispronouncing stuff is indicative of a lower intellectual ability.” When she reported the issue to the program administrators, they attempted to dismiss it by having Josefina drop the complaint. Josefina shared that although the program administrators did speak to the professor, the professor never apologized, and the program never followed up with her on her complaint.

Like, I, I had a professor basically, like on my oral comps, my professor basically, I mispronounced something, something unimportant. And she just went off and basically implied that you know, mispronouncing stuff is indicative of like, a lower intellectual ability. And basically that, non-native English speakers have a lower intellectual ability. And so, you know, I filed a complaint with that…And the school first refused to investigate it. And then finally um [pause], when they did, their solution was kind of to be like, “Oh, you’re just, like, overly sensitive.” [pause] And like, “will you just like rescind this, this complaint?” I’m like, “No,” [laughs] “I am not going to take away the complaint just because it makes it easier for you”… And they’re like, “Oh, you must have misunderstood.” And I’m like, “why aren’t you talking to the professor?”…And then finally because I refused, they finally did go to the professor. And, but it was very much like, let’s try to get rid of the complaint. Rather than, like, let’s deal with the issues…The problem is that it was all done before even talking to the professor. So, it wasn’t like they even follow their own policies, or even, you know, tried to get somebody else’s, it was, let’s get rid of the complaint first, “Oh, it’s not going away? Fine. We’ll actually deal with it, sort of.”

Similar to Jesica and Moon Rivers, Carlita identified that all the material presented in class was in English and left out “values that many Latinx folks hold, such as familismo, personalismo.” Her professors did not provide her with resources and texts to prepare her to
work with clients in Spanish. She had to teach herself how to translate specific counseling materials when working with clients.

And I think something that I noticed was also that there’s a lack of, like, information because all the therapy is done in English, but it’s so it’s not easily transferable, in Spanish. Like some things don’t translate over well, and like some things like some therapeutic techniques, you just don’t say in Spanish, right? It’s like it. It’s a different form of doing therapy and not a lot of people are taught how to do that and to do that with Latinx folks and so on. I think, for like, suggestions for professors, is to, like, teach Latinx students how to be therapists in Spanish and to incorporate those values that many Latinx folks hold, such as familismo, personalismo. And I think that doesn’t happen often.

When discussing her experiences with faculty, Carlita shared that her “White professors” did not embrace nor acknowledge her Latinx values, which made them appear “strict” and “formal,” and sharing her experiences with these professors made her feel “uncomfortable.” During the interview, Carlita shared that her “White professors” felt like authority figures and lacked an understanding of her cultural background. In contrast, when sharing her experiences with her Latinx professors, she felt “comfortable” and felt like they “actually cared” about her personal and professional experiences. During the interview, Carlita shared that her “Latinx professors” embraced a more personal and familial pedagogical approach that allowed her to build rapport and not be so formal with these professors.

Like Carlita and Jesica, Linda felt a sense of “invisibility” and the “underrepresentation” of Latinx professors, Latinx students, and Latinx values present in her program.
There’s a handful of Latino people in my program. And I very rarely see them being represented. I would say the program is very [takes a deep breath] [pause] White-centered. I want to say, um, and then there are few African Americans, and then everybody else is basically Caucasian throughout the program. So, I feel like I want that connection with others in the program. I want that level of understanding, but I don’t feel that connection… I should never feel unsafe to vocalize my perspectives in the classroom… When I am around my White counterparts, I feel like they lack understanding. I don’t know if I can say that… This program should aim to become more culturally aware, we are in a very diverse world, it is not just Black and White.

Although Maria felt psychologically safe the majority of the time bringing up cultural topics at her HBCU, she shared that several of her peers and professors would stereotype the “Latino communities,” in particular, “immigration issues” and “immigrant families.” She suggested that her professors embrace “empathy” and adjust the way they “view Latino communities,” especially when preparing counselors to work with “clients.” Josefina shared similar views and expressed that when her peers and professors discussed “immigration,” they solely focused on the Mexican population without the multicultural understanding that other races and ethnicities struggle with issues regarding migration.

Like Maria, Moon Rivers shared an experience when her peers made stereotypical statements about the Mexican culture during classroom discussions. She stated that these stereotypical comments left her feeling psychologically unsafe to speak up during class discussions, “uncomfortable,” “upset,” “somewhat angry,” and exhausted having to hear these statements in her class.
I feel so uncomfortable…I literally found myself, like, shrinking into my chair and kind of like wanting to hide. Another time when we were in a different class. And it was something about, like, a test and measurements class, statistics-wise. And we were talking about collectivism versus individualistic, um, like countries and whatnot. And so, one of the countries that was collectivism was Mexico. And again, I’m the only Latina in the class, um, and that was just my cohort, so there was nine of us. This one girl ends up saying something about, “Oh, well, of course, Mexicans are very collective, as a collectivist” or whatever um, and she was like, “That’s why they love their tequila.” And she just started saying very, like, stereotypical things. [takes a deep breath] And I just remember feeling so, like, my body feeling hot, and just feeling so uncomfortable, and just feeling upset and somewhat angry, because I was like, “Oh, my God, seriously, like, this is so stereotypical.” And I didn’t say anything. That was my first quarter, um as well. And in undergrad, I struggled a lot with talking in class because I was very nervous and very anxious, and shy. So, I really wanted to overcome that for grad school. And so, fall quarter when we started, I was still struggling with that. And so, in that class, I just kind of shrank down and then kept looking at my notebook and was just writing down notes, trying to ignore it. But I just felt my body get so hot and just felt so uncomfortable. And I could feel some of my peers just kind of looking at me, as like the one Mexican [emphasis] in the class. And I didn’t say anything. Um, this one other peer, he did say something. And he was like, “Oh, you must be talking about the resort parts of Mexico because I don’t think you’ve been to real Mexico.” And like that did feel good that somebody did say something, but it was just so, so uncomfortable that it’s like I am the one Mexican in here. And you’re saying something, as I guess, quote, unquote, you can
say like an outsider. And it’s so stereotypical, and it’s just so exhausting hearing that stuff.

Moon Rivers shared that she “did feel good” when another peer was able to acknowledge that the stereotypical statement was false and was not representative of Mexico.

Four participants shared feeling “taken advantage of” and “tokenized” when feeling pressured to serve as the Spanish-speaking translator in their classrooms and at their internship and practicum sites. These four participants expressed having to serve as the Spanish-speaking translator without being given extra credit, without being provided with direct or indirect hours, and without appreciation from their professors or peers. For instance, Carlita expressed refusing to serve as a translator, but did see her peers serving as translators. She shared how one peer was able to advocate for herself, and their supervisor took action to provide a “language line” to provide clients with translators. Cathy shared that when she did “help someone by translating Spanish,” she felt “used” instead of “genuinely appreciated.” She described how her “Caucasian peers” would ask her for help translating certain parts of their sessions when they had Latinx clients but “never communicated” with her during or outside of class, making her “feel used” and “tokenized for [her] ability to speak Spanish.” Josefina shared her experience of sharing with her professor and administrators the “unethical” procedures that led her to be tokenized when she was given the sole responsibility of seeing only Spanish-speaking clients. In addition to being given only Spanish-speaking clients, her site supervisor and program supervisor do not speak Spanish. When she presented cases to her site supervisor and her peers, she was left to translate all of her client cases alone. When she sought help from her professor for her concern about being tokenized, not receiving resources that met her needs, and not receiving counseling direct
or indirect hours for the time spent translating her and other clinicians’ client cases, she felt that the school was “gaslighting” her in their response.

And, you know, when I said this to [my professor], they were like, “Oh, but like, you’re doing such a great job.” And… I’m feeling pretty burnt out already [laughs and puts head down]. And…Yeah, it almost feels like very gaslighting. Like a lot of, “Don’t rock the boat.” Yeah, I think it’s an I think it’s part. They’re just not used to handling it, and they don’t know how to handle it. And it’s kind of, you know, like, obviously, I care about being ethical. And so, whenever I’m like, this is seems like an unethical situation. And then they’re kind of [pause] twisting it around and being like, actually would be unethical not to see them. And then all this stuff. And I’m like, but…I need to be supervised. I need it. Like, I need someone to be supervising me, and what does my supervisor know, if I am telling her the truth?… She doesn’t know the language, like, so that’s kind of, yeah.

Four participants (e.g., Cathy, Josefina, Moon Rivers, Jesica) expressed building a bond with professors that valued their Latinx values. However, those professors left the program, which left them feeling “isolated’ and “alone.” For example, Cathy expressed having a Latinx professor who supported her professional endeavors, but soon left the program. Josefina shared,

I think it really [emphasis] depends on the professor…I guess like, the issue in my program is, we had a great professor who was very, very good with, like, cultural stuff. And then she left. And then the other full-time professor that they hired [pause], is terrible. And so now there are two full-time professors are [pause] horrible about this stuff. And, I’d say probably 75% of the adjuncts are just really [emphasis] bad with all this stuff. And, um, you know, like, I’ve had a lot of professors where I’m like, I kind of have to be like, it almost feels like we have to teach them about our cultures. And
they’re like, “Oh, yeah, well, you can learn about it.” And it’s like, “No”. Or when they
are like, “Oh, yeah, and, and Hispanics, this and Hispanics that.” And I’m like, but, but
like, “No,” like, that’s some people. That’s some cultures. Some cultures are not. Like,
the idea that there’s different cultures or that, like, in general, I think, in my program, it’s
like, being Latinx means you’re Mexican [long pause]. And like, the idea that there’s like
any other culture outside of Mexico [makes the mind-blowing gesture with hands near
her head].

Due to the lack of cultural understanding and resources from professors and
administrators, when completing the paperwork needed for internship, Josefina was left alone to
figure out several questions she needed to complete the required paperwork. Josefina shared that
the administrators and professors did not make attempts to understand the cultural components of
her concern nor was there an inclusion of her culturally relevant concern on their paperwork.

For example, we’ll starting with the fact that, you know, like I got the like the BCG
vaccine, which is, you know, is fairly common in South America. When I went to do my
internship, they were like, “Oh, you need a tuberculosis vaccine. And I’m like, “Well, I
can’t do that.” Like the form didn’t even have an option for it. Well, I’ve had the BCG
vaccine. It was, you know, either you’ve had the TB test and it was negative or it was
positive and then you had to do like, the doctor had to sign off that you did the, like
medication. And I’m like, but neither applies. There was this whole big thing, I ended up
having to pay to have the X-ray and get all this stuff. And it’s like, I spent 200 and
something dollars extra than everybody else [pause] in order to be able to do my
internship um, which my school was, didn’t even know how to handle it, either. They
were like, “Oh, we don’t know.” Like, ‘What, what do you mean, you have a vaccine?’
I’m like, that’s, that’s the thing. Like, every other job I’ve worked in, in Florida, you know, it was a common thing... You know, it was something that already was included in policies. And my program, all of a sudden was like, oh, like a deer in headlights moment, when, I guess, no, there was no other intern that had the vaccine than they had no idea how to handle it. And the program was like, “We can talk to our lawyers if you want. Do you want to try another site?” And it was like, “No, well there’s ways around this.”

**When is it My Turn to Speak? Deciding When to Enter the Conversation**

Seven of the eight Latinx CITs reported deliberating over when to enter classroom discussions and share their thoughts and ideas. Those seven Latinx CITs considered if the classroom space was psychologically safe enough to speak up about cultural topics. In addition, they considered if they were able to be vulnerable with their cultural identity, due to witnessing their professors and peers taking up space, without inviting their voice into the conversation.

Jesica spoke about her peers being “very outspoken,” which caused them to “take up space” in a non-intentional manner without “[realizing] that they’re not allowing for spaces of other people’s voices.” Jesica stressed the importance of inviting voices into the conversation to be able to hear her peers’ multicultural perspectives. She shared that when these voices are not invited during classroom discussions, there is this “missing” component that attributes to the learning experience of both her peers and her professors.

How do I say this, and it’s nothing bad about my classmates, like, I think some, we have some that are really outspoken. And I think there’s some that don’t, don’t see the lens that they’re taking up space and conversations and dominating certain conversations. Um, I’ve politely have said with my professors, and in sessions because I am outspoken, [pause] or I’ve tried to be, but I’ve also taken a step back if I don’t want to be taking up
space for others, because I think that’s also a learning experience. I wish that some of us in our class, in this cohort, would just take a step back and just take a moment, more moments to listen. Because we’re missing, I’ve noticed that the other three or four folks of color, don’t speak up. So, then I don’t know that perspective, from an Asian perspective, from an African American perspective, or from a Muslim perspective, right, or women of color in those areas, or mothers, or whatever the intersectionality that they have as well, right, just like me. I don’t get to learn that. Because [pause] it’s not…it doesn’t feel safe to speak up in these spaces that are very White-centered and very dominated by folks who, you know, are very confident or are uncomfortable with silence. And I think sometimes it’s okay to pause and wait for someone to speak up, or someone to open that door, and leave it open for them to speak, and share their perspective and their lens.

Moon Rivers described being “frustrated” when she wanted to vocalize her thoughts in the classroom and bring up cultural topics that her peers and professors did not make discussable. However, she shared that the lack of psychological safety impacted her ability to speak up. She described blaming herself for wanting to say something, but remaining silent and “freezing” in the moment.

Sometimes I get frustrated because I, just, I have so much I want to say, and I say nothing. [pause] It goes back to that freezing moment, I’ve also just come to learn that I, I can’t have a discussion with somebody who isn’t open-minded enough to hear what I’m trying to say. If they have already made it made up their mind about something, then I can’t change their mind about it. And so, I feel like it’s not worth wasting my own energy, fighting a fight that I’m not going to win.
Carlita discussed how, similar to Jesica, her “White peers” did not allow space for others to enter the conversation, and “they would be the ones to answer questions,” “even when [the conversation] was on issues of race,” which made it “harder for [her] to speak up.” This experience led Jesica to feel less psychologically safe to speak up, in turn, her and her peers of color stayed silent during class discussions. During these interactions, Carlita found comfort in texting her Latinx peers about what she was witnessing with her “White peers,” which she expressed made her feel “bad.” The researcher inquired more about what felt “bad” about texting her friends and “blaming” herself for wanting to take up more space, but not knowing how to enter the conversations when she felt that the space was filled.

I feel guilty on one end because instead of texting my friends about how frustrated I am that these students are taking more space…I should be, like, unmuting myself, and talking and speaking up [laugh]. Um, but then again, like that other contradiction where I’m like, but I don’t want to because I don’t want to be that girl, that that student that always talks about race and like, right, and so…And so, I think those are like, in that moment, those are so many feelings that are going on for me…Then I think, oh, well, it’s not their fault that they’re taking up space. It’s just that I’m not taking up enough. That I need to put myself out there. And then and then on the other side of me, I’m just like, no, like people should understand take space and make space, right? Especially for, like, voices who are never heard or often like quieted…I guess that’s all that goes down when like, when I’m texting my friends or, like, when I’m in a classroom and then, like, again, more people are taking [pause] Okay, like more White students are taking up space as opposed to any other voice in the room. I feel like that blame [long pause] because I feel like in my [Latinx-focused] classes…I’m able to speak up, I’m able to talk, and I think
[pause] for the most part, I, that blame come from like, the idea that I know I can do it. However, I don’t do it if that makes sense [laughter]. Like, I like, I think, [Carlita], like you, you have done it before in other spaces. So why can’t you do it in this one? And yes, I know, like, the room [pause] is majority White like [pause], and I guess like that’s where the blame comes from, like, so you’ve done it in other spaces. However, why can’t you do it in this space?

Additionally, the researcher inquired about what seemed to be directly hindering Carlita from inviting herself into the conversation. Carlita explained that in the “big classroom,” she felt like her voice would not be appreciated. However, before she does attempt to speak up in those classrooms, she prepares what she might say to appear “more professional” and “look put together” because she feels “that [she] can’t make a mistake” in the “big classroom.”

I think one of the fears would be [long pause] I think seeming, seeming dumb or…I think I’m afraid of mistakes in that big classroom…I feel like [pause] in the big classroom…I feel like there’s a lot more judgment…And I think that’s why I don’t [pause] I don’t feel comfortable speaking up [pause]…And then I blame myself for not speaking up afterwards. And then I hold in that frustration like, ah, [Carlita] you could have said that, during that. [laughter]. However, like in the major big broad classes, like I do have this belief that if I speak up, I am taking a risk. And I am like, I do have a risk of, fear of being humiliated, dismissed, shut down. I just feel like in the Whiter classroom, or like, with my White counterparts, like I did feel [pause]…I also felt like maybe not that I was undermined, but rather like, I think there’s also an aspect that, I was a little bit jealous, like that they were very confident and like, the things that they would say, and like, they always spoke up, they always took space. And so, I guess a part of me always, like, I
should do that [emphasis]. Right. I think that like aspect, like why can’t I do that in this space?

Like Carlita, Susana said, “the main people in the classroom that are talking are White students. And it’s like, their voices are heard, even when they’re talking about minorities.” She further explained that it felt “triggering” for her to experience the “White students” answer questions about others “ethnic background” as if they knew the “experience of a minority.” Additionally, she felt that although her counseling professors talked about inviting all voices into the classroom space as a form of “social justice,” discussing their “own biases,” and “respecting other people’s differences,” they did not make space to respect, value, nor invite students’ voices into classroom discussions when students shared “a different opinion.” During the interview, Susana questioned how her peers would be prepared to hear their clients’ stories, if they were not open to their peers’ stories. Susana further described her thoughts regarding her professors and peers as she sat in the classroom thinking, “I’m not gonna stir the pot. Like why do it? They’re stuck in their ways.” Although Susana believes that it might be a notion of “social justice” for her to speak up, she’s not sure how her professors would even “hear” her.

And so, I feel like even within like the classroom setting, you’re not, or when I hear stories like that, and I’m just thinking, you’re not someone, I can go to and have that those conversations with, because you’re so stuck in your, in your thinking. When I hear especially professors that not, you know, say anything to the contrary or not. And like, I wonder, like, do you all like think when I’m thinking? Even a little bit? Like, maybe they could have handled that situation differently? But, when they give them like two thumbs up for like, being passionate and doing social justice, and, or, or don’t say anything to the contrary, I feel like you’re in a position of power. Like they’re setting the stage for like,
Okay, I’m definitely not gonna share my opinion, because you as a professor, you as like, the person of power in the room are not going to have my, my back. You’re not creating space for me to have this other opinion, especially when someone’s so like set in their way…And I’m here for a purpose, to get my degree and to get out of here. You know, and um, but I’ll just know, you know, that’s probably not someone who, who aligns with like, my, my thinking and um I don’t know. Now, now, as we’re talking out loud, I think, oh, is that, would that be social justice? Me, like, speaking my mind? And then, and I think, um, maybe frustrating in others. Because like I said, when they’re just um [long pause] so stuck in their beliefs, like, they’re not even going to be able, in a place to hear it. So, I guess having the right words for them to hear it. I just don’t know, in those moments, would I have the right words? And I’m like so frustrated that I probably wouldn’t have the right words in that moment.

Josefina describes, similar to Susana, her reaction to her professors not creating space for students’ voices in the classroom. Like Carlita, Josefina recalls looking over to her peers of color during classroom discussions as they expressed, too, being silenced and “missing” the experiences of various students’ cultural knowledge.

I’m an ethicist…One of the biggest things, being an ethicist, like being ethical is knowing that it’s always a journey. Like, none of, none of us, are actually, will ever really be multiculturally competent. None of us will ever be actually ethical, like, we all need to constantly be working on ourselves, and be aware of the fact that like, we’ll fail at it. Because the second you think that you’re not going to do it, is the second that you’re most likely to mess up and do something hurtful. So, and it’s kind of like, a lot of what I’ve seen is my professors are like, “No, I’m good at it”…And it’s, that whole idea that,
like, counselor educators are supposed to be modeling this stuff for us?... And instead, it’s like, even just the like [pause], the ability to like, acknowledge when they’ve done something wrong, or acknowledge that they’re not perfect, does not at all seem to be, um, acceptable. It’s almost like, if you’re saying anything [pause], then it’s disrespectful to them. Like, nobody’s ever going to be multiculturally competent. Like, I’ve had classmates from all sorts of different cultures. So, instead of like actually telling us what our experiences are, like. You should be listening to the different people in the classroom, and the different cultures in order to actually get a full sense. Like, professors be like, “This is what Asians’ experiences are like.” And my Asian classmates are like, “No, it’s not” [laughs].

Linda shared that she does not feel psychological safe when her professors “lack the compassion” and “understanding” of her culture and “fail” to invite her voice into the classroom space. Linda expressed that during these times, she feels “disconnected” and isolates herself in the classroom. Similar to Carlita, Linda stood silent as a way to protect herself from being “judged” and labeled as “dumb.”

I kind of feel, very shut down and disconnected. Then, I don’t really want to engage, and [pause] I rather do work alone. I kind of feel just like very shut down. [My professors and peers] already made their mind up, so, um, yeah, I kind of just stay alone, in the, the classroom… I want to be able to have the opportunity to talk in the classroom, without seeing others make comments on culture, they, [pause] haven’t even tried to learn or inquire about…I would never try to make a stereotypical comment on someone else’s culture. It is important to listen. It is important to hear someone else’s story and dig deeper. At the end of the day, some people just want to be heard. And there’s nothing
worse than trying to be heard and being judged at the same time. [takes a deep breath]…I
don’t feel heard. I feel judged. I almost feel dumb. I am not dumb, but I feel dumb when I
am in the classroom, and I am being judged. It makes me not want to speak, because I
just feel, um, [pause] awkward with my peers and my professors. Why is this happening
so often? What are we doing wrong? Like I have great grades, I care about my academics
and my education. I just isolate myself. I stay quiet. I shut down. I can’t take risks, I want
to. But, am I able to? No, not when I have been in so many classrooms where I am being
judged for just raising my hand and expressing my views…I guess I have to just stay
isolated.

During the interview, Cathy described the “hurt” she experienced from having her voice
“hindered” in the classroom by her professors. She described not being able to ask questions or
talk about “certain topics” to her professors. In addition, she stayed quiet to protect herself from
being “brushed off” and “judged.”

And I, I feel like I, as a woman, as a Latinx woman, as someone who wants to have a
voice and wants to stand up for themselves, it’s hurtful. And it’s just like, you know, in
the counseling field, I was shocked, that my voice didn’t matter in select spaces, but
maybe, um, maybe I should have expected that….Why would I open up in a space where
my views are not respected?

**Broken Foundation: Lack of Supportive Outlets**

Seven out of the eight participants shared directly feeling a lack of support from their
peers and professors in the classroom space.
When describing the lack of supportive outlets in her program, Moon Rivers described struggling with “conflicting feelings” inside the classroom and “[having] low expectations of things, that way, if things don’t go great, [she] wasn’t expecting it to be great.”

A lot of times, people are very angry, and they’re complaining about [the program]. And I find myself also being angry and complaining about it. But then there’s also a part of me that’s like, I don’t; I feel like I’ve never had the privilege to complain about these things. Because I’m just lucky to be here, it’s almost like I settle for the minimum because that’s where my expectations are. I don’t expect the same treatment as others because I haven’t had that in the past…It’s like a tug of war between wanting to be angry because I also feel like, we deserve more, I deserve more as a student. But also feeling like I’ve never gotten more. It’s always been more on the low end of things. So why would I expect anything to be different now? I guess I just feel like, um, throughout my academic career journey, um. Ever since being like in just regular school to college life, I’ve always felt like, because we are, I am a person of color, the expectations aren’t that high. So, it’s like, I’ve never been able to count on many professors to be able to be helpful. I’ve always just had to do things on my own. I’ve had to figure things out on my own. I haven’t had that extra support. I’ve never expected them to be available to me for support because it’s not something that I had before. And so, when I hear people saying things like, “Oh, well, we deserve this, or we deserve that,” or “They should be doing more for us.” I’m like that; that, to me, sounds like privilege. You had the privilege of having that because I haven’t, and so, why would I expect that now when in the past that wasn’t available to me?

When describing the challenge of not having supportive outlets in the classroom space,
Cathy described how she and her Latinx peers struggled to get through the program and wished “the program could just be over.” In addition, she shared that in her program, “psychologically safe spaces [were] not the norm,” specifically for “students of color.” Josefina expressed similar sentiments about the challenges she faced due to the lack of support she received from her peers and professors.

It’s been [pause] really hard. And it’s been horrifying. And that, it’s, like, I’ve spoken up a couple of times, and it’s very, like [pause] very performative. Like, that’s been my experience. It’s been like, “Oh, yeah, we accept everybody.” Well, that doesn’t help. When you have someone in, at the end of their program and internship, saying these things and, like, saying them freely in class…I want to say it’s probably worse, um, [pause] with my peers, but [pause] there is professors, there’s some professors that are pretty, pretty bad….How are you capable of ?[pause]...There’s been some experiences, and the ability of my program to deal with it has not been there.

During the interview, Susana mentioned her professors and her peers being attacked for expressing their beliefs, which led the university to send out emails to students about “being respectful and mindful.” She shared “I’m not always even protected by the professors in the classroom…I am not in a place in my life where I want to take on this attack. Where I want to take on this fight.” With the lack of support, she received from her peers and the professor, Susana shared her view on taking risks in the classroom.

I’m sure I have taken risks. But I think it’s like kind of, like, where am I in this space today? Because if I don’t get, you know, supported or not even like, like, supported in the sense of I agree with you, but just um have that space where it’s allowed. Like, I know, like, I know, I am strong enough today that, I don’t care if I’m backed up.
Similar to Susana, Moon Rivers expressed having to “walk on eggshells” when having conversations with her peers, “just a regular conversation is now something that you’re having to defend or argue about. And it’s like, I don’t want to argue about it. I just want to be able to have a calm conversation about these topics.” When seeking support from her professors, Moon Rivers shared that she felt a “misconnection” and “too much of a power dynamic” when speaking with her “program director.” She shared that this made her “hesitant” when sharing information about her education with this professor.

Carlita described her experience with the lack of support she received from her peers and professors when she was vulnerable enough to share her past struggle with an eating disorder in the “big classroom.” During the interview, she shared how much her peers’ “snickers” impacted her. In addition, she felt that her professor did not lead the class discussion and did not support her.

I remember my first classroom that I ever had in my graduate program. It was in, in the big classroom, with everybody in it. And it was like the first [counseling course], like the basics. And um, at the end, we had we had to write a paper of something that was bothering us or a challenge that we have been facing constantly. And I talked about an eating disorder when I was like in high school. And um, I started crying in the classroom and so then then these two students, these two White students, they like snickered in the corner, um [pause]. And the teacher looked at like, oh, White teacher, a professor as well, looked at them, and then they, like, quieted down. But, by then, I already felt it, I already saw it, I already heard it. It made me feel very shitty. Like, I guess you could say, like, I don’t think I have ever gone to a White professor for help [long pause] in this program. I
don’t think I’ve ever gone to a White colleague for help [long Pause] And so, for me, those [White professors], like they’re not safe for me, or like they won’t understand.

Due to the experiences of feeling “isolated” and enduring the lack of support in her program, Jesica expressed her views of her CACREP program. She shared how some of her meetings with her advisor were “canceled” or “rescheduled,” although she needed to see him when she switched her internship site. However, she stressed that she “had to be understanding” because there was a lack of professors in the program, which made all of the professors “very busy” and “short on time.”

It feels lonely, feels lonely. At times, I’ve questioned whether like this program… I’m not getting, I should say I have questioned whether I’m getting, what I should out of this program, right? And I honestly, I wouldn’t recommend this program at this time. Because this is the first group that’s going through CACREP accreditation, I wouldn’t recommend it to other BIPOC, folks. Um, because [pause] it’s isolating. I think they’ve hired maybe one Latinx professor for clinical, for the clinical side, which is great, but I think they could do better. I think that we could get more support, um, more. I don’t know, I don’t know how to explain it because I’ve never been here before. I don’t know if maybe this is what it looks like in all graduate programs [takes a deep breath]. But it feels lonely like I can’t. And I think that professors could do better at facilitating that. Because I think, in some of these spaces, you really need to have good facilitators who create these ground rules, rules for the group, you know, norms, whatever you want to call it, but they create those spaces.

Like Jesica, Linda shared that she would not recommend this counseling program to others and “looked forward to graduating.”
**Dismissed and Isolated**

Five out of the eight participants shared that their professors and peers displayed low curiosity during classroom discussions when they shared their thoughts and ideas. Additionally, when the five participants made an effort to contribute to the discussion, they experienced verbal dismissal. They witnessed body language from their peers and professors that made them feel “dismissed.”

Cathy acknowledged that when presenting her ideas in the classroom, she felt “dismissed and disrespected” as a member of “the BIPOC community.” When she would share her viewpoints, she expressed that her peers would “dismiss the conversation,” “blatantly interrupt” her, and “not follow up” on her viewpoints. This left Cathy feeling like her “voice was not taken seriously.” She rushed to get her “assignments done” so she did not have to be “hurt” by her peers’ dismissive behaviors. When sharing with her professors, Cathy expressed that she would “get dismissed” and “couldn’t elaborate” because her ideas would “get pushed to the side.”

Similar to Cathy, Linda felt that her peers and professors provided her with “surface and dry responses” that showed their lack of desire to “dig deeper” in her responses. She expressed that her peers and professors would state, “Okay, cool, next topic” when she would share, which left her feeling “hurt” and “dismissed.” Linda shared that she would see her professors check in with her “White peers” and “go in-depth with their stories,” but never wanted her to expand when she shared her experiences. She described her experiences with being dismissed as not being treated like she was “a human.” Linda wondered if the dismissive behavior she received from her peers and professors was due to her being a “Latinx student.”
When describing how it felt to be dismissed and “brushed away” by her peers and professors, Josefina described feeling “stuck in the system” that was “designed for you to fail,” which felt very “isolating.”

Yeah, it’s, I mean, I think a lot of it is especially the stuff we’ve experienced out in the field when we come back, where this is supposed to be a safe space, and you’re getting, or when you’re going to the people, like the adults, that are supposed to be taking care of you. And in the classroom, and it gets just brushed away, or it gets [pause], it’s like it very much takes away that feeling of safety. And, um, yeah, so it’s like you’re [pause] experiencing a lot of like [pause] I don’t know, it’s like you feel very, like, alone. And like, it’s [pause], you’re stuck in the system that’s like [pause], doesn’t care about you, and that, it’s kind of designed for you to fail. And it’s very isolating because it’s like, nobody else gets it. And everyone else is doing, is experiencing a different world, than you [long pause].

When describing how her peers were being dismissed when bringing up difficult topics in the classroom, Moon Rivers stated that the “topics don’t get talked about for a very long time.” Moon Rivers shared that talking about these topics for a short time served as a way to say, “there’s just enough room to say it was talked about, but in reality, it wasn’t really talked about.” Additionally, Moon Rivers shared hearing her peers “giggle” or “smirk” as a “way to make fun of” her and others in a “snobby way” when they made mistakes. When sharing her experience about being excited to take a multicultural class, Moon Rivers shared how topics were “shut down” and “we were ignored again,” which made her feel like the topics presented in her class “dismissed” the experiences of people of color and were deemed as not “big or significant,” which made her feel like it was “pointless” even to share her experiences.
When commenting on “colonization,” Carlita shared how her “White professor” responded with “yeah” and “that was it. We moved on to a different conversation, and it felt very dismissive.” Additionally, Carlita highlighted how her experiences with her “White professors” and “White peers” were dismissed during class discussions due to the professor’s “fear” of making a mistake when talking about cultural topics.

I feel like I would have no issue or no problem speaking up. And I think, my professor, I think, as a White professor, he’s very, like, open about, I guess you could say like, he mentions it, like the importance of it. But like, I also feel on one sense, like it’s I guess I sense this fear even from my, my professor that he doesn’t want to. Like, sometimes I feel like he doesn’t want to dive into it. Because he like if he makes a mistake. And like if that makes sense. Like I’m like, I sense that he doesn’t want to delve into it. Because he like if he makes a mistake. [pause] I guess you could say like a lot of people will call him out on it. And I guess like, that’s what I have a feeling of, but at the same time, it’s kind of like, it’s important to talk about this [laughs].

**Superordinate Theme Four: Staying in the Ring Despite the Obstacles: The Influences of High Psychological Safety**

The fourth superordinate theme captured the voices of all eight participants who prevailed forward in their program by “staying in the ring” and choosing to persevere despite the obstacles. The researcher categorized this superordinate theme into three subordinate themes: (4a) The development of leader alliances, (4b) Peer support and collaboration, and (4c) The responsibility of advocacy. These three subordinate themes illustrated the influences of the participants experiencing high psychological safety in the classroom.
The Development of Leader Alliances

Seven out of eight participants expressed their experiences of sense-making through the alliances that they built with leaders.

Conversely to other participants, being at an HBCU, when Maria shared her ideas in the classroom, she felt that her professors appreciated her contribution to the various classroom discussions. Maria shared, “among my professors, I always feel heard, honored for, for who I am culturally, as a Latina student.” In addition, Maria felt that conversations surrounding “race” and the “Latinx Community” were welcomed and she described them as “positive conversations.” In class, Maria described being “encouraged” by her professors to talk about “anything, race, sexuality, religion, like all of the politics, come up quite a bit.” However, during the interview Maria shared that the “Latino voice in academia is largely missing,” but her professors and peers provide her with the “opportunity” to share her perspectives and explore what “cultural competency” might look like for those serving the “Latino community.”

During my multicultural counseling class, we were talking about [the] Latino community like serving, culturally competent counselors. What does it look like to be a culturally competent counselor serving the Latino community? And so, I was very vocal because it is [laughter] my community. And so, and I felt like I was encouraged…I remember, at one point, I apologized to him. And I said, you know, I’m sorry, [name of professor], I kind of took over your lecture. And he was like, you know, “I would rather you speak, and we get to hear your perspective, than not.” And he thanked me after class...And I had several [peers] come up to me and, like, ask questions, and you know, “What did you mean by this?”…And I really appreciated the opportunity to do that. And there was another girl. Uh, she is Mexican, and she came up to me and thanked me, and told me
that she would have never been comfortable speaking the way that I had, but she was appreciative that I was able to share. So, I appreciated that as well [laughter].

Similar to Maria, Josefina expressed how some professors invited conversations on race in the classroom and discussed the “importance of distinguishing between ethnicity and race” and components of “intersectionality” and “immigration.” Additionally, Josefina shared an experience she had in her “seminar class” when her peers and professor supported her. She expressed that their support was “shocking” because her concerns were ignored in other classes. However, in this seminar class, Josefina felt like her peers and the professor was able to understand that she was being tokenized, as a Spanish speaker. She expressed that her shock erupted from feeling like her peers and the professor were able to “agree” with her and “get” what she had been trying to overcome. Josefina attributed this positive experience to her professor’s ability to “facilitate an environment for that kind of discussion.” When the researcher inquired if Josefina felt that the responsibility for psychological safety relies heavily on the leader in the room, Josefina said “Yes!” and emphasized the “power and authority” professors have in the classroom when training CITs.

That’s one of the things I’ve been trying to tell the school it’s because they’re like, “Well, professors, this.” And I am like, “No, professors have to be the adult.” Like, you know, I mean, I know, we’re all adults in the room, but like, no, the professor has the power and the authority in this room. And so, like, sure, you’re not going to make somebody unbigated. But you can, you know, set the tone. And you can create an environment where people learn…It’s not a matter of like politics. It’s not, like, yes, people have the right to their own beliefs, but not when you’re a counselor. You can’t be [pause] judgmental against your clients. If you’re a counselor.
Susana expressed how her “female professor” allowed her to talk about her plan for completing assignments, as she was preparing to give birth to her first daughter, without a sense of judgment as she had previously experienced with her male professor.

Well, I did have my daughter during one of my semesters, my first one…She was a female professor, and I think she was more [pause] more of like, like logistics. Like, “Okay, let’s, let’s talk about it.” Like, “Where are you going to be? Is it gonna be in a place where you’re gonna be able to finish it?” But not like, because you can’t do it. But just like, let’s like really evaluate it. No, she was much better. And I had, I had my baby, and I came back [emphasis]. You know, I was, like, out for a week. And we like coordinated. And I came back. I think everyone was just, like, shocked. Like, “How the heck are you doing that?” And I was like, I just really, time managed and organized myself. And I planned it, and I did feel, I did feel supported by that professor [pause] female professor.

For Cathy, she described how some of her professors are “open to talking about the importance of learning about different cultures, having conversations on culture, and providing us with the space to learn and make [pause] mistakes.” Additionally, during class discussions, she shared how her professor allowed her to “roleplay conversations on race with [her] peers” and process the “frustrations” and “issues” she had, which was being ignored in her “other classes.” She expressed her “appreciation” for professors that “create psychologically safe classes” because she has experience with “professors that just care about the work being done and moving on.” During the interview, Cathy shared that having “supportive professors” really makes “working full-time” “doable” for her.
So, with the ones that are supportive, um, they have been helpful to this journey. They have, you know, guided me in the ways, like, if I’m having issues with my own counseling identity. They are able to have conversations with me on my role as a counselor and what that looks like. And basically, give me that space to explore my counseling identity and ask questions. They have been helpful. Um, I do, I do work full time and go to school full time. So, I really appreciate their support. There have been times, where my professors have just given me the space to talk about self-care and how I am taking care of myself in this program. They really keep me focused.

Cathy elaborated on the support of her “Latinx professor” that left the program, but she expressed being thankful he helped her on this “learning journey.” She shared being able to talk to a professor that was willing to support her “bold ideas.” Cathy shared how she could be her authentic self with her “Latinx professor,” receive resources when she struggled with translating counseling terms into Spanish, and had the opportunity to hear her peers’ perspectives in the classroom.

I am struggling with translating some of the counseling terms into Spanish. I often do this, to learn how to better serve the population I work with. Many of the individuals that I work with are from the BIPOC community. I came into class early, and like, my professor could tell that I was struggling, and he acknowledged my efforts. And he gave me some tips and strategies. He provided me with a resource and who I could reach out to for more information. I was shocked. I just wish more professors were like him. He continued checking in after that week. He allows me to explore my difficulties and ask questions. And he was just, you know, extremely supportive. So, he made the class feel like a psychologically safe place. This is someone I can honestly talk to. I could be
myself in the classes with my Latinx professor. He is open to everyone’s perspective, and everyone’s opinions matter. He will continue to ask you questions when you bring up a topic, he doesn’t have more information on. He’s super supportive when I make a mistake or bring up a concern. He actually makes it a point to tell us that this is a time to make mistakes or offer suggestions. So, it’s also like a learning experience for everybody. So, I get to hear everyone else’s viewpoints and gain a better understanding of their perspective for myself.

Throughout the interview, Moon Rivers shared that the support of her professor provided her with “validation,” which she stated was “the biggest thing” when sharing her experiences and building rapport with her professors. For Moon Rivers, being embraced by her professor, led her to cry.

Oh, it was amazing. I cried. [laughter] I’m a crier. And I definitely cried. Um, I remember the first time I was able to actually talk to my, uh, one of my professors. I felt like I wasn’t allowed to say what was going on at home or what I was stressing about at home because it just had to be kept separate. And she started to notice that I was kind of getting burnt out and I just wasn’t, I wasn’t doing the work the way that I typically did. And so, she ended up asking just how things were. And I remember once I actually shared with her how things were at home in connection with the stress that I was doing all of that, plus being in school… I remember seeing the look on her face and she was like “I totally get it now.” And she gave me this little speech about just taking care of myself, and how I can’t provide good services to my clients if I’m not taking care of myself and taking care of my life at home. And it changed completely how I viewed the support from professors, because I never had that before.
Additionally, Moon Rivers shared how the support from her White professor made it psychologically safe for her to build rapport. Although the professor was not Latinx, Moon Rivers stated that she “validated” her experience as a “Latina,” which impacted her experience in the program.

Whereas with my other professor, I was able to voice things with her, and she would very, very openly say, you know, “I haven’t experienced that, and I never can because I am not a Latina, but I feel for you. And I hear you.” And I think that was the biggest impact that she had on me. Is that she didn’t have to experience it, and she acknowledged that it would never be the same experience, even if the exact same thing happened to us because I am a Latina, and she was not.

As a first-generation student, Jesica shared that “no one taught” her how to navigate the college process. However, to get into her master’s program, she was able to receive support by going to her “community” and her “friends” “to help [her] through this process.” Although Jesica shared that she could not get the support that she needed from the CACREP master’s program, she was able to receive support at her internship.

I feel very fortunate that, you know, my internship is, at a, like I said, Title I middle school, predominantly Black and Latinx kids. Now, the staff is not, doesn’t meet that, you know, population. But I feel like they want to do better; they want to help those communities. So, the investment and the seed is there, right. So, I’m fortunate to have that, and the, um, the leaders, admin are also people of color. So, I’m fortunate to have [pause] a work employment that is employing me. So, I’m ahead of my cohort in the sense that now I’m going to jump in and actually do the work and getting paid for it. Because that elementary school, you know, recognizes my tools or my resources and my
skills, and it’s a blessing for me to have that opportunity. And then also, you know, it’s a privilege, because not everyone has the opportunity to do work, get your degree, and be paid for your education, or while you’re getting your education. So, I’m blessed. But it’s unique in that sense, where I’m getting support from both schools, from my employer, and for my internship, right? So, it feels a little bit better.

For Carlita, when deciding to choose a counseling program, she expressed choosing a program that “specifically catered towards Latinx counselors” and “trained therapists” to work with “Latinx clients.” In her classes, she expressed learning how to “work with Latinx individuals.” With her professors in the “Latinx-focused” concentration, Carlita shared that she was able to share “everything,” such as “life circumstances and like, the whole shebang,” which allowed her to feel connected to those professors. When explaining what was unique about professors in the “Latinx-focused” concentration, Carlita shared how they appreciated the “Latinx values.”

Um, I think something that was really unique about my professor was that she really valued Latinx values. So, for instance, like personalismo, familismo, like she really cared about those things. And, she would mention how like, you know, a lot of Latinx folks, like we’re, we were very personal, like we want to get to know who like, who you are, how your day went. And so, she would start off a lot like that, like, “Let’s do like a, check in,” “How is your family?” “How are you doing?”…Once we’re doing that, then we’ll get into the business, and so it was a lot less formal. And I felt like that. I guess that took a lot of the anxiety out of talking to a professor. And so, for me that that was really important, important her being able to understand like the cultural values, like personalismo, at least more familismo and stuff like that. I think that was really
meaningful for me. I’m like, oh, like, yes, I do that too. And I love when people ask me how my family is, and like, I want to know about your family, too [laughs]. Like, how are you doing? Like, how’s everything? How’s work? How’s school? So, that was very comforting.

During the interview, similar to Josefina, Carlita mentioned how she felt her Latinx professor “got it like she understood [her]” when she shared her concern about “how Latinx students who are bilingual were asked to constantly translate for other folks, were not compensated for [those] translations and were not given the opportunity to use that hour for direct client hours.” Carlita shared that the professor was able to hear her and her peers’ concerns and figure out a solution that met their needs. Compared to her “big classrooms,” Carlita expressed how she felt psychologically safe in her “Latinx-focused” classrooms.

In the [Latinx-focused] classes, like I do believe that I can take interpersonal risks, such as asking questions, voicing my concerns, my fears. And I know, I will not be humiliated, dismissed, overlooked, shut down, and so forth, by either my colleagues, my peers, and my instructors. I do feel that way in my “Latinx-focused” classes. And so, I usually tend to go to my Latinx Professor, Latinx colleagues, my supervisor, who also happens to be Latinx. Like I go to them for help, as opposed to like other, like in the larger classroom. I don’t think in the [pause] larger classroom I would ever say like a mistake I did. I probably would just stay quiet throughout the whole place, like the whole thing. Like the whole classroom. And so, [pause] I think for me, I think mistakes are okay. However, I do feel unsafe, talking to certain people about those mistakes.
**Peer Support and Collaboration**

In this subordinate theme, all eight participants discussed how peer support and collaboration impacted their experiences of psychological safety within the classroom. The critical nature of their peer support assisted participants within the classroom.

Despite having differing views from her peers during several classroom conversations, Maria expressed that she was able to share her thoughts with her classmates. In class, Maria expressed how her peers embraced a collaborative approach by asking questions and offering support during conversations surrounding the “Latinx community.”

In contrast, Josefina mentioned feeling supported by some of her peers during conversations, but often felt like her peers’ responses and support seemed “performative.”

When asked about her peer alliances, Susana enthusiastically spoke of how her peers valued her ability to go to school and be a mom. Additionally, she described how her peers recognized her skill to work with a particular population “in a juvenile hall.”

I’m in juvenile hall, that’s where I’m doing my, like, practicum…I would say, probably more of my peers are like, “Oh, wow, like, you know, you’re really able to work with this population.” And, we had to do like our videos and kind of see that, and they’re like, “Oh, wow, you really know, like the system or how that works.”…I think it came more probably from like, their nervousness or fear of doing something like this. So, that they were like, really, I guess, really talked a lot about like, “Oh, wow, like, you know, you’re really good at, you know, connecting with them” or “I would never be able to do that.” or “How do you know how the system works? or like probation works?” and stuff like that. And I felt like, with that experience, I have gotten a lot of kudos on, I guess…And yeah, I think even, even just for being a mom and juggling, you know, both things.
Similar to Susana, Moon Rivers shared how her peers were supportive of her being able to be a mom and attend a master’s program. Additionally, she shared how some of her peers have been “supportive and helpful” when she had to “plan things out” for assignments so she can spend time with her daughter.

For Cathy, having “Latinx students” in her program made her feel like her program was a “home away from home.” During class discussions, Cathy expressed her and her peers being able to “bounce ideas off of each other” and having the ability to “talk about so many topics” and set up “group chats” to navigate the counseling program. With her “Latinx peers,” Cathy did not “feel a divide” because she was able to talk about “difficult topics,” which she felt “attributed to a psychologically safe space.” Additionally, when she shared valuable topics, Cathy felt like her peers asked her questions on her topic by “digging deeper” and embracing her “viewpoint as a Latinx student.” When she needed help, Cathy shared that she felt that her peers “had [her] back” and gave her the space to “be more relaxed” and be herself. When having difficulties translating some of her counseling activities into Spanish, Cathy shared how her peers embraced her culture and were “always willing to help” if she made a mistake.

Similar to Cathy, Linda shared feeling supported by her “Latino peers” and her other “students of color” throughout her “educational journey as a Latinx student.” Linda described how her peers of color respected her cultural history and she made efforts to learn about their cultural history. When bringing up concerns, Linda shared solely speaking in classes where she knew she would have the support of her peers of color. Linda further expanded on the reason she feels so psychologically safe with her peers of color is because she feels that “somebody actually understands what [she] is going through” without “passing judgment,” but “instead having conversations on how [they] can get through this together.”
Jesica expressed that although she does not “have more support” from the university and “the program itself,” when “figuring out assignments,” she is able to receive the support of her peers of color in her “cohort” and stated, “that’s where the value is” since professors do not have “the time” to provide students with “more guidance.”

Carlita shared that those experiences with her “Latinx colleagues” have “been the best experience” she has had “thus far.” She described feeling “so much safer” and feeling the “ability to speak up and advocate” for herself, compared to when she is in the “big classroom” with her “White peers.” Carlita further expanded that during class discussions, her “Latinx colleagues” “always made space for each other to talk,” which “felt like a family.” In addition, Carlita shared that being able to “learn from” her peers and not being “judged” to bring up certain topics “just felt so much more safer” when referring to classroom discussions. Like Cathy, Carlita felt that her peers helped her build a “sense of community” in the classroom, and “group chats” helped support her thought process. In the “Latinx-focused” classrooms, Carlita “believed” that she could “take interpersonal risks such as asking questions, voicing [her] concerns, [her] fears, and [she knew], [she] will not be humiliated, dismissed, overlooked, shut down…by either [her]colleagues, [her] peers, and [her] instructors.” She described “asking for help” as being one of the “biggest things” when collaborating with her peers. Although her peers in the “big classroom” did not support her when she was vulnerable and shared her experience with overcoming an eating disorder in the past, Carlita decided to share this vulnerable experience with her “Latinx-focused” classroom and received a supportive response. She described this experience as a “correctional experience” and she emphasized her peers offering her support by “hugging” her, which made her feel “cared for.”
And then interestingly enough, I cried again during my practicum class, but I was part of the [Latinx-focused] classroom. And so, we have a separate, um, we have separate classrooms than the other class, all the other students who don’t have [Latinx-focused classes]. And so, in that practicum class, like I was bawling my eyes out and the whole class got up and they hugged me. And it was like, it was like eight of us in total, or something like that, six or eight of us. Um, and the whole classroom got up and they hugged me. And then we had like a group hug. And like, it was like one of the, like, I was really sad in that moment, like when I was explaining it, but I’ve never felt so like, cared for. And it was like a, like it was a correctional experience, compared to what I had in the beginning when I first started off.

The Responsibility of Advocacy

In this subordinate theme, all eight participants described feeling a sense of responsibility for advocacy related to their experiences as Latinx CITs in a CACREP-accredited master’s program.

For Cathy, her sense of advocacy erupted from moments in the classroom where her “voice wasn’t taken seriously” or feeling “used.” After several occasions of being tokenized by her peers and professors for her ability to speak Spanish and translate, Cathy shared how she “set boundaries” with her peers and professors as a way to “advocate for [herself]” and “speak up on [her] behalf.”

Linda shared that “despite being a Hispanic woman” and “facing the many stereotypes that some Latinx folks experience,” she “entered [her] counseling program” as a way to “challenge those stereotypes” and “impact [herself], [her] clients, and [her] community, the Latinx community.” During class discussions, Linda shared intentionally asking her “peers of
color” about their “culture” as a way to learn to be prepared to “work with diverse clients” and “serve as their advocate.”

For Susana, when her “male professor” questioned her ability to remain in the program due to her being pregnant, Susana expressed being “enraged” about that experience. However, when she spoke to the professor again, she advocated for herself by expressing that she “can handle” the “next step in the program.”

I did have to talk to him for like some advising things afterwards. And I was like, dreading it. I’m like, “Ughhhh, I don’t want to talk to this guy again.” And so, when I did talk to him in the future. I felt like, I had to reiterate like, I know I have little kids, but I can handle it. I have a support system. I’m ready to take this next step, the next step in the program. I felt like I’d advocate for myself.

In contrast to other participants, Josefina shared that when students made attempts to advocate for themselves, the program has “done a very good job of retaliating against people for speaking up.” Josefina expressed viewing her program and peer advocacy as “performative” and felt like her program did not encourage their students to be advocates when it was not “convenient” for the program. However, despite these obstacles, Josefina advocated for herself by meeting with the dean and provost to discuss particular experiences in her CACREP master’s program.

There are, at least in my program, they’ve done a very good job of, like, retaliating against people for speaking up. So, nobody wants to…I mean, I, I brought it up. I had a meeting with um [pause], with the dean and the provost. Because I was like, there’s a whole bunch of stuff going on in classrooms …. And, um, and they were like, “Oh, you’re just getting offended over this.” And I’m like, “No, like, in general.” If somebody says
something really offensive, the whole class should be upset. The fact that the whole class isn’t speaking up is indicative that the program has some issues. Because [pause], you know, if somebody were to stand up and say something that doesn’t apply to me, but is offensive to other people, like, it’s not up to the people who are being harmed to say something. Advocacy is supposed to be such a big part of our profession. And yet, you know [pause], everyone is like “I’m a good person.” And then, nothing. Like, you’re not willing to step up and like speak up for other people [pause]. That’s a clear indication that, like you’re not, you’re not doing this. It’s your advocacy. It is only performative, and it’s only good for when it’s convenient. So that’s why like, I think very much like my program has not encouraged that kind of advocacy, and it’s very like performed. It’s very like, “Make sure you say the right word at the right time,” but like also not.

For Carlita, she considered herself an advocate, but in classroom environments, she did not “think [she] advocated for [herself] as much.” During the interview, Carlita expressed that she would feel more comfortable advocating for herself in her “Latinx-focused” classroom compared to “the big classroom.” However, throughout the interview, Carlita reflected on several strategies that she used to cope with times she may not have advocated for herself, such as self-reflection outside the classroom.

Similar to Carlita, Moon Rivers discussed wanting to advocate for herself; however, she expressed elements of “fear,” and “emotional exhaustion,” and reflected on being an “adult” and having to advocate for herself in “grad school.”

It’s that fear. And also, it’s like, I feel tired before I’ve even started, to try to defend my case. I already feel exhausted, emotionally, and mentally exhausted to even try to go there. Because it’s something that I’ve been doing for so long. And I consider myself an
advocate for these topics, since probably [laughs] I was like in middle school. And so, it just feels exhausting that I’m in grad school. Now, I’m an adult, and I’m still trying to advocate for the same things that I was advocating for as a kid. It just feels mentally exhausting.

Despite describing feelings of fatigue and being “exhausted, emotionally, and mentally,” Moon Rivers shared advocating for herself when she felt “defensive” in the classroom, which led to a “good conversation” with her professor about her feelings when hearing one of her professor’s experiences with a Latinx supervisor.

We were in a practicum class one day, and my professor was giving an example of when she was doing her Ph.D. and how she had a supervisor who was a Latina. And she, at the time, said that she didn’t feel like [her supervisor] was as open-minded with things. And [Moon Rivers’s practicum supervisor] was sort of disrespectful to the supervisor. And she felt like it was because the fact that this supervisor was a Latina, and she felt like she didn’t have authority over her. And I remember, as she was sharing this story, I found myself feeling really defensive [pause] for the supervisor, as a person of color, and as being a Latina, in the academic world. And I just felt so defensive. And after she shared the story, um, we all had a chance to, if we wanted to share our feelings as to what we felt during that, um, during that story. And I remember feeling really nervous. But I raised my hand, and I just told her, I was like, I felt defensive. I felt defensive, when you were saying that. I felt defensive for the supervisor. Because as a woman that is a Latina in this field, and in just higher education, it already feels like we don’t get respected enough. And hearing that you didn’t respect her because of who she was. It just, [pause] I felt [pause] I felt defensive for her. And I remember, um, I felt, I mean, after I shared that, I
was like, “Oh, my God, what did I just say? Why did I say that like? That was just too much.” And it was, it was a good moment. She was like, “No, I appreciate you saying that.” And, um, we had a good conversation about it.

During classroom discussions, Maria expressed advocating for how her professors and peers discussed “immigration issues” and how it affects “every immigrant community,” as a way to educate others that the “Latinx community” is not the only community that experiences “immigration.” Maria shared that when others view the Latinx community as “immigrants, that takes away from the humanity and the beauty of Latino culture, and people, and the stories that are real, and need to be heard and empathized with, and if, if no other profession can do that, therapists should.” Throughout the interview, Maria expressed various experiences of asking her professors questions, educating others in the classroom, and her “love” and “passion” for research.

Jesica felt that her program was not providing her with the tools and resources to complete her presentations, and she received “very little support” from the program and her professors. Despite the experience of obtaining resources being “nerve-racking,” Jesica used a metaphor to describe her perseverance through her statement: “I just [had] to do it, and jump in the water is cold, it’s freezing, but you just, you know, acclimate to it for a little bit. And you jump out when you have to.” With this, Jesica explained that a person who is “Latinx,” “an immigrant,” or “a person of color,” has “learned to be resilient,” “push through,” and “get through” obstacles because “there’s no other choice.” During the interview, Jesica expressed “jumping into” the school counseling program because she wanted to “help queer kids and BIPOC kids” by “empowering” her community. During class discussions, Jesica noticed that she “pushed” herself “into conversations” because her professors and peers did not extend an
“invitation” to hear her thoughts. As a form of advocacy, Jesica described going to the “dean with certain things” because she felt that her “program could do better” and “professors could be held accountable” but shared that “nothing really has changed.” With the lack of resources, in classroom settings, Jesica described advocating for her peers by helping them during assignments and offering her professor suggestions to bring in “presenters” and “community folks” to share their multicultural experiences. After Jesica graduates from her master’s program, she expressed her desire to come back to her counseling program to serve as an “agent of change.”

I want to be that path, like, I don’t know, agent of change to my own community. And somehow, when I get to my master’s, and my exams, and I want to help others, and mentor other people in my community, somehow, I don’t know how I’m going to do that. But I feel like I want to help other people, because it’s hard. It’s hard. If you don’t know someone who can explain to you, “Hey, this is what you need to do for this application. And don’t stress out, don’t worry about it, this is what you need to do for this and for that, or this is what you need to do for financial aid.” I’ve talked to my professors about this, like even within the university. If I can help other Latinx people that come through [name of university], and mentor them as I get into my own profession, then I want to do that.

Superordinate Theme Five: Participants’ Suggestions and Recommendations

In this superordinate theme, all eight participants shared their responses to the researcher’s question, “Given your experiences of when you have felt psychologically safe and psychologically unsafe, as a Latinx CIT, what suggestions might you have for how instructors,
peers, and higher education institutions can create environments that are more psychologically safe?”

Josefina expressed that professors should consider “shutting down” statements that make students feel psychologically unsafe in the classroom. Additionally, Josefina shared that professors have the responsibility to “amplify [all] students’ voices” in the classroom and the program should make students more “aware” of the student advocates available to them.

I mean, I think definitely, like amplifying students’ voices, in general. Because not just like, Latinx population, but I think everybody, because, ultimately, you know, I think one of the best things that you can model for your students, is that everyone’s gonna mess up, that’s just being part of life. And so being able to, like, own your mistakes, and like, allow people to give feedback, is really the only way you’re actually going to grow. So, I think definitely, like [the] complaint processes needs to be made much more clear, within the program. I found out that we have student advocates. That’s a great thing, but like, it needs to be [made] more aware, like, people need to be more aware of how there are student advocates and people who can speak for you, because you’re not necessarily comfortable in calling out somebody, but like your student advocate can, anonymously, and really just like shutting things down, as soon as it happens, and it’s not necessarily like shaming people about it.

Similar to Josefina, Susana shared that the “university” and “the professors” were responsible for creating psychologically safe places for both “Latinx” and “political” concerns. Susana stressed the importance of professors “allowing people to have a voice” and inviting students’ “perspectives” into the classroom space. She compared fostering psychologically safe spaces to a “debate” and recommended that professors invite “both sides” when referring to
perspectives being invited during classroom discussions. Additionally, Susana discussed how professors should not label student perspectives as “right or wrong,” but instead remain curious about all perspectives.

Cathy suggested that professors should “invite more conversations surrounding culture, diversity, and inclusion in the curriculum, or even in the syllabus.” She suggested that the classroom should serve as “a space where Latinx students can build a connection and build, you know, rapport with other students.” Cathy found it important for professors to “cater to all cultures” by including “topics on culture” and making the classroom “feel like a diverse environment, where everyone’s perspectives are valued” and “students are able to share their cultural histories.” Additionally, Cathy mentioned that professors should include texts and videos of “Black, White, Latinx, Asian, authors,” instead of solely including “counseling texts about treating clients from a White perspective.”

For Linda, having “some direction from the leader, the professor in the room” can help the “learning” process. She expressed wanting to see her professor “make attempts to place themselves in [her] shoes” and provide space for “students to share their history.” Linda reported wanting to see her professors “engage in cultural topics” and “set some ground rules for conversations.” She recommended that professors should “dig deeper” instead of “shutting down” student ideas, which often made her “feel alone” and felt “isolating.” Like Cathy, Linda mentioned wanting to see “cultural topics” embedded into “the curriculum and classroom structure,” along with “bringing in” textbooks and “reviewing content” that “reviews different cultures” and “doesn’t use [text from] only the White authors.”

Maria was vulnerable and passionate about the suggestions she had for her professors, peers, and CACREP programs. Maria mentioned that “there needs to be more representation
among faculty, among leadership, at universities.” Additionally, Maria expressed that faculty should foster a space where the Latinx community could share their “values” and aspects of their cultural “identity.” She mentioned the importance of “adding a class on self-awareness” to prepare CITs when confronting issues “personally and professionally” on race in the classroom and with their clients. When sharing her passion for the Latinx community as a Latinx CIT, Maria shared the following sentiment regarding the challenges she has witnessed the Latinx community endure and included suggestions for professors and peers.

I am very passionate. I think what would help the Latin, Latino community is for people to see us [pause] for the depth and the richness of who we are. And that our communities, our countries are ransacked with violence and corruption, and trauma. And yet, we have persevered. And, you know, my, my family fled El Salvador in the 70s, because they were putting heads on stakes in the Civil War, and all of this stuff that we know. And to be seen under any other political circumstances, we were refugees. But because we came from El Salvador, we are immigrants. And so that carries a connotation where it strips you of some of your humanity. And that was put on full display with Trump and the White supremacy that came out of this country that we’ve all known was there. But I think that our profession, the counseling profession, would do well to serve the Latino community with some very real cultural competence. That does not mean, let me learn your general values and copy and paste. That does not mean, let me learn some Spanish words and some colloquial terms, and now I understand what you’re saying. Like, [pause] that means to me cultural competence, if you are a non-Latino person, means that, this ideal, and I know we talk about it. Everybody talks about it, and they say it because they have to, but they don’t mean it. If they meant it, our profession would look
different! If they meant it, I, as a Latina, counselor-in-training, I would not have faced some of the microaggressions and outright racism, that I have. But to look at somebody in their cultural experience and understand you are a unique person with a unique set of values and a unique experience and your culture, is a part of that. But there are so many [pause] parts of that. There are so many parts of you, and everything is valuable. And let me help, let’s, let’s understand it together. Let us find the depth of your value. And from that place, you get to do with that, what, whatever you would like. And I’m going to sit here and I’m going to empower it and I’m going to, you know, aid you in that process.

When sharing the importance of making cultural topics more discussable, Moon Rivers suggested that her peers and professors should be “open” to various topics and should not “feel afraid of bringing up” topics because of the fear of saying the “wrong thing.” She felt that “opening up the conversation” and allowing the conversation to “flow” provides people with the space to “learn instead of ignoring the elephant in the room,” regarding the Latinx culture.

It’s almost like, yes, I know that I am a Latina, I know that we are different. I know that we have different experiences. But like I mentioned earlier, I can sit next to another Latina, who is completely different from me and has a completely different experience than me. And so, I think [pause] not, not ignoring topics, not, not making it uncomfortable to have these topics, just making it open for everyone equally. That’s like the big thing that stands out to me. Um, because I know that with like my, my professor that I did end up being more, that ended up being more helpful, she was, she would have very much voiced the fact that she was a White professor and that her experiences were different, but then there was other situations where we had similar experiences. And I think being able to see that, yes, we are different, but also look, there’s the similarities
that we have, it just made it feel more easy to talk about things because I don’t have to
only have a Latino professor to be able to have these conversations. I can count on
another person, who is a person, who is a White person who is, you know, something
different.

Additionally, when the researcher asked Moon Rivers what she would want others to
know about Latinx CITs, she expressed the following sentiment suggesting that the Latinx
community will not “break” due to their peers' and professors’ candor.

I think the biggest thing is just knowing that. I mean, I can only speak for myself, but just
knowing that we’re not gonna get broken if we have to have a conversation that you
might think is uncomfortable. It may be more uncomfortable for them than it is for us,
because we are the ones experiencing a lot of these things.

Carlita explained that what led her to choose her program was the “Latinx-focused”
concentration at her CACREP-accredited program. She inquired why other CACREP
universities did not provide a “Latinx-focused” concentration, which provided the space “to
really talk about the [Latinx] culture and how it applies in therapy,” along with “services in
Spanish,” and creating a space for “Latinx folks to connect with each other.” Carlita suggested
that professors should consider providing resources in Spanish, since “some therapeutic
techniques” “don’t translate over well” in English. With this, she recommended that professors
“teach Latinx students how to be therapists in Spanish and work to incorporate those values that
many Latinx folks hold, such as familismo and personalismo” into the curriculum. Additionally,
she recognized that not many conferences focus on the needs of the Latinx community,
“especially in higher education.” Carlita mentioned that her professors should “intentionally
make spaces” for people of color by inviting them into the conversation and setting a norm with students that “if [they] feel like [they] take up more space, give more space.”

Jesica suggested that professors could “think about [how] their curriculum differently” by including “different visualizations” and by “incorporating the lenses, the views, the perceptions, the activities that lean more toward cultural experiences.” Additionally, she recommended “creating” a cultural “lens in [the] CACREP requirements from BIPOC educators who are at the table, building or changing or modifying CACREP accreditations from the lens of those people.” The researcher asked Jesica, “What do you think educators can do to make Latinx CITs feel psychologically safe in the classroom?” Jesica shared:

That’s hard. Because I think in order to get there, in order to create those spaces, people who are privileged or have the knowledge to create that psychological safety have to be open and maybe have done some work. Because if I want to feel safe, and that triggers someone, a teacher, an advisor, you know, when I’m asking for something, a need, then I think that they need to do the work. There needs to be work done. And I think that, like any form of education, I think people’s perspectives change when you research when you become more educated on the topic, more aware, um. And I think creating those spaces of moments of silence. Right, of saying, “Okay, let’s take a break,” or “Let’s share out,” or “Let’s connect,” or, you know, “Tell me what you need in these classroom settings to feel safe,” right, um. I think those are all things that they could improve on.

Summary of Chapter Four

Within the current chapter, the researcher addressed the wide breadth of experiences retrieved from Latinx CITs' narratives reflecting upon the research question: How do Latinx CITs experience and define psychological safety within classroom environments while enrolled
in CACREP-accredited master’s degree programs in the United States? Additionally, the findings from the current study align with the purpose of critically and multiculturally exploring Latinx CITs lived experiences of psychological safety in their classroom environments. Notably, the five superordinate themes and nine subordinate themes that emerged were comprehensively described through participants’ experiences. Taken together, the results of this interpretative phenomenological analysis revealed the meaning Latinx CITs attributed to their past and present experiences with psychological safety in classroom environments to aid in informing CACREP-accredited master’s programs of the unique classroom needs of Latinx CITs. Additionally, within a LatCrit lens, these results produced knowledge to foster psychologically safe spaces for ethnically diverse higher education counselor education students, specifically Latinx CITs, an underrepresented group in academia (Aguilar & Kim, 2019) and within the psychological safety literature (Edmondson & Lei, 2014).

The following chapter will bring attention to the researcher’s analytic interpretation of the narrative accounts of Latinx CITs’ through the presentation of a discussion of the results in relation to the literature presented in chapter two. Additionally, the researcher will present implications to advise counselor educators on the significance of promoting psychologically safe spaces and make modifications to classroom practices to support the academic success and learning processes for Latinx CITs. Furthermore, the limitations of the present study and further recommendations for the counselor education and training field will be discussed.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to investigate how Latinx CITs currently enrolled in CACREP-accredited master’s programs define and experience psychological safety in their classroom environments. Using IPA and LatCrit, five superordinate themes and nine subordinate themes emerged from the present study’s findings to address the guiding research question: How do Latinx CITs experience and define psychological safety within classroom environments while enrolled in CACREP-accredited master’s degree programs in the United States? The pairing of IPA and LatCrit threaded together the interpretation of this study’s findings. It offered insights into the value of understanding the psychological safety of Latinx CITs in classroom environments.

LatCrit acknowledged the cultural journeys of Latinx CITs and carefully considered the often-overlooked experiences of psychological safety addressed by Latinx CITs. Once the analysis was completed, the researcher revisited the five tenets within LatCrit to better comprehend how this theoretical framework functioned to understand the present study’s findings. For the current study, the researcher utilized four out of the five tenets within the structure of the findings to identify the often dismissed educational challenges and experiences of underrepresentation that Latinx CITs faced in their classroom environments: focus on race and racism, challenging the dominant ideology, acknowledging experiential knowledge, and focus on historical context (Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Villalpando, 2004). Navigating their counselor education program, Latinx CITs identified past and present experiences of psychological safety in their classroom spaces. Additionally, they provided suggestions and recommendations based on their future hopes of integrating psychological safety in classroom environments with CACREP-accredited programs. LatCrit assisted the researcher in identifying
the multifaceted elements of Latinx CITs that are distinct to “language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, and sexuality,” considering their particular needs and experiences (Bernal, 2002, p. 108).

Using IPA, the researcher was immersed in an interpretative endeavor, which provided the opportunity to engage with the participants’ reflections regarding the intricate details of how Latinx CITs made sense and defined their experiences of psychological safety (Smith et al., 2009). Adhering to IPA guidelines, the researcher recognized Latinx CITs’ contextualized experiences of psychological safety in their classroom spaces and analyzed their accounts in a systematic and multicultural manner to construct a narrative and highlight the meaning and importance of the findings in a broader context directed toward the field of counselor education.

In narrative form, this chapter consists of an in-depth analysis of the current study’s five superordinate themes while connecting back to the literature presented in chapter two to demonstrate meaning and significance. Next, in an effort to interpret this study’s findings and provide insights concerning policy and practice, implications are outlined for the field of counselor education and training. Additionally, the limitations of this qualitative study are addressed. Furthermore, recommendations for future research informed by this study’s findings are proposed.

### Discussion of Theme One: Psychological Safety Defined

This superordinate theme explored eight participants’ responses to the following question: How would you define psychological safety as a Latinx counselor-in-training? Additionally, eight participants’ reflections on Edmondson’s (2018) definition of psychological safety were examined (see Appendix G), after they had defined what it meant to them as Latinx CITs.
Seven out of the eight participants mentioned culture relating to the Latinx population when defining and reflecting on psychological safety. The cultural elements mentioned by participants in the present study included: a desire for value and acceptance of “the Latinx community,” “familismo” and “personalismo,” the importance of “Latinx topics” in the classroom, the Latinx community as a “personal experience” and “personal community,” freedom to discuss the Latinx population, and respecting conversations on “culture and diversity.” For example, several participants in this study mentioned not wanting to feel embarrassed, “excluded,” or judged when having a desire to engage in discussions on culture. Previous literature utilizing LatCrit has indicated the challenges Latinx students experience regarding their racial and ethnic identities, marginalization within interpersonal relationships with peers and faculty, and the absence of their voices and histories in educational spaces (Delgado et al., 2017). The results of the current study also corroborate the ideas of Ogbu (1992), who recommended that educators gain an understanding of their students’ cultural backgrounds and ethnic identities. The current findings are consistent with prior research conducted by Capers (2019) that discovered that Latinx students felt a sense of inclusion and representation when their culture was implemented into the classroom curriculum. The present study supports evidence from previous observations, which showed the importance of integrating topics on diversity and inviting perspectives on various student identities (e.g., ethnicity, racial group, gender) into the classroom environment (Pajo, 2017; Rodriguez & Blaney, 2020). One of the noticeable differences in the results of this study, as compared to existing studies, was the emphasis on the inclusion of the Latinx culture relating to psychologically safe spaces, specifically acknowledged by Latinx CITs. Additionally, the results from the current study corroborate the ideas of Kaser and Short (1998) who revealed that when leaders embrace cultural differences with sensitivity
and inquiry, this fosters a learning community in the classroom. Previous literature has shown that by including the Latinx community in the counselor education curriculum, counseling students could better understand their needs and develop their skills for working with Latinx clients (Ramirez & David, 2021). Furthermore, when fostering and promoting structures that support student success and build community responsibility, previous literature has also discovered that individuals can recognize and assume a role in bringing about social change (Harewood & Keefer, 2009).

Two participants mentioned “personalismo” when referring to building a sense of community and connection with their peers and professors. Personalismo addresses the importance of connection for interpersonal relationships built on trust (Ortiz, 2020). For example, one participant specifically suggested using “personalismo” to create a guideline for what a psychologically safe environment might resemble for peers, professors, and clients. The second participant mentioned her peers and professors using “personalismo” to create psychological safety in the classroom among her peers and professors. These results corroborate the ideas of Tsuei et al. (2019), who suggested that in generating a non-judgmental and supportive environment, students appreciated their peers’ and professors’ support, which created feelings of trust and psychological safety to move forward in building interpersonal relationships with those in their classroom environment. Additionally, the results of the present study corroborate with the findings of Chicca and Shellenbarger (2020) who found that when instructors build rapport and trust with their students, they cultivate psychologically safe spaces that set students up for success.

Several participants expressed wanting to discuss their viewpoints and be heard in the classroom without having to defend themselves. One participant expressed the desire for a
psychologically safe environment where people do not feel threatened and have to defend and protect their identities. Another participant yearned for “calm conversations” about various topics rather than having to “walk on eggshells” and defend herself. These results further support the findings Kahn (1990) reported, which found that individuals who feel supported by others in psychologically safe environments can present their true selves. Specifically, for one participant, a psychologically safe space where she did not have to “defend” herself and was able to be heard by her peers and professors was a space where she did not have to “experience trauma.” This result seems to be in accord with those of España and Herrera (2020) who found that pedagogical practices are often not inclusive of the unique needs and narratives of Latinx students and do not address the traumatic experiences students can face inside and outside of the classroom.

In numerous ways, all participants in the current study expressed wanting to be heard by their peers and professors, invited into conversations, and have the ability to make mistakes without consequences. In addition, participants discussed the importance of these mistakes being seen as learning opportunities in the classroom. These results are in accord with Turner and Harder (2018) who show that psychologically safe environments permit students to learn from their mistakes and build clinical and problem-solving skills, rather than psychologically unsafe environments where instructors focus on students’ mistakes and do not provide students with learning opportunities and feedback. Previous research has also indicated that promoting psychologically safe learning environments allows the learner to speak up, review, and ask for help concerning their mistakes (Edmondson, 2014; Kilcullen et al., 2022; Roussin et al., 2018; Tsuei et al., 2019). The participants of the present study shared being able to make mistakes and express their views without being “mocked,” “judged,” belittled, dismissed, excluded, told to “stay quiet,” shut down, and thought of as “dumb.” One participant stated, “If you’re not safe
enough to take a risk, then you’re not safe…Safety without risk isn’t really safety.” These results are in agreement with Edmondson’s (1999) findings which defined psychological safety as the belief that team members can take interpersonal risks without apprehensions of being dismissed, overlooked, embarrassed, or shut down by others in that environment.

One participant in the current study discussed psychological safety as a “safe and trigger-free” space that encompasses “well-being.” However, Edmondson (2020) previously addressed how psychological safety is often misunderstood as a “safe space” and a trigger-free environment. A possible explanation for this result might be that the participant focused on the needs specific to the Latinx community. However, consistent with Edmondson (2020) this participant understood that students might not always feel comfortable, but should have a space in the classroom during presentations and assignments to voice their ideas and opinions with a sense of psychological safety. Additionally, this participant highlighted the language her professors and peers used that might “trigger” individuals in the Latinx community who speak Spanish. This result may be explained by the participant’s emphasis on peers and professors in CACREP-accredited master’s classrooms understanding how their language usage might affect the Latinx community. Previous literature has drawn a distinction between psychological well-being, which focuses on the psychological functioning used to describe an individual satisfaction with their life and employment (Obrenovic et al., 2020). This participant expressed the “shame” and “stigmatization” often faced in Latinx communities and shared her desire for a non-judgmental space. This result is also in agreement with McClintock et al. (2022) findings which showed that educators should express appreciation for their students’ suggestions and make efforts to understand students’ choices, in turn, eliminating the shame associated with failure and focusing on the resources needed to offer solutions.
Discussion of Theme Two: Attitudes Toward Openness

This theme explored the participants’ responses to the researcher’s question, “How would you describe the influence of psychological safety on your openness within the classroom?” Six out of eight Latinx CITs described how psychological safety influenced their openness within classroom environments.

Two participants in the current study indicated that being open and engaging in interpersonal risks relied upon their professors. For example, one participant shared that once she knew her professor’s viewpoints and non-verbal behaviors, she was able to assess whether or not to take an interpersonal risk and be open about her opinions and ideas. This sentiment is consistent with previous research that found that in psychologically unsafe spaces, employees often observe the leader’s non-verbal cues prior to sharing their thoughts, and the leader’s unspoken viewpoints have inadvertently inhibited employees from sharing their opposing thoughts (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020; Edmondson & Lei, 2014). In addition, one participant stated that “taking those risks” and being open also relied upon how her opinion might impact her future opportunities to work alongside her peers. However, there is a dearth of research focusing on Latinx CITs’ openness in academia and their experiences engaging with their peers in clinical practice after graduation.

Before being open about their viewpoints, three participants expressed examining if their peers and professors would value and respect their ideas, without placing judgments. The results in this study support evidence from the findings of Romney (2020) that showed that individuals want to understand that their thoughts are respected and that others value their contributions, allowing them to speak up and share their perspectives. Previous literature found that team members are open to taking interpersonal risks and contributing their ideas when they are able to
trust that their fellow team members would value their voices (Edmondson, 2018; Schepers et al., 2008).

Within psychologically unsafe spaces, two participants expressed components of isolation and silence, which prevented them from being open or vulnerable. This result seems to support evidence from previous observations, which revealed that employees suppressed their perspectives within work settings, which led to lower employee engagement in workspaces (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020; Benedictine University, 2018; Edmondson, 2018).

Several participants emphasized the challenges of being students of color and wondering if their White counterparts would respect, care for, and understand the validity of their experiences and cultural knowledge. This result aligns with prior research suggesting that when listening to an individual with the goal of communicating psychological safety, the emphasis is not on agreeableness, but instead on respecting another’s opinions and establishing a psychologically safe environment for them to express their ideas (Edmondson, 2018; Green, 2020; Trevail, 2020). The participants in the present study reported hesitation while speaking openly with their White counterparts because of their peers' prior actions, which made them feel psychologically unsafe when deciding to communicate their values and opinions. However, there is a gap in the literature research focusing on the connections between Latinx CITs and their experiences of being open with their White peers.

Two participants acknowledged that there is “room for improvement” regarding the field’s knowledge of how Latinx CITs’ openness affects psychological safety. This result supports Frazier et al. (2017) findings which did not provide evidence linking psychological safety to an individual’s experiences.
Discussion of Superordinate Theme Three: Acknowledgment of Racial Microaggressions Related to Low Psychological Safety

This superordinate theme explored the racial microaggressions all eight Latinx CITs encountered in the classroom, which were associated with low psychological safety. This superordinate theme contained the following subordinate themes: (3a) Influence of multidimensional identities, (3b) Recognition of “being the only one,” (3c) Lack of access to multicultural components within program instructional content and resources, (3d) When is it my turn to speak? Deciding when to enter the conversation, (3e) Broken foundation: Lack of supportive outlets, and (3f) Dismissed and Isolated.

Participants in the current study revealed experiencing racial microaggressions from their peers and professors that targeted their multidimensional identities, including ethnicity, skin color; language, migration history, and parental role, which affected their sense of psychological safety. Due to these microaggressions, participants expressed physical and emotional reactions such as shock, feeling required to provide evidence of their ethnic identities, being judged, isolated, angry, hurt, and being left in disbelief. Several participants shared encounters of microaggressions from their peers and professors who perceived all Latinx individuals as belonging to “one category” and sharing “the same experiences.” One participant shared that “psychologically safe spaces [were] not [the] norm,” particularly for “students of color.” Participants reported feeling psychologically unsafe in the classroom related to their multidimensional identities; when they were told they could not “handle” the course, invited for “tacos,” and given labels such as “tequila” to describe the Mexican community. Additionally, several participants were humiliated for attempting to pronounce English terms or told that “non-native English speakers have a lower intellectual ability.” Previous literature on LatCrit has
suggested that Latinx individuals encounter oppression and marginalization based on their multicultural identities related to language, race, class, gender, and sexuality (Bernal, 2002; Delgado et al., 2017; Villalpando, 2004). Additionally, previous studies on LatCrit have illuminated the microaggressions, inequalities, and stereotypes that place labels and ignore the voices and histories of the Latinx community, which may result in Latinx individuals feeling invisible and not empowered in these spaces (Bernal, 2002; Delgado et al., 2017).

Participants in this study recognized that even in their multicultural classes, the prevailing ideology of the “White culture” was embedded in the class discussions, texts, instructional content, curriculum, and other resources. Previous literature on LatCrit has suggested that educational structures and curriculum procedures that reflect solely the dominant ideology place Latinx students at a disadvantage in the classroom (Villalpando, 2004). The results of the current study also reflect those of Nieto and Bode (2017) who suggested that educators better understand the gaps within the classroom content and available educational resources offered to Latinx students. Additionally, previous literature has indicated that the pedagogical approaches of educators may not highlight the needs and stories of Latinx students (España & Herrera, 2020). Similarly, previous research discovered that in multicultural courses offered in CACREP-accredited counselor education programs, only 45% of professors covered content on people of color in their syllabus, and only 26 courses out of 57 included content on people of color (Pieterse et al., 2009).

Participants expressed feeling that their peers and professors “lacked an understanding” and did not make an effort to comprehend their Latinx values, Latinx community, Latinx histories, and Latinx experiences. These results corroborate the ideas of Haskins et al. (2022) who found that Latinx and Asian CITs reported that their counseling courses were ingrained in
the dominant White culture. This resulted in CITs feeling left out during group experiences in the classroom.

Participants in the current study mentioned that the discussions of “undocumented immigrants” and subjects related to culture and immigration were described by participants as taking a “negative” stance, which left Latinx CITs feeling uncomfortable, upset, angry, exhausted, and invisible, and left out. These results are also consistent with Huber and Malagon (2007) who found that students who identify themselves as undocumented often experience inadequate support in the classroom, stemming from instructional neglect.

One participant, a first-generation student, in the present study expressed anxiety and a lack of preparedness when completing tasks due to the program’s lack of “supervision, advice, tools, and resources.” Previous literature has found that first-generation Latinx higher education students may experience difficulties with their assignments, feel underprepared, and receive scarce support and guidance from school administrators (Ali & Menke, 2014; Flink, 2018; Vega, 2018).

Several participants reported teaching themselves how to translate counseling texts into Spanish since they were not given direction or resources from their professors. With the lack of direction and resources, participants in the current study reported serving as Spanish-speaking translators. This resulted in participants describing feelings of being “tokenized,” “used,” “taken advantage of,” and “unappreciated” without receiving any compensation in the form of extra credit or direct/indirect counseling hours. These findings are consistent with that of Thacker and Minton (2020) who found that master’s and doctoral racial and ethnic students of color reported experiencing microaggressions and tokenism within counselor education. They also discovered that these students felt invisible, isolated, and disengaged. The results of the present study also
reflect those of España and Herrera (2020) who explored the oppression and lack of cultural representation that Latinx students can experience due to educators prohibiting Spanish in the classroom. One participant in the current study expressed her belief that CACREP and the DSM-5 do not sufficiently understand the needs of the Latinx community. This finding implies that although the American Psychiatric Association (2022) proposes that the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.; DSM-5-TR) has been modified to provide inclusion and representation to the Latinx community, more effort has to be made to accurately reflect the needs and the values of the Latinx population. Prior studies on LatCrit, have noted the importance of acknowledging, understanding, and offering validation to the cultural histories that advocate for the integration of racial and cultural components of the Latinx community within institutional curricula (Bernal, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Participants in the current study reported an underrepresentation of professors and peers of color in their program. With this, several participants expressed their desire for a Latinx professor in their program because they felt that having cultural representation in their program faculty would influence their sense of psychological safety when bringing up cultural topics. These results are consistent with those of Rodriguez and Blaney (2020) who found that Latinx STEM students yearned for more diversity and representation in their classroom environments.

Participants in the present study reported being the “only” Latinx CIT in their classrooms and expressed feeling hesitant to discuss racial topics because they did not want to hold the burden of being the “only one” or “labeled as that girl” that brings forward racial matters “again.” Previous research revealed that when leaders failed to create psychologically safe environments where employees felt welcome to present their ideas, leaders potentially missed an opportunity to hear a game-changing idea from their employees (Benedictine University, 2018).
The results of the present study are consistent with those of previous studies, which highlighted the significance of the leader inviting participation, showcasing initiative when posing questions, and creating a space for meaningful conversations to occur without presuming that silence is an indication of the employee’s lack of interest (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020; Edmondson, 2018).

Participants in the current study described feeling dismissed by their peers and professors within classroom spaces. For instance, participants described how their “voice was not taken seriously” and how they were interrupted, “pushed to the side,” “isolated,” and disregarded when they spoke about matters pertaining to the Latinx community or people of color in the classroom. When Latinx CITs would talk, peers would “smirk,” “giggle,” “blatantly interrupt,” “not follow up,” and make hurtful racial statements. The participants shared that their professors and peers did not exhibit curiosity for their contributions, but instead provided rather impersonal comments such as “yeah” and “okay, next topic” before moving on to the following activity. Some participants described giving a platform for their “White peers” to speak, but showing a lack of interest in their comments involving Latinx histories and cultural roots. These results reflect those of Byrd et al. (2020) who also found that Latinx students engaged in silence and isolation in the classroom when they experienced a lack of respect and value. This present study’s results align with the findings of Fujimoto and Presbitero (2021) which have shown that people of color often report their voices being overpowered, overlooked, and dismissed by the dominant group. Additionally, this study’s results are in accord with studies reporting the experiences of Latinx STEM students encountering rejection, dismissive reactions from peers and professors, sparse diversity within topics, and unwelcomed and hostile spaces (Irizarry et al., 2021; Rodriguez & Blaney, 2020). The results of the current study also corroborate the ideas of Locke (2021) who
found that Latinx doctoral students felt ignored and isolated by their peers and professors when those professors refused to include topics on race and examine ways to work with the Latinx population in counseling practice, which erupted anger in students because they felt invisible and had to find ways to combat oppression. The results of the present study seem to also align with Turner and Harder (2018) who found that within psychologically unsafe environments, educators exhibited unconstructive behaviors such as unclear goals, highlighted students’ mistakes, and failed to provide constructive feedback on students’ responses.

Participants in the present study discussed multiple ways their historical and cultural narratives, as well as the histories of other students of color, were being overlooked in classroom environments. In addition, participants in the current study described how they avoided speaking up in class and joining classroom discussions because their peers occupied space during discussions, without “allowing” or “inviting” space for their voices. These participants expressed how classroom topics were frequently “White-centered.” Additionally, several participants also expressed feeling “guilty” and “bad” for remaining silent, due to their fear of making mistakes, being “judged,” and being regarded as “dumb.” Other participants reported choosing to stay silent in order to “protect” themselves. Previous research has shown that CITs have reported feeling excluded from the group and treated differently in the classroom as a result of counseling matters entrenched in the dominant White culture and specific topics like White privilege that were dismissed as a norm rather than being fully examined and comprehended (Haskins et al., 2022). The results of the present study also align with Woodall (2013) who discovered that when confronting whiteness in the classroom within higher education institutions, educators should hold discussions about privilege and racial inequalities, find ways to challenge the dominant ideology, and build rapport with students to break their silence. Additionally, educators should
also make sure that all students have a place to express their ideas and values, invite students to identify and draw attention to racist statements, and enable critical thinking around these concerns (Woodall, 2013). The present study’s results are consistent with previous research suggesting that employees felt it was impossible to speak in psychologically unsafe spaces, even if they wanted to (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020). Prior research has also shown that employees protect themselves through the lack of engagement and suppression of their ideas in conversations, by utilizing silence as a shield (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020; Benedictine University, 2018; Edmondson, 2018). Additionally, the current study’s results corroborate the ideas of Edmondson (2018) who suggested that spaces contributing to low psychological safety foster a sense of invisibility and establish a norm of silence among team members.

Participants in the present study reported experiencing a lack of supportive outlets in their classroom environments. Several participants in the current study exhibited hesitation and fear when discussing their Latinx culture and making mistakes among their “White professors” and “White peers.” These participants indicated that when engaging with their “White professors,” they had to “walk on eggshells,” “defend” themselves, were “attacked” for voicing beliefs, meetings were often “canceled” or “rescheduled,” and there was a “misconnection” within their interactions that felt like there was “too much of a power dynamic.” Previous research highlights the significance of understanding what hierarchy means to employees, which has been shown to affect employees withholding information and their fear of taking interpersonal risks (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020; Green, 2020; Edmondson, 2018). Previous studies have indicated that team members experienced fear when contributing their thoughts, asking questions, and interacting with others around them in environments where leaders were
vague about their roles and expectations (Edmondson, 2018; Trevail, 2020). Prior research consistently has found that students of color may struggle when communicating with authority figures and suggested that educators collaborate with students, offer availability to meet to answer students’ questions, and engage in class activities that build cultural knowledge and prepare students to work with numerous cultures (Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2020).

Discussion of Theme Four: Staying in the Ring: The Influences of High Psychological Safety

All eight participants in this superordinate theme reported experiences with professors and peers that served as influences of high psychological safety. The subordinate themes for this superordinate theme are as follows: (4a) The development of leader alliances, (4b) Peer support and collaboration, and (4c) The responsibility of advocacy.

All eight Latinx CITs in this study reported appreciation for interactions with professors who invited their voices into discussions on race and culture. Participants in this study stated that they were able to form leader alliances with their professors, when their professors provided them the freedom to talk about “anything, race, sexuality, or religion,” invited them into conversations on race and ethnicity, validated and understood their experiences, helped when outlining assignments so they did not conflict with their parental responsibilities, provided the opportunity to learn from their mistakes, recognized moments when self-care was needed, and engaged students in “role-playing conversations on race with peers.” Participants in this study reported feeling heard, “honored as a Latina student,” encouraged, validated, and psychologically safe to make mistakes without being embarrassed, dismissed, disregarded, or shut down when forming partnerships with their instructors. Although one participant shared that the “Latino voice is largely missing in academia,” she reported instances of high psychological
safety influenced by the appreciation and value she received as a Latinx CIT at her CACREP-accredited HBCU institution. Several participants in the current study also expressed that the professor was responsible for implementing psychological safety in the classroom. Prior studies have shown that when cultivating psychological safety, the leader should invite employee’s voices, foster a space for employees to ask questions, feel heard, and show curiosity and interest when offering their input in discussions (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020; Catmull & Wallace, 2014; Chapman & Sisodia, 2015; Edmondson, 2018; Frazier et al., 2017). Previous research has shown that fostering high psychological safety in classroom environments has positively impacted students’ ability to ask questions, build rapport, make mistakes, and engage in discussions on critical topics (Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2020; Tsuei et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2016). The results of the present study align with Vela et al. (2019) who found that Latina CITs expressed feeling respected and encouraged when they saw that their professors valued and cared for their learning journey; respected their ideas; and integrated meaningful conversations on culture, awareness, accountability; and reflection within classroom activities. Consistent with the results of this study, previous research on LatCrit has noted the importance of empowering students to discuss and learn about the history of the Latinx community entrenched in students’ unique narratives and familial roots, which both serve as nurturing systems (Bernal, 2002; Villalpando, 2004). The results of this study are also consistent with Nieto and Bode (2017) who suggested that when cultivating learning environments for students, educators should gain a better understanding of their students’ language and communication practices; cultural identity; and attitudes towards culture, advocacy, and learning.

All participants in the current study placed a high value on collaborating with their peers in the classroom. Additionally, participants in the present study described their peers providing
them with support by collaborating with them on cultural conversations involving the Latinx community, recognizing their counseling skills when working with specific populations, valuing their efforts to earn their master’s degree and hold parental responsibilities, demonstrating interests and value in their contributions, offering to help, listening in a non-judgmental manner, having the ability to speak up and advocate, learning from their peers, and being able to take interpersonal risks and be vulnerable. Participants in this current study expressed feeling that their peers made the class feel like it was a “home away from home,” “more relaxed,” collaborative, and “so much safer.” Within these psychologically safe spaces, Latinx CITs were able to be their authentic selves, which made the classroom feel more like home and their peers more like family. However, one participant in this study expressed that when her peers did provide support and discuss culture and race, it felt “performative.” The current study’s findings also support the notion that in classrooms where students felt psychologically safe, students were able to engage in risks, discuss race, and share their opinions despite their views conflicting with others (Buckley & Foldy, 2010). Previous research has also found that Latinx undergraduate students relied on the interactions within their classroom and campus to feel less isolated, more engaged, and receive insights on achieving academic success (Mireles-Rios & García, 2019). The results of this study also corroborate the ideas of Rudolph et al. (2014), who suggested that in psychologically safe spaces, students were able to speak up and work with their peers to discuss new ideas and build mutual respect and trust.

Within their program, participants in the present study described instances of holding the responsibility to advocate for themselves and their peers. Participants in the current study described advocating for themselves by establishing “boundaries,” “pushing” themselves into conversations when they were not invited, challenging stereotypes about the Latinx community,
voicing their concerns to the “dean and provost,” and speaking up when they felt “defensive” about specific discussions on race and “immigration issues.” When being an “agent of change” for others, participants in this study shared educating their peers on the Latinx community to better prepare them when working with clients, offering to serve as a mentor in the program after graduation, and providing their professors with suggestions on discussing culture and immigration. When the researcher asked the participants in this study why they chose to advocate for themselves, they explained that they felt “used”; “not taken seriously”; “exhausted, emotionally, and mentally,” did not feel like their peers and professors efficiently approached culture and race; had to “push through”; “learned to be resilient”; and had “no other choice” but to “get through” and prevail. The results of this study are consistent with those of Locke (2021) who found that despite the challenges Latinx doctoral students encountered, such as marginalization, isolation, and being dismissed, they were able to demonstrate resiliency by empowering themselves to invest in the counseling field and consistently reflect upon their educational endeavors. The results of this study also support evidence from previous research, which has shown Latinx students’ perseverance and advocacy in academic settings, despite the challenges they face (Chavac, 2021; Rodriguez & Blaney, 2020; Witkowsky et al., 2018).

Previous research has highlighted that Latinx STEM students challenged marginalization and barriers by consistently cultivating a mindset of trailblazing and reframing their arduous narrative (Rodriguez & Blaney (2020). Furthermore, prior research has used LatCrit to illuminate and validate the deep-rooted strengths of Latinx individuals (Bernal, 2002).

**Practical Implications for the Field of Counselor Education and Training**

This section explored the findings presented in the five superordinate themes, nine subordinate themes, and the literature presented in chapter two to address implications for
counselor education and training in CACREP-accredited master-level programs. Additionally, in utilizing the foundational blueprints of LatCrit and IPA, the researcher gathered Latinx CITs' reports of definitions and experiences with psychological safety in the classroom to highlight the unique needs of Latinx CITs for the field of counselor education and training. During the interview, the researcher asked the participants, “Given your experiences of when you have felt psychologically safe and psychologically unsafe, as a Latinx CIT, what suggestions might you have for how instructors, peers, and higher education institutions can create environments that are more psychologically safe?” Therefore, the implications will also be informed by the suggestions and reports of the Latinx CITs in this current study.

In sharing their narratives, Latinx CITs in the present study highlighted moments their peers and professors dismissed them. One participant suggested that educators should be responsible for "amplifying [all] students’ voices” in the classroom by allowing everyone to offer feedback and admit their mistakes. Several other participants suggested that professors should cultivate a psychologically safe space where students can share and be curious about the differing opinions of their peers and professors. In creating these “brave spaces” and understanding the “thought bubbles” of students (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020; Edmondson, 2020), professors are urged to incorporate psychological safety into curriculum requirements, classroom norms, and experiential activities while considering student learning in counselor education and supervision (CES) programs.

For example, counselor educators can engage in the principles of psychological safety through a leader toolkit. With the aid of this toolkit, educators are encouraged to acknowledge the contributions of their students in a nonjudgmental manner, set expectations for discussions when mistakes are made, emphasize learning from mistakes, establish structures that encourage
participation, and foster deeper thinking by embracing multiple perspectives (Edmondson, 2018). To meet the needs of enrolled students, counselor educators are also encouraged to gain an understanding of the institution’s unique organizational culture and individualize the construct of psychological safety by collaborating with students and welcoming their voices (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020). Due to the disparity of knowledge in the literature, counselor educators are also advised to embrace an individualized approach to comprehend the influence of psychological safety on students of color in the academic realm. With this approach, counselor educators can express value in students’ perceptions, integrate multicultural awareness, and understand how psychological safety impacts students’ multidimensional identities within their social, cultural, and physical realities. Previous studies have stressed the importance of conveying representation and appreciation of students’ voices into the curriculum by reflecting upon suggestions, ideas, and supportive resources (España & Herrera, 2020; Garvin et al., 2008; McClintock et al., 2022). Furthermore, prior research has found that in fostering psychologically safe learning environments for students of color, educators should support constructive feedback and allow students to make mistakes without the fear of humiliation and shame (Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2020).

One participant in the current study suggested that professors and administrators aim to better understand the unique needs and identities of Latinx CITs to prevent “actively harming” and threatening students. Additionally, this participant suggested that counselor education programs should explain the “complaint process” to students in the case that a student felt unsafe and would like to make a report about a peer, professor, or administrator. For example, this participant shared being unaware of the “student advocates” offered by her program. With this information, counselor education programs are encouraged to provide students with a detailed
template addressing the proper procedures when reporting a complaint. Within that template, contact information should be provided for various advocates, such as university advocates, and on-campus and off-campus mental health resources to meet the student's needs.

All eight participants in this current study acknowledged experiencing microaggressions by their peers and professors in classroom environments. This information can be used to develop targeted interventions to integrate policies and procedures within counselor education programs that directly acknowledge students’ experiences of microaggressions. With that information, counselor educators are advised to hold discussions regarding their pedagogical approaches, instructional tools and content, syllabi construction, resources, and support available to students who may or may not report instances of microaggressions in the classroom. Additionally, counselor educators are encouraged to integrate a solidarity statement addressing the multidimensional identities of Latinx CITs, exploring the impact of low psychological safety on Latinx CITs, and engaging in conversations that acknowledge how peers and professors could decrease microaggressions and increase psychologically safe classroom spaces. Furthermore, counselor educators should implement classroom activities that define and provide examples of microaggressions. Once students have grasped the foundational understanding of microaggressions, educators are advised to integrate role-play within classroom activities that allow students to practice acknowledging and addressing microaggressions in a psychologically safe collaborative manner. In their recent book *Microaggressions in everyday life*, Sue and Spanierman (2020) provide the following: pedagogical strategies to teach about various forms of microaggressions, a thorough summary of microaggression scales to measure microaggressions, the most recent qualitative and quantitative findings on microaggressions, classification of the various types of microaggressions, strategies for addressing and eliminating microaggressions at
the individual, group, and community levels. Counselor educators can potentially utilize this textbook as a resource when constructing their syllabi and when holding discussions on microaggressions that occur in classroom and academic environments.

Participants in this study shared deciding when to enter classroom conversations, due to their peers and professors not creating a psychological space to do so. During the moments when Latinx CITs utilized silence, one participant suggested that professors and peers should invite perspectives by asking students what they need in the classroom to feel psychologically safe. Another participant suggested that professors “invite more conversations surrounding culture, diversity, and inclusion in the curriculum, or even in the syllabus.” A third participant suggested that professors and students should not fear nor ignore topics on race and culture, which she labeled as “the elephant in the room,” but instead be “open” to having these conversations that might appear difficult. Based on participants’ responses, discussions on race and culture should be integrated by educators into classroom activities and classroom exercises. Additionally, educators should consider asking students to list what topics are difficult for them to discuss and develop activities that provide students with the opportunity to discuss these difficult topics in a psychologically safe environment.

One participant suggested that her counselor education program should offer a self-awareness course to students to better understand the importance of highlighting students’ cultures and histories and preparing students to address racial and ethnic concerns. With this information, counselor educators are advised to provide a training, workshop, or course within the curriculum structure to address the racial and ethnic apprehensions of Latinx CITs. Research supports the importance and utility of self-awareness and cultural awareness within CACREP
programs to process unintentional discrimination, reflect on cultural identities, and better understand their counseling identities as CITs (CACREP, 2015; Kimbel & Levitt, 2017).

Participants in this study shared their experiences of recognizing when they were the only Latinx CIT in the classroom. In addition, participants of the current study discussed the importance of leader and peer alliances. Several participants suggested that professors and peers should adopt a collaborative approach to build rapport and instill a sense of community. Moreover, some participants also expressed a desire for their program to have more peers and faculty members of color. Counselor educators can better support Latinx CITs by implementing “personalismo” and “familismo” factors within curriculum practices that will allow discussion and reflections on the multidimensional identities of Latinx CITs to increase faculty and peer awareness and understanding in hopes of influencing community engagement. Within multicultural education courses, Chan et al. (2018) suggested that educators exercise transparency, engage in rapport-building activities, and understand various cultural histories to reduce invalidating their students. Aligning with the research on LatCrit, institutional policies should aim to acknowledge community engagement and understand the communication patterns of the Latinx community (Vales, 1996; Villalpando, 2004). Furthermore, Edmondson (2020) asserted that classroom spaces should be considered “brave spaces” where students can collaborate on tasks, make mistakes, ask questions, and challenge themselves and others in the learning process. Therefore, counselor educators should consider acknowledging their unique and diverse roles as advisors, mentors, confidantes, and evaluators (España & Herrera, 2020).

All eight Latinx CITs in this current study expressed a lack of access to multicultural components within program instructional content and resources. One participant suggested that professors should include instructional materials that “cater to all cultures,” provide opportunities...
for students to discuss their “cultural histories,” and include textbooks and audio tools that represent all racial and ethnic identities. Several other participants suggested that their professors should not exclusively utilize textbooks and resources from “White authors.” Another participant suggested that multicultural courses should offer presentations from diverse community leaders to provide insight on various counseling practices BIPOC community leaders utilized when working with diverse clients. Research shows that the textbooks used in courses deemed to provide multicultural competence in CACREP-accredited counselor education programs lacked content outlining the histories and cultural journeys of people of color (La Guardia, 2021; Pieterse et al., 2009; Sawyer-Kurian et al., 2017). Several participants suggested that resources should be provided for Spanish speakers, such as allowing cases to be presented in Spanish and offering support when translating counseling terms into Spanish. In order to address the needs of the Latinx community, counselor educators are encouraged to offer English language learners the necessary resources in Spanish. With the responsibility of advocacy, counselor education programs should aim to highlight and honor student skills rather than undermine and tokenize Latinx CITs by learning what creates cultural meaning and appreciation for students. Additionally, to prevent Latinx CITs from being tokenized and holding the burden of translating for their peers and professors, España and Herrera (2020) suggested that institutions provide translators or translation software; encourage students to bring in texts that recognize their culture and language practice; assign discussion boards to better understand student expectations; inquire on what makes students feel psychologically safe and psychologically unsafe in the classroom; humanize students’ experiences; and utilize phrases to make students feel less isolated such as “‘Help me understand,” “I am sorry,” and “You are not alone.”
Several participants explored the influence and value of their multidimensional identities. One participant suggested that CACREP programs should offer a “Latinx-focused” concentration that addresses the needs of Latinx CITs, implements Latinx values, educates Latinx students on how to work with Latinx clients in the counseling space, provides resources to meet the unique needs of Spanish-speakers, understands the language practices of Latinx CITs, and allows Latinx CITs to build a community. Another participant suggested that CACREP requirements should include the voices of “BIPOC educators” and students. Based on the participants’ responses, CACREP should consider revising its standards and policies to reflect the unique needs of Latinx CITs, such as providing counselor education programs with guidelines and resources to better serve Spanish-speaking Latinx CITs. Latinx CITs felt that their values were not addressed within their selected concentrations. Therefore, CACREP programs should consider implementing a “Latinx-focused” concentration to illuminate the histories and voices of the Latinx community. Research shows that a Latinx counseling concentration may serve to address the multicultural standards outlined in CACREP (Locke, 2021; Ramirez & David, 2021). Kimbel and Levitt (2017) expressed that the 2016 CACREP (2015) standards stressed the importance of instructors incorporating content exploring social and cultural diversity and experiential learning to acknowledge one’s identity and other cultural journeys. Specifically, section 1.K. addresses, “the academic unit makes continuous and systematic efforts to attract, enroll, and retain a diverse group of students and to create and support an inclusive learning community” (CACREP, 2015, p. 6). In addition, aligning with LatCrit objectives, counselor education programs should consider including courses within the curriculum that focus on the Latinx population (Bernal, 2002; Vales, 1996; Villalpando, 2004). Although Latinx students are an underrepresented community within higher education, research suggests that by 2028, to achieve enrollment
quotas, higher education institutions will be dependent upon Latinx student admission (Aguilar & Kim, 2019; Sáenz, 2020). Counselor education programs are encouraged to provide a space for Latinx CITs to exercise their language practices within classroom assignments, presentations, and activities. Based on the participants' responses concerning the scarcity of conferences and other culturally appropriate trainings in the counseling profession, ACA should consider culturally inclusive conferences or offering culturally relevant trainings that are open and accessible to Latinx students. ACA (2014) code of ethics identified in Section F.7.c. that counselor educators should “infuse material related to multiculturalism/diversity into all courses and workshops for the development of professional counselors” (p. 14). Correspondingly, in providing multicultural comprehension skills, ACA (2014) section F.11.C indicated, “Counselor educators actively infuse multicultural/diversity competency in their training and supervision practices” (p. 15).

**Limitations**

Several limitations are essential to consider within the current study. One limitation of the current study is that all eight Latinx CITs who voluntarily participated identified as female. Within a qualitative study, this limitation is critical to note because the results of this study may not be transferable to Latinx CITs who identify as males enrolled in CACREP-accredited master’s counselor education programs. A second limitation, typical with IPA studies, is purposeful sampling. The scope of the study was limited to Latinx CITs; therefore, the current study held a small sample size. The first and second limitations may be seen to impact theoretical transferability. In qualitative research, transferability is reflected upon and interpreted by the reader, and transferable knowledge addresses the insights and utility of the current study’s findings (Patton, 2014). In her speech at the 2020 Association of American Medical Colleges
Conference, Edmondson also suggested that psychological safety is not homogenous within organizations. Therefore, educators are encouraged to collaborate and learn from their students how to generate psychological safety so that it is meaningful within their unique organizational cultures (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2020). Additionally, using IPA, Smith et al. (2009) described the term theoretical transferability,

> It is also possible to think in terms of theoretical transferability rather than empirical generalizability. In this case, the reader makes links between the analysis in an IPA study, their own personal and professional experience, and the claims in the extant literature. The analyst should provide a rich, transparent and contextualized analysis of the accounts of the participants. This should enable readers to evaluate its transferability to persons in contexts which are more, or less, similar. Further points which situate the sample in relation to the extant literature will help the reader to make that assessment. The effectiveness of the IPA study is judged by the light it sheds within this broader context (p. 51).

Previous studies using Latino Critical theory have used transferability when employing purposeful sampling in qualitative research (Contreras Aguirre et al., 2020; Elliott & Lambert, 2018; Locke, 2021).

A third limitation of this study is that despite the researcher’s efforts to contact Latinx CITs, only four participants responded to the researcher’s member checking emails. Member checking is essential to assess the researcher’s bias and reflect upon confirmability. However, it is essential to note that after each participant’s response to the researcher’s questions, the researcher was able to engage in member checking and clarify the participants’ responses. As with the nature of IPA, the researcher was able to bracket and set aside her assumptions.
concerning this study’s fundamental components and consistently engaged in deep reflection through memos, journals, and meetings with her committee members.

Despite these limitations, the present study adds notable value to the literature since no prior studies have explored the psychological safety of Latinx CITs. This study provided a knowledge base for counselor education regarding how Latinx CITs define and experience psychological safety in their classroom spaces. In addition, this study provides a framework that offers valuable insight and contributes to the voices of Latinx CITs in efforts to foster psychologically safe spaces and improve curriculum, programming standards, and the implications stated in the previous section.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Utilizing the foundational components of IPA and LatCrit, this study aimed to investigate how Latinx CITs defined and experienced psychological safety while enrolled in their CACREP-accredited counselor education master’s program. The results of this current study provided the infrastructure to support the considerations for future research.

The participants in the current study were Latinx CITs who defined and experienced psychological safety while enrolled in a CACREP-accredited counselor education master’s program. CACREP currently establishes minimal unified standards for master’s programs (CACREP, 2015; Remley & Herlihy, 2016). In addition, CACREP outlines several standards that emphasize social and cultural diversity, inclusive learning environments, multiculturalism, and social justice (Kimbel & Levitt, 2017). To become CACREP-accredited, program faculty must provide a comprehensive Self-Study Report and undergo a multi-stage review process outlining their commitment to these standards (CACREP, 2022b). After the application is submitted, the CACREP accreditation process can take 12-24 months (CACREP, 2022b). Thus,
there is a level of responsibility, accountability, and quality assurance for instructors and program administrators to integrate or make an intent to integrate components of culture and diversity into the classroom to keep the accreditation status. However, without specified outlined unified standards and a level of accountability on cultural factors, it is crucial to understand the measures that counseling programs without CACREP accreditation are engaging in to include social and cultural diversity, inclusive learning environments, multiculturalism, and social justice into their curricula and policies. Future research should investigate the experiences of Latinx CITs enrolled in non-CACREP-accredited counselor education programs.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in English to answer the research question of the present study using an interview protocol inspired by and using revised versions of Edmondson’s (1999) 7-item survey questions, and integrated seven supplementary items grounded on the current literature presented in chapter two. Further research should complete the interviews in Spanish to address the specific nomenclature and highlight the language practices of Latinx CITs (West-Olatunji, 2022). Additionally, a quantitative study could be developed using the interview protocol in the current study. However, to ensure that culture and diversity are highlighted, a quantitative study should embrace a theoretical framework to address issues of race and ethnicity. West-Olatunji (2022) advised that when conducting research on marginalized communities, the following methodologies may be utilized to empower the voices of participants: CRT, LatCrit, endarkened feminist epistemology, Chicana feminist epistemology, Transcultural theory, Indigenous research methodologies, and emancipatory research.

Two participants in the current study identified as Lesbian; however, they did not express the influence of psychological safety on their sexual orientation. Further research should be undertaken to investigate the influences of psychological safety on participants’ sexual
orientation. Additionally, all of the participants in the present study identified as female. Further research might explore the experiences of Latinx CITs who identify with a different gender identity (e.g., male, non-binary, transgender, gender-expansive, agender, etc.).

Purposeful sampling methods were utilized to investigate the experiences of psychological safety, specifically with Latinx CITs within classroom environments while enrolled in CACREP-accredited master’s degree programs in the United States. However, further research should be undertaken to investigate other racial and ethnic groups that define and experience psychological safety within diverse environments and program statuses, such as longitudinal research investigating students from practicum until graduation.

One interesting finding of this study is that one participant reported feeling more psychologically safe talking to her “female professor” than her male professor. A possible explanation for these results may be the lack of adequate male Latinx faculty representation that this participant experienced in her program, compared to the female Latinx professors. Therefore, future research may examine the role of gender with Latinx CITs regarding their experience with psychological safety. Additionally, this finding may further highlight the importance of comprehending how gender relations between students and instructors affect psychological safety in classroom environments.

A second interesting finding in this study was one participant’s report that in her “Latinx-focused” classrooms, she felt “much more safer” to “take interpersonal risks such as asking questions, voicing concerns and fears” without feeling embarrassed or disregarded, compared to her “big classrooms.” As previously specified in chapter four, a “Latinx-focused” concentration is available through this participant’s counseling program. The focus of a “Latinx-focused” concentration is rooted in an exploration of the Latinx culture and training methods to prepare
Latinx CITs to work with Latinx clients and community members. In addition, this participant
took classes with students who were not in the “Latinx-focused” concentration; the participant
refers to these classes as “big classrooms” and “broader classrooms.” To protect the participant’s
anonymity, the name of the concentration was provided a pseudonym. Furthermore, a possible
explanation for this interesting finding could be that her “Latinx-focused” classrooms embraced
“Latinx values” and taught her how to work with Latinx clients, which her “big classrooms” did
not do. To that end, future research could examine the role of “Latinx-focused” classrooms
compared to “big classrooms” within CACREP-accredited master’s programs and their influence
on psychological safety.

A third interesting finding of this study is that one participant attended an HBCU and
expressed being in a “psychologically safe” and “profoundly positive” environment, despite her
knowledge of peers in other counselor education programs facing difficulties. Future research
can examine the lived experiences of Latinx CITs in CACREP programs across multiple types of
academic institutions (e.g., public, private, HBCU, HSI) to understand what experiences
contribute to their psychological safety.

Conclusion

This study provides the first comprehensive qualitative examination of how Latinx CITs
experience and define psychological safety within classroom environments while enrolled in
CACREP-accredited master’s degree programs in the United States. As one of the first attempts
to thoroughly enhance our understanding of the experiences of Latinx CITs with psychological
safety, five superordinate themes and nine subordinate themes addressed the research question,
How do Latinx CITs experience and define psychological safety within classroom environments
while enrolled in CACREP-accredited master’s degree programs in the United States?
The five superordinate themes that illustrated the voices of Latinx CITs within the context of psychological safety included: (1) Psychological safety defined, (2) Attitudes towards openness, (3) Acknowledgment of racial microaggression related to low psychological safety, (4) Staying the ring: The influences of psychological safety, and (5) Participants suggestions and recommendations for how instructors, peers, and higher education institutions can create environments that are psychologically safe in CACREP-accredited master’s programs. These findings added to the growing body of research by recognizing and bringing representation to the narratives of Latinx CITs, which are based on their definitions and experiences of psychologically safe learning environments (Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2020; Clark, 2020; Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson, 2018; Frazier et al., 2017; Garvin et al., 2008; Tsuei et al., 2019).

The current study used interpretive phenomenological analysis and Latino Critical Theory, which allowed the researcher to view Latinx CITs as creators and holders of their cultural stories and examine the constructed meanings participants placed on psychological safety in their classroom environments. Additionally, the present study lays the groundwork for acknowledging the importance of psychologically safe learning environments with students of color along the pipeline of counselor education and training practices and procedures. This study adds to the growing body of research that recognizes the educational and cultural journeys of Latinx students enrolled in higher education institutions to cultivate spaces that strengthen their academic success (García et al., 2021) and promote psychological safety within instructional tools, pedagogy methods, and training procedures in counselor education.

This study provided a seat and invited the voices of Latinx CITs, an underserved and underrepresented population in academia, to enter the conversation within a research platform.
Latinx CITs have emphasized their needs within psychologically safe and unsafe spaces and have shown their persistence to prevail and stay in the ring despite the obstacles they faced in classroom environments. The hope is that future research structures the work of psychological safety with marginalized communities by recognizing students’ voices and racial and ethnic stories, with a lens of cultural humility, curiosity, and advocacy.
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https://strategy.asee.org/37016


$20 STARBUCKS OR AMAZON E-GIFT CARD AT THE COMPLETION OF THE 45-60 MINUTE INTERVIEW.

Latinx Students in CACREP Master’s programs

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS IN STUDY ENTITLED

Feel my story: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of Latinx counselors-in-training experiences with psychological safety viewed through a Latino Critical framework

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY:
The purpose of this study is to address a gap in knowledge by exploring the phenomenon of psychological safety with Latinx counselor-in-training (CiT) students within classroom settings in CACREP master’s programs. Within the interview process, I hope to explore how you define and have or are currently experiencing psychological safety in classroom environments, as a Latinx CiT.

PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY:
- Currently be enrolled in a CACREP-accredited counselor education master’s program in the United States
- Currently in the practicum or internship stage
- Must be at least 18 years old
- Identify as Latinx
- Must be willing to participate in a 45–60-minute interview about your experiences with psychological safety in the classroom. [Note: You will not be asked about your immigration status.]
- The interview will be conducted in English.

For more information, please contact
Felishatee Rodríguez, LPC, NCC
Doctoral Candidate
Rodriguezf1@duq.edu

This study has been approved by Duquesne University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB).
Protocol#: 2022/07/3
Expires: 07/24/2025
Appendix B: Social Media Recruitment Announcement

Hello all! My name is Felishatee Rodriguez, and I am currently a doctoral candidate in the Counselor Education and Supervision program at Duquesne University. I am conducting a study on Latinx counselors-in-training in CACREP-accredited counselor education programs. The title of my study is, Feel my story: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of Latinx counselors-in-training experiences with psychological safety viewed through a Latino Critical framework. I am working under the guidance of my dissertation chair, Dr. Matthew Joseph. This study has been approved by Duquesne University’s IRB board.

To participate in this study, you must meet the following criteria:

- (a) Currently be enrolled in a CACREP-accredited counselor education master’s program in the United States
- (b) Currently in the practicum or internship stage
- (c) At least 18 years old
- (d) Identify as Latinx
- (e) Must be willing to participate in a 45–60-minute zoom interview about your experiences with psychological safety in the classroom. The interview will be conducted in English.
- (f) Must be willing to complete an informed consent form and a demographic questionnaire. [Note: You will not be asked about your immigration status.]

If you meet the criteria above and are willing to participate in this study, please contact me at rodriguezf1@duq.edu. If you know other individuals who meet the following criteria, please feel free to share this information. Your participation in this study is voluntary and confidential. All identifying information in your responses will be removed. Your time and willingness to share your experiences with the principal investigator, Felishatee Rodriguez, are valuable and highly appreciated; therefore, after the successful completion of the interview, participants will be given a $20 Amazon or Starbucks electronic gift card.

You are welcome to scan the flyer attached to this post or click on the link below to complete the informed consent, brief demographic form, and schedule your interview.

[https://forms.gle/XjhwvvvHfcZWKSCc7]

With much gratitude,

Felishatee Rodriguez, LPC, NCC
She/Her/Hers
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Counseling, Psychology, & Special Education
Duquesne University
rodriguezf1@duq.edu
Hello [Insert Participant Name],

My name is Felishatee Rodriguez, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Counselor Education and Supervision program at Duquesne University. I am pleased to invite you to participate as an interviewee in a research study entitled “Feel my story: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of Latinx counselors-in-training experiences with psychological safety viewed through a Latino critical framework.” This study seeks to address a gap in knowledge by exploring the phenomenon of psychological safety with Latinx counselor-in-training students within classroom settings, which can inform educational policies and practices on how counselor educators can strengthen curricula and programming to meet the needs and bring representation to Latinx counselors-in-training academic achievements, and successes through psychologically safe classroom environments. This study is supervised by Dr. Matthew Joseph, an associate professor at Duquesne University. This study was approved by the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board.

To qualify for participation, you must:
- Currently be enrolled in a CACREP-accredited counselor education master’s program in the United States
- currently in the practicum or internship stage
- be at least 18 years old
- identify as Latinx
- Must be willing to participate in a 45–60-minute interview about their experiences with psychological safety in the classroom. The interview will be conducted in English. [Note: You will not be asked about your immigration status.]

Interview information: If you are interested in participating in this study, we can schedule a Zoom (video and/or audio interview). The scheduled interview will be no longer than 60 minutes, but may end sooner. Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. To facilitate the interview process, before the interview, you will be asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire and sign an informed consent form. [Note: You will not be asked about your immigration status.]

Confidentiality: All information you provide (e.g., forms, interviews, emails) to the researcher will be confidential and adhere to the guidelines set by Duquesne University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Your name and any other identifying information will not be included. Instead, a pseudonym will replace your name. Information collected will be used solely for the
purposes of this study and any additional publications that may result from this study. Your participation in this study, and any identifiable personal information you provide, will be kept confidential to every extent possible, and will be destroyed three years after the data collection is completed. Your name will never appear in this study or publication thereof. All electronic forms and study materials will be kept in a password-protected laptop. All data will be coded, password-protected, and securely stored to be used for professional purposes only. Due to the researcher meeting with the participants during the interview process via Zoom, anonymity will not be possible in this study. When recordings are transcribed, all identifying information will be removed, and you will be identified in the research records by a pseudonym (false name).

This study was approved by the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board.

**Compensation:** At the end of the interview, participants will receive a $20 Amazon or Starbucks electronic gift card for participating in this study.

**Contact Information:** If you are interested in participating or have any questions regarding this study, please contact me via email at rodriguezf1@duq.edu.

*Advising Faculty Chair:* Dr. Matthew Joseph, Duquesne University, joseph4@duq.edu

*Duquesne University Institutional Review Board:* Dr. David Delmonico, Duquesne University, irb@duq.edu.

*To facilitate the interview, please click on the link below* to be directed to the full informed consent, brief demographic form, and the interview scheduling application. You are under no obligation to start or to continue this study. You can withdraw at any time without penalty or consequence by not completing the study or leaving the survey unfinished. Any survey that is unfinished will be considered withdrawn. By consenting to participation, found in the following link, you acknowledge that you have been fully informed about the procedures listed in the consent. You understand what has been asked of you and the benefits and risks of participation. You agree that you are 18 years of age or older, meet the indicated participation criteria, and are participating freely and voluntarily.

[https://forms.gle/XjhwvvvHfcZWKSCc7]

Thank you for your participation. Your time and participation are valuable.

Sincerely,

Felishatee Rodriguez, LPC, NCC
She/Her/Hers
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Counseling, Psychology, & Special Education
Duquesne University
rodriguezf1@duq.edu
Hello [Insert Chair/Director],

My name is Felishatee Rodriguez, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Counselor Education and Supervision program at Duquesne University. As partial fulfillment of my doctoral degree, I am conducting a qualitative research study entitled “Feel my story: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of Latinx counselors-in-training experiences with psychological safety viewed through a Latino Critical framework.” This study seeks to address a gap in knowledge by exploring the phenomenon of psychological safety with Latinx counselor-in-training students within classroom settings, which can inform educational policies and practices on how counselor educators can strengthen curricula and programming to meet the needs and bring representation to Latinx counselors-in-training academic achievements, and successes through psychologically safe classroom environments.

Given your role and expertise in a CACREP-accredited master’s level program, I identified you as a potential resource to aid in the recruitment process of this research study. Would you be open to sharing the attached flyer or the link below with students who meet this study’s primary criteria?

This study is supervised by Dr. Matthew Joseph, an associate professor at Duquesne University. This study was approved by the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board.

In order to qualify for participation, participants must: (a) currently be enrolled in a CACREP-accredited counselor education master’s program in the United States, (b) currently in the practicum or internship stage, (c) be at least 18 years old, (d) identify as Latinx, and (e) must be willing to participate in a 45–60-minute interview about your experiences with psychological safety in the classroom. The interview will be conducted in English. [Note: Participants will not be asked about their immigration status.] At the end of the interview, participants will receive a $20 Amazon or Starbucks electronic gift card for participating in this study.

Thank you for your time and consideration in assisting me in this dissertation project. If you have any questions or concerns, you are welcome to contact me at rodriguezfl@duq.edu or 484-538-7993.

To facilitate the interview, please click on the link below to be directed to the full informed consent, brief demographic form, and the interview scheduling application. You are under no obligation to start or to continue this study. You can withdraw at any time without penalty or consequence by not completing the study or leaving the survey unfinished. Any survey that is
unfinished will be considered withdrawn. By consenting to participation, found in the following link, you acknowledge that you have been fully informed about the procedures listed in the consent. You understand what has been asked of you and the benefits and risks of participation. You agree that you are 18 years of age or older, meet the indicated participation criteria, and are participating freely and voluntarily.

[https://forms.gle/XjhwvvvHfcZWKSce7]

Sincerely,

Felishatee Rodriguez, LPC, NCC
She/Her/Hers
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Counseling, Psychology, & Special Education
Duquesne University
rodriguezf1@duq.edu
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE:

Feel my story: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of Latinx counselors-in-training experiences with psychological safety viewed through a Latino Critical framework

INVESTIGATOR:

Felishatee Rodriguez, LPC, NCC
She/Her/Hers
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Counseling, Psychology, & Special Education
Duquesne University
484-538-7993
rodriguezf1@duq.edu

ADVISOR:

Dr. Matthew Joseph, Ph.D.
he/him/his
Associate Professor
Department of Counseling, Psychology, & Special Education
Duquesne University
josephm4@duq.edu

SOURCE OF SUPPORT:

This study is being performed as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Counselor Education and Supervision in the School of Education at Duquesne University.

STUDY OVERVIEW:

Participation in this study includes completing an informed consent form, a brief demographic form, and one 45–60-minute interview on your experience with psychological safety in classroom environments as a Latinx counselor-in-training (CIT). This study aims to explore how you define and experience psychological safety in the classroom as a Latinx CIT in CACREP-
accredited master’s level programs. The findings have the potential to inform educational policies and practices on how counselor educators can strengthen curricula and programming to meet the needs and bring representation to Latinx CITs’ academic achievements and successes through psychologically safe classroom environments. I am expecting a total of 8+ participants, as reached by saturation.

PURPOSE:

You are being asked to participate in a research project investigating Latinx counselor-in-training (CIT) students within classroom settings in CACREP master’s programs. The purpose of this study is to address a gap in knowledge by exploring the phenomenon of psychological safety with Latinx CITs students within classroom settings in CACREP master’s programs. Within the interview process, I hope to explore how you define and have or are currently experiencing psychological safety in classroom environments, as a Latinx CIT.

In order to qualify for participation, you must:

- (a) Currently be enrolled in a CACREP-accredited counselor education master’s program in the United States
- (b) currently be in the practicum or internship stage
- (c) be at least 18 years old
- (d) identify as Latinx
- (e) must be willing to participate in a 45–60-minute interview about your experiences with psychological safety in the classroom. The interview will be conducted in English. [Note: You will not be asked about your immigration status.]

PARTICIPANT PROCEDURES:

You are invited to participate in a research study that explores Latinx master’s level students’ experiences of psychological safety in classroom environments.

If you provide your consent to participate:

- a. You will be asked to sign an Informed Consent form, which will acknowledge your participation in this study.
- b. You will be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire.
- c. You will be asked to participate in one interview, that will be 45-60 minutes and audio and/or video recorded, conducted by the principal investigator.

With your written and verbal consent, the interview will be audio and/or video recorded, and transcribed. Additionally, to provide voice and representation to your experience, the researcher will use direct quotes in this study. No names or identifiable information will be used in the direct quotes. Any names and identifying information will not be released, and participant names will be provided with pseudonyms (fictional names) to ensure that you cannot be identified. If you feel uncomfortable using names, you may say, “my peer,” “my friend,” “my professor,” “my group,” etc. Interview questions will focus on the participant’s experiences with psychological safety in classroom environments.
RISKS AND BENEFITS:

There are minimal perceived risks for your participation in this study, but no greater than those encountered in everyday life. Participation in this study will hold a similar encounter as those encountered in a usual classroom discussion or classroom experiential activity. During the interview, you may choose to skip and not answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable. You will be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire, if any of these questions make you uncomfortable you may skip the question. If any of the questions trigger stress or some other psychological effect, you may contact, SAMHSA’s National Helpline, at 1-800-662-(4357) or Crisis Text Line at www.crisistextline.org Text “HOME” to 741741. Only the principal researcher and her committee members will have access to the written and taped materials. The principal researcher is bound to make every effort to keep data as secure and confidential as possible. All data will be coded, password-protected, files will be kept in password-protected folders, and sign-in to the laptop and files will require two-factor authentication, and securely stored to be used for professional purposes only. The possible benefits of this study include the study adding to the knowledge base within CACREP counselor education programs. The information collected may not directly benefit the participant in this study, but it has the potential to bring forth representation and meaning of the participant’s experience. Your participation in this study will offer valuable information in further understanding the experiences of Latinx CITs and how they define psychological safety in classroom environments. This research may contribute to understanding the Latinx CACREP master’s level experiences in classroom environments, which has the potential to improve the higher education classroom and curriculum practices and bring representation to the Latinx participant’s stories.

COMPENSATION:

Participants will receive a $20 Amazon or Starbucks electronic gift card at the end of the 45–60-minute interview for their participation in this study.

There is no cost for you to participate in this research study.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Your participation in this study, and any identifiable personal information you provide, will be kept confidential to every extent possible, and will be destroyed three years after the data collection is completed. Your name will never appear in this study or publication thereof. All data will be coded, password-protected, files will be kept in password-protected folders, and sign-in to the laptop and files would require two-factor authentication, and securely stored for professional purposes only. Due to the researcher meeting with the participants during the interview process via Zoom, anonymity will not be possible in this study. However, the researcher will use pseudonyms to protect the participants' identities. When recordings are transcribed, all identifying information will be removed and you will be identified in the research records by a pseudonym (false name). If you mention anyone by name, those names will be changed, along with your name. If you feel uncomfortable using names, you may say, “my peer,” “my friend,” “my professor,” “my group,” etc.
RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:

You are under no obligation to start or continue this study. You can withdraw at any time without penalty or consequence. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to withdraw from this study, the data collected, including electronic documents and recordings, will be destroyed within 24 hours. You are welcome to ask any questions or address any concerns you may have with the researcher before you decide to participate in this study.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS:

A summary of the results of this study will be provided to you at no cost. You may request this summary by contacting the researchers and requesting it. The information provided to you may not be your individual responses, but rather a summary of what was discovered during the research project as a whole.

FUTURE USE OF DATA:

Any identifiable information collected in this study will not be used for future research studies, nor will it be provided to other researchers. Data collected from this study will be destroyed within three years of data collection.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT:

I have read this informed consent form and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, for any reason without any consequences. Based on this, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that if I have any questions about my participation in this study, I may contact the principal researcher, Felishatee Rodriguez, at rodriguezf1@duq.edu, who will answer my questions. I may also contact the advisor, Dr. Matthew Joseph, at josephm4@duq.edu.

As part of the human subject research policies and procedures, principal investigators are required to adhere to the research protocols of the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

If I have any questions regarding my rights and protections as a subject in this study, I can contact Dr. David Delmonico, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at (412)-396-4032 or at irb@duq.edu.

Video and/or audio recording is part of this research. Only the principal researcher and her committee members will have access to the written and taped materials. Within three years of data collection, all information that matches up to individual participants, including the audio and video recording, with their responses will be destroyed.

Please check one:

(   ) I give my consent to be audio and video recorded.
( ) I give my consent to only being audio recorded.
( ) I do NOT consent to be audio or video recorded.

I will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Your signature below means that this study has been discussed with you, the researcher has answered your questions, and you agree to be a participant in this study.

____________________________________________          __________________
Participant’s Signature                               Date

____________________________________________          __________________
Principal Investigator Signature                      Date
Appendix F: Brief Demographic Information Questionnaire (Google Form)

Thank you for your participation in this study. Please fill out the following brief demographic information questionnaire to facilitate the interview. Once you complete this demographic information questionnaire, Click submit. [Note: Before you click submit, ensure that you have chosen an interview time and date that meets your scheduling needs. You will receive a confirmation email with your chosen date and time.]

1. First and Last Name:
2. University Email Address:
3. Pseudonym (a false name you would prefer to use instead of the actual name):
4. Please enter your university email address to be eligible for an interview:
5. Pronouns:
6. Gender:
7. Age:
8. Race:
9. Ethnicity (Must self-identify as Latinx to participate):
10. Nationality/Country of Origin:
11. Parent’s Nationality/Country of Origin:
12. Name of CACREP Master’s Program (Must be enrolled in a CACREP master’s program in this United States to participate):
13. What phase of the master’s process are you currently in?
   a. Currently in coursework before practicum [Not eligible for study].
   b. Currently enrolled and participating in practicum.
   c. Currently enrolled and participating in internship.
   d. I have completed practicum/internship but am still enrolled in the CACREP master’s program.
14. Program concentration (e.g., Clinical Mental Health Counseling, School Counseling):
15. The number of years in the CACREP master’s level Program:
16. Before submitting this survey, please click the link below to schedule the 45-60 minute interview. IMPORTANT NOTE: Please return to this page and click Submit after scheduling your interview.

https://doodle.com/meeting/participate/id/bDRr7MKe

Thank you for completing this brief demographic information questionnaire. Your time and participation are valued and will help build the body of knowledge regarding the psychological safety of Latinx CITs enrolled in master's-level CACREP programs.
Appendix G: Interview Protocol

Interview Schedule: Latinx CITs’ experiences of psychological safety (45-60 minutes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Interview Began:</th>
<th>Time Interview Ended:</th>
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<td>Date:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant Name:</td>
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<td>Participant Email:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant Pseudonym:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant Pronouns:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ethical Considerations and Building Rapport

Hello, thank you for taking the time to join me today. My name is Felishatee Rodriguez, and I am a doctoral student in the Counselor Education and Supervision program at Duquesne University. I appreciate your voluntary participation in this study.

To confirm, Can I please have your name? I see the email you listed on the demographic form is [INSERT EMAIL]. Is this correct? Additionally, you stated that your pronouns are [INSERT PRONOUNS]. Is this correct? The pseudonym you listed for this study is [INSERT PSEUDONYM]. Is this correct?

Before we begin, I would like to review the components to be eligible for the study:

In order to qualify for participation, you must:

(a) Currently be enrolled in a CACREP-accredited counselor education master’s program in the United States [INSERT NAME OF PROGRAM]
(b) currently be in the practicum or internship stage [In practicum? In internship?]
(c) be at least 18 years old
(d) identify as Latinx [Yes/ No]
(e) Must be willing to participate in a 45–60-minute interview about your experiences with psychological safety in the classroom. The interview will be conducted in English.[Note: You will not be asked about your immigration status.]

The purpose of this study is to explore how Latinx counselors-in-training (CITs) experience psychological safety within classroom environments while enrolled in CACREP-accredited master’s degree programs in the United States. This information could help build the knowledge base in counselor education concerning how Latinx CITs experience psychological safety in classroom environments and inform counselor educators’ efforts to cultivate psychologically safe spaces and strengthen curricula and programming to meet the needs and bring representation to Latinx CITs.

If at any time I ask you a question that you do not want to answer, you can skip that question. If you mention anyone by name, those names will be changed, along with your name. If you feel uncomfortable using names, you may say, “my peer,” “my friend,” “my professor,” “my group,” etc.

To obtain your verbal consent, this interview will be recorded. Can I move forward and record this interview? [STOP AND ALLOW THE PARTICIPANT TO ANSWER.] Thank you.

While you are speaking, I may be taking notes because I want to be as accurate as I can be and ensure to represent your voice. Are you okay with me taking notes as you speak?
The approximate time for this interview is 45-60 minutes. At the 45-minute mark, I might stop you to acknowledge that we have 15 minutes to wrap up the interview. If either of us freezes or the zoom video accidentally drops, you can always join the session again. As a reminder, any identifying information, including your name, will not be used in any reports or publications that result from this study. You have the right to stop the interview at any time, without any pressure from me or further consequences. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

As you answer the questions, I would like you to consider your identity as a Latinx CIT within the classroom environment.

The time now is [Insert time] I will now begin with the first question.

**Interview Questions Guide:**

1. Can you tell me about your experience as a Latinx counselor-in-training in a CACREP-accredited master’s degree program?
2. How would you define psychological safety as a Latinx counselor-in-training?
   a. Amy Edmondson (1999) defines psychological safety as the ability to take interpersonal risks without the concern of being humiliated, dismissed, overlooked, or shut down by others, whether that be peers, instructors, tutors, or mentors.
   b. Reflection on Edmondson’s definition of psychological safety as a Latinx CIT
3. Can you tell me about your experience of psychological safety in the classroom?
   a. What helped you feel psychologically safe?
   b. What did not help you feel psychologically safe?
4. Can you tell me about your experience with making mistakes in the classroom? (Edmondson, 1999)
   a. How did your peers respond?
   b. How did the leader(s) in the room respond? (e.g., instructor, professor, supervisor, tutor)?
   c. How did you feel about their responses?
   d. Did you ever feel judged or humiliated by others in the classroom for making that mistake?
5. Can you tell me about your experience with bringing up concerns or difficult topics in the classroom? (Edmondson, 1999)
   a. How did your peers respond?
   b. How did the leader(s) in the room respond? (e.g., instructor, professor, supervisor, tutor)?
   c. How did you feel about their responses?
   d. Did you ever feel like you were unable to discuss concerns or difficult topics in the classroom?
6. Can you tell me about your experience where you felt you could be yourself in the classroom, even if you felt you were different from others? (Edmondson, 1999)
   a. How did your peers respond?
   b. How did the leader(s) in the room respond? (e.g., instructor, professor, supervisor, tutor)?
c. How did you feel about their responses?
d. Did you ever experience feeling rejected for being different from others?

7. Can you tell me about a time you felt safe to take risks in the classroom? (Edmondson, 1999)
   a. How did your peers respond?
   b. How did the leader(s) in the room respond? (e.g., instructor, professor, supervisor, tutor)?
   c. How did you feel about their responses?
   d. Did you ever not feel safe taking risks in the classroom?

8. Can you tell me about a time you asked your peers for help? (Edmondson, 1999)
   a. How did your peers respond?
   b. How did you feel about their responses?
   c. Have you ever felt it difficult to ask your peers for help?
   d. Have you asked your leaders for help? How did they respond?

9. Can you tell me about a time your efforts in the classroom were intentionally undermined? (Edmondson, 1999)?
   a. How did your peers respond?
   b. How did the leader(s) in the room respond? (e.g., instructor, professor, supervisor, tutor)?
   c. How did you feel about their responses?

10. Can you tell me about a time your unique skills and talents were valued in the classroom? (Edmondson, 1999)
    a. How did your peers respond?
    b. How did the leader(s) in the room respond? (e.g., instructor, professor, supervisor, tutor)?
    c. How did you feel about their responses?
    d. Did you ever feel like your unique skills and talents were not valued?

11. How would you describe the influence of psychological safety on your openness within the classroom?
    a. Latinx Culture?

12. Given your experiences of when you have felt psychologically safe and psychologically unsafe, as a Latinx CIT, what suggestions might you have for how instructors, peers, and higher education institutions can create environments that are more psychologically safe?

13. Is there any information you, as a Latinx CIT, feel is important that we did not cover?

This concludes our interview. As a reminder, I will send you a member checking email in a few weeks, which will ask you to review if I interpreted this interview correctly. You can respond with a simple yes, no, or expand on what you would like me to change, whatever works best for you. This is to ensure I represent your voice as accurately as possible. Is that okay with you?
If you have some time, I would like to send you the $20 gift card for conducting this interview. Would you like a Starbucks or Amazon gift card? [WAIT FOR RESPONSE] To confirm, your email address is [CONFIRM EMAIL]. You are welcome to check your email to ensure you received the gift card.

Thank you again for taking the time to participate in this study. Your time is valued. Should you have any questions regarding this interview, please feel free to contact me at my email address: rodriguezfl@duq.edu.
Appendix H: Member Checking Email

Dear [Insert Participant Name],

Thank you for your participation in the 45–60-minute interview. At this time, the transcription and the themes have been completed. To ensure accuracy and bring representation to your voice, I have attached a summary of your experiences of psychological safety in classroom environments as a Latinx CIT.

Have I accurately represented and interpreted your voice in this interview?

Have I accurately represented and interpreted your voice in the assigned themes?

Do you need clarity on the themes, or would you like to change anything?

I am happy to make modifications to ensure that I honor your experience and provide an accurate representation.

You are welcome to respond to this email, schedule a Zoom, or schedule a phone call.

As a reminder, all email threads will be destroyed at the completion of this dissertation study.

Sincerely,

Felishatee Rodriguez, LPC, NCC
She/Her/Hers
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