

EXPLORING CULTURALLY RELEVANT RESPONSES TO
LATINX STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

by

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DISSERTATION

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to Travis, my wonderful spouse. Thank you for keeping the house clean and my spirits high during one of the most challenging times in my life. I love you.

ABSTRACT

EXPLORING CULTURALLY RELEVANT RESPONSES TO
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Social workers have an ethical obligation to challenge systemic oppression. Within the context of Latinx college students, there are many systemic barriers that negatively impact their mental health. Previous research focuses on identifying individual characteristics among Latinx students that promote academic success and psychological wellbeing. However, it is important to hold postsecondary education accountable for creating more inclusive environments that welcome the increased enrollment of Latinx students. The following dissertation explores culturally relevant responses to Latinx college student mental health. The first article is a qualitative interpretive meta-synthesis that explores how Latinx-specific programming shapes ethnic identity and psychological wellbeing among Latinx students. The second article analyzes counseling center websites to determine whether websites include information and programming specific to Latinx students attending 4-year public Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). The final article explores the perspectives of counselors at 4-year public HSIs to understand how they perceive and respond to Latinx mental psychological distress. The results of each article are summarized and implications for social work research, practice, and policy are considered.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

There are an estimated 2.4 million Latinx students enrolled at four-year postsecondary institutions, which is a 287% increase since 2000 (Mora, 2022). While this growth is impressive, barriers continue to interfere with degree attainment (Tajalli & Ortiz, 2018). Mental health concerns are common for college students, but Latinx students are more at risk for developing severe mental health symptoms and elevated levels of suicidal ideation (Madubata, 2020; Silva & Orden, 2018). Previous research identifies the campus environment as a strong influence on Latinx mental health. Even with higher enrollment rates, there are still accounts of on-campus discrimination (Serpas, 2021) and unwelcoming interactions with faculty and staff (Stebbleton & Alexio, 2015) that can make Latinx students question whether they belong in academia (Koo, 2021).

If Latinx students are skeptical of on-campus support due to poor interactions, these experiences may also interfere with students connecting with college counseling centers. Lipson et al. (2022) confirmed a utilization gap between Latinx college students and White counterparts. While multiple factors contribute to this gap, one concern reported is counselors will not understand cultural differences (Shea et al., 2019). A change within higher education needs to take place—one that makes students feel welcome and safe to explore their emotions.

Research on Latinx college students provides insight into individual protective factors against difficult campus environments (Gloria et al., 2005; Lara, 2009; Madera, 2009). However, this frequently used narrative in research places more responsibility on Latinx students to conform to oppressive university standards rather than identifying how campus environments can reduce barriers to success (Campbell, 2017). With the rise in Latinx enrollment and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) (campuses that have at least 25% Latinx full-time, undergraduate enrollment), HSI scholars are questioning whether campuses are actually

“serving” Latinx students (Vargas & Villa-Palomino, 2018). This shift puts more focus on identifying ways that higher education can create more inclusive environments.

The focus of this dissertation is to explore ways that college campuses can respond to mental health concerns in culturally relevant ways. The first article shares the results of a Qualitative Interpretive Meta-Synthesis of literature focused on participants discussing ethnic identity exploration within Latinx-specific university programming. The second and third articles examine counseling center efforts to provide culturally relevant mental health services. A content analysis of HSI counseling center websites was conducted to explore whether HSI counseling centers were providing information and services specific to Latinx students. The final study interviewed ten mental health counselors at HSIs to understand how they perceive and respond to Latinx student psychological distress.

Relevance to Social Work

Social justice is a core value within the social work profession (NASW, 2021). Having a social justice lens means social work researchers have the ability to look at individual concerns within broader systems. There is already a wealth of knowledge regarding Latinx student mental health, but research on culturally relevant responses is just emerging. Social workers can be leaders in paradigm shifts that focus more on dismantling systemic barriers.

Social workers are also frequently employed within higher education. They are found throughout student affairs departments, including counseling centers. Having more evidence that focuses on inclusive campus environments may help social workers advocate for the development and implementation of culturally relevant programs within higher education.

Theoretical Foundations

Theoretical foundations were used to inform each article written in this dissertation. The first article used Ryff's and Keyes's (1995) six dimensions of psychological wellbeing to understand how ethnic identity exploration and wellbeing relate throughout Latinx-specific programming. The six dimensions were applied to analyzed qualitative articles related to Latinx-specific programming. Using theoretically-driven coding created clearer analysis of quotations related to ethnic identity exploration.

As mentioned previously, HSI scholars are shifting research paradigms to focus on organizational structure of university campuses. Garcia et al. (2019) recently developed a framework that identified university characteristics and student outcomes that are indicators of "serving" Latinx students. The second article used this multidimensional framework for "Servingness" to operationalize variables that would represent serving when reviewing HSI counseling websites. This framework was especially beneficial to developing a coding strategy and data analysis strategy.

The final article analyzed qualitative interviews of HSI mental health counselors. The aim of this research was to understand how counselors perceive and respond to Latinx student psychological distress. The semi-structured interview questions were informed by a theoretical model developed specifically for college counselors (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). The model provides structure for the attitudes, knowledge, and skills when providing counseling to Latinx students. Within this model, four psychosociocultural factors are suggested for counselors to consider including the university environment, ethnic identity, acculturation, and social support.

Overview of Important Literature

This section summarizes important literature, but each article has its own literature review that further explores relevant information. For the first article, it is important to note that ethnic identity is often identified as a protective factor against psychological distress for Latinx college students (Chang et al., 2017). However, it is unclear if universities place value on ethnic identity exploration or prioritize it as a nonacademic outcome. University campuses are shaping ethnic identity regardless of intention (Verduzco Reyes, 2018). Therefore, it may be beneficial for universities to consider holding intentional spaces for ethnic identity exploration in the classroom or in student affairs programming.

While there is no known programming that intentionally focuses on ethnic identity exploration, Latinx-specific programming such as ethnic studies courses, study abroad programs, or learning cohorts for Latinx students appear to provide a more intentional space to discuss ethnic identity. Reviewing literature on ethnic identity exploration within Latinx-specific programming may offer guidance on further development of intentional spaces within higher education.

The second article explores whether HSI counseling center websites include information specific to Latinx students. A review of the literature reveals an ongoing service utilization gap among the Latinx college students (Lipson et al., 2022). Previous studies report Latinx students may feel wary of interacting with on-campus services (Constantine, 2002). This is consistent with literature that reports concerns that counselors will not understand Latinx culture or be dismissive of student concerns (Shea et al., 2019). To counteract this uncertainty, college counseling centers need to be proactive in communicating a welcoming environment. Counseling

center websites are most likely the first point of contact with the counseling center. Because of this, website communications that are targeted towards Latinx students should be examined.

The final article of this dissertation attempts to understand perspectives of mental health counselors within HSIs regarding Latinx student mental health concerns. The relevant literature for this article is similar to the second article. Latinx students are more likely to experience a traumatic event than they are likely to attend counseling services (Menendez, 2020). Based on previous studies, Latinx students are at risk of experiencing discrimination on campus (Serpas, 2021) and struggle with balancing family and school (Vasquez-Salgado et al., 2014). It is important that counselors provide culturally validating services to increase the likelihood of Latinx students participating in ongoing therapy (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). Counselors working with Latinx students should be prepared to discuss cultural factors and refrain from influencing students to make decisions based on Western, individualistic perspectives that are deeply rooted in mental health services.

Research Questions

Article One

There is strong evidence that a strong sense of ethnic identity promotes psychological wellbeing among Latinx college students. Because the campus environment shapes ethnic identity, it is important for higher education to consider ways to provide intentional spaces for ethnic identity exploration. Intentional ethnic identity exploration is under-researched, and there are no known university programs that specifically intend to shape ethnic identity. However, previous research on ethnic identity includes student perspectives on ethnic identity when participating in Latinx-specific university programming. Using qualitative interpretive meta-

synthesis, the current study aims to understand how Latinx-specific programming shapes ethnic identity and psychological wellbeing for Latinx student participants.

RQ1. How does Latinx-specific programming on college campuses shape ethnic identity and psychological wellbeing among Latinx participants?

Article Two

HSIs should prioritize messaging that is welcoming for Latinx students. Counseling center websites are often the first point of contact for students considering the use of mental health services on campus. It is unclear whether HSI counseling centers communicate culturally relevant information or have culturally relevant programming. The current study will identify whether 4-year public HSI counseling websites communicate information specific to Latinx students through content analysis.

RQ1. To what extent do 4-year public HSI counseling websites communicate information specific to Latinx students?

RQ2. What external factors predict culturally relevant communication on 4-year public HSI counseling websites?

Article Three

Counselors within HSI counseling centers should provide culturally validating therapy. While there are some theoretical models for counselors on providing therapy to Latinx college students, little is known about the actual practices of college counselors. Using semi-structured qualitative interviews, article three will explore how counselors perceive and respond to Latinx mental health concerns.

RQ1. How do counselors within 4-year public HSIs perceive and respond to Latinx psychological distress?

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CHAPTER 2

HOW LATINX-SPECIFIC PROGRAMMING SHAPES ETHNIC IDENTITY AND
PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING AMONG LATINX COLLEGE STUDENTS: A
QUALITATIVE INTERPRETIVE META-SYNTHESIS

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ABSTRACT

Latinx college students are more likely to have severe mental health symptoms, and they are at a higher risk for suicidal ideation. Having a strong sense of ethnic identity is shown to be a protective factor for symptoms of depression and anxiety. A qualitative interpretive meta-synthesis was conducted to understand how Latinx-specific programming shapes ethnic identity and psychological wellbeing among Latinx students. A total of five articles were selected to review. Deductive thematic analysis was used to identify six new themes, which represented Ryff and Keyes's (1995) dimensions of psychological wellbeing. Recommendations for Improving Latinx-specific programming was discussed.

Keywords: ethnic identity, Latinx, psychological wellbeing, university programming, college mental health

How Latinx-specific Programming Shapes Ethnic Identity and Psychological Wellbeing Among Latinx College Students: A Qualitative Interpretive Meta-Synthesis

Mental health concerns for college students are rising in frequency and severity. A recent study reported depression among college students dramatically increased by 135% between 2013 and 2021 (Lipson et al., 2022). Since the COVID-19 pandemic, college students continue to report higher rates of psychological distress (Elharake et al., 2021). Pre-pandemic knowledge on college student mental health along with more recent reports of persistent symptoms are a major concern for researchers and mental health professionals. They anticipate mental health concerns will maintain in severity for college students (Liu et al., 2022). Due to resource constraints within college counseling centers, novel mental health interventions beyond traditional counseling services are necessary for addressing this issue.

The rise in mental health concerns overlaps with the growing number of Latinx student enrollment. There are currently 559 Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) in the U.S., a university status that is achieved when 25% or more of enrolled, full-time undergraduates are Latinx. The present number of HSIs is impressive when compared to the 137 total in 1990 (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, 2022). Even with the rise in enrollment, Latinx students still face challenges with academic success, and there is a degree attainment gap when compared to White students (Kang & García, 2021). These challenges can come from systemic barriers such as low sense of belonging on campus along with cultural norms such as pressure to prioritize school over family. These factors add stress to what is already a major life-transition and can contribute to elevated rates of suicidal ideation and self-harm among Latinx students (Chesin & Jeglic, 2012; Madubata, 2020).

The novel interventions mentioned earlier must also be culturally relevant to fit the needs of Latinx college students. Ethnic identity is consistently identified to influence psychological wellbeing among the Latinx community, yet it is unclear whether ethnic identity has been a measured outcome for university programming. Including opportunities for ethnic identity exploration could be an effective intervention for promoting student wellbeing. Unfortunately, there is a lack of known interventions outside of traditional counseling that promote exploration of ethnic identity. Furthermore, there is little knowledge on what components help develop or strengthen ethnic identity (Pabón Gautier, 2016).

Though there are no known university programs that evaluate ethnic identity, some ethnic identity development may occur when Latinx students are exposed to Latinx-specific programming. Further exploration is needed to understand the changes in ethnic identity and psychological wellbeing when Latinx students participate in Latinx-specific programming. Understanding how ethnic identity and wellbeing interact one another during Latinx-specific programming can help identify components to include in future programming. The purpose of this qualitative interpretive meta-synthesis is to understand how Latinx-specific programming shapes ethnic identity and psychological wellbeing among Latinx students.

Literature Review

Ethnic Identity and Latinx College Students

Ethnic identity refers to the relationship one has with their ethnic group that can include values, cultural traditions, and language (Phinney, 1992). It is often found to correlate with mental health and psychological wellbeing. For example, Oakey-Frost et al. (2021) found that lower sense of ethnic identity was associated with greater suicide risk among Latinx young

adults. Another study found that ethnic identity and participation in cultural practices predicted the likelihood of symptoms of depression and suicidal behavior (Chang, 2016). Ethnic identity is also associated with academic success among Latinx college students (Ong et al., 2006; Zarate et al., 2005).

Developing a sense of ethnic identity, particularly among marginalized individuals, is complex and happens over the course of a lifetime. However, there is an emphasis on exploration during adolescence and early adulthood due to new experiences such as cultural interactions, discrimination, or learning about historical oppression being catalysts for development (Phinney 1992). The campus environment provides opportunities to begin ethnic identity exploration. In fact, previous research indicates one's self-identification is influenced by on-campus interactions. Verduzco Reyes (2018) notes that the physical campus environment, classroom interactions, and diversity within the student body shape how Latinx students self-identify and how they come to understand their place within higher education. After interviewing Latinx college students about their first two years of college, Torres (2003) identified ethnic identity was underexplored before college and rapidly changed for students within the first two years of their university experience.

Literature around intentional ethnic identity exploration is lacking within the context of education. Exum and Colangelo (1980) encourage educators to incorporate discussions that encourage ethnic identity exploration within the classroom. Torres and Hernandez (2007) also recommend educators learn more about ethnic identity and how it is shaped within the classroom. Based on research recommendations, intentional ethnic identity exploration requires structured facilitation with faculty and staff leadership. Latinx-specific programming such as ethnic studies courses, study abroad programs, or facilitated learning cohorts offer insight on developing interventions focused on ethnic identity.

Psychological Wellbeing

The current study uses Ryff's and Keyes's (1995) model of psychological wellbeing to define Latinx student wellbeing. There are six dimensions of wellbeing that unite multiple frameworks developed by various social scientists. The six dimensions include self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, and autonomy (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The Ryff and Keyes (1995) model of wellbeing is used in many studies, some of which include ethnic identity. For example, one study found that ethnic identity predicted greater wellbeing among Latinx college students (French & Chavez, 2010).

The six dimensions have similar characteristics to the concept of ethnic identity. Both incorporate self-reflection and socialization that can inspire positive emotions regarding one's identity. While there is evidence that ethnic identity and wellbeing are connected, there is a lack of in-depth understanding on how they influence one another. Looking into how Latinx-specific programming shapes ethnic identity within each dimension of wellbeing can provide examples of how the two concepts overlap, possibly identifying guidelines for intentional ethnic identity exploration within higher education.

Using Pan-ethnic Labels

The use of pan-ethnic labels to identify people of Latin American descent, particularly within the United States, has a complex history that is rooted in White Supremacy (de Onis, 2017). There are several pan-ethnic labels used in research that are used to capture Latin-American lived experiences. For this study, the researcher chose to use Latinx as it is a gender-neutral term that considers queer and trans people of color. The author is aware that any term would not be inclusive of all people of Latin-American descent, and there is criticism around using any pan-ethnic label, including the term Latinx.

Method

The purpose of this qualitative interpretive meta-synthesis (QIMS) is to understand how Latinx-specific programming shapes ethnic identity and psychological wellbeing among Latinx students. QIMS was used for this study to understand the relationship between ethnic identity and wellbeing when Latinx students participate in Latinx-specific programming. Interpretive analysis balances the importance of highlighting individual experiences as well as the collective discourse about a particular phenomenon (Smith & Osborn, 2008). A QIMS applies this interpretive lens to systematic review of qualitative studies in a specific research area. Once a sample is selected for analysis, quotations are extracted from each article. The extracted quotations are reviewed individually and as a collective to gain a more in-depth understanding of the chosen topic (Aguirre & Bolton, 2013).

Previous scholars used QIMS to focus on issues primarily related to the field of social work and social justice, such as mental health services for incarcerated individuals (Frank, Praetorius, & Nordberg, 2018), childhood sexual abuse (Watkins-Kagebein et al., 2019), and women's experiences of intimate partner violence during pregnancy (Robinson et al., 2019). QIMS samples range from five qualitative studies (Schuman, 2016) to twenty-five (Kataja, Lantela, & Romakkaniemi, 2020). To the knowledge of this author, there are no QIMS studies examining how ethnic identity and wellbeing interact when Latinx college students participate in Latinx-specific university programming.

Instrumentation

Qualitative research identifies the researcher as the primary instrument, and through their interpretations, a deeper understanding of a phenomenon emerges (Creswell, 2007). Because the

researcher is the primary instrument, disclosure of professional and personal beliefs and experiences is necessary when considering the context of research analysis. The author was the primary instrument, identifying the sample and completing the analysis of the articles identified for this study.

Author's Statement

I am a licensed clinical social worker and a current doctoral student within a School of Social Work. My primary research interest is college student wellbeing. This interest is informed by my previous work as a counselor at a university counseling center. Listening to students struggle with a hostile campus environment resonated with my own mental health struggles that arose as I adjusted to college. I consider myself an insider of this research topic as I am a first-generation, Mexican-American college student. Latinx-specific programming as an undergraduate helped me find support during a tumultuous time in my life.

Sampling the Literature

A consultation with a university librarian assisted with search strategies, inclusion criteria, and search terms. Qualitative studies were identified through searches of online databases: Academic Search Complete, Anthropology Plus, ERIC, Educational Administration Abstracts, PSYCHInfo, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, and Social Work Abstracts. The key search terms were ethnic identity development, ethnic socialization, Latin*, Hispanic, Chican*, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, Columbian, Argentinian, South American, higher education, college, university, and post-secondary.

Qualitative studies pertaining to Latinx Latinx-specific programming at 4-year universities were included in this study. Latinx-specific programming included any course or on-

campus program that focused on a Latinx culture and was led by faculty or an on-campus department. Student organizations such as Latinx-specific clubs, fraternities, or sororities were excluded due to the focus on facilitated ethnic identity exploration. All studies were contained to 4-year universities within the United States. Specific dates were not included, as intentional interventions promoting ethnic identity development are under-researched. The search for qualitative studies included dissertations, theses, peer-reviewed articles, and books as all are relevant for analysis when conducting a QIMS (Aguirre & Bolton, 2013). Only studies written in English were included, and qualitative research without quotations from participants was excluded.

The initial search (see figure 1) rendered 110 studies. From the total, duplicates were removed, and titles and abstracts were screened, leaving 17 sources for further review. Reference lists of the 17 studies were screened to identify any additional studies that met inclusion criteria. This rendered one additional study to include in the full text read. Once the 18 studies were read, 13 more were excluded that did not meet inclusion criteria, and a final sample of 5 studies were identified for this QIMS.

Castillo-Montoya and Verduzco Reyes (2018) interviewed students enrolled in a course offered by the campus Latino Cultural Center. The two major components of the course included academic readings and service-learning. Gonzales (2019) examined narrative essays of a learning community specifically for Latinx students. Case and Hernandez (2013) explored student experiences with a leadership program for Latinx students offered at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Teranishi (2007) interviewed Latinx students who traveled to Mexico for a service-learning course. Finally, Raymondi (2005) spoke with five students over the course of a

year as they completed an Latinx-specific course followed by a semester-long study abroad trip to Senegal. Table 1 includes the list of selected studies and the characteristics of participants.

Figure 1. *Quorum Chart*

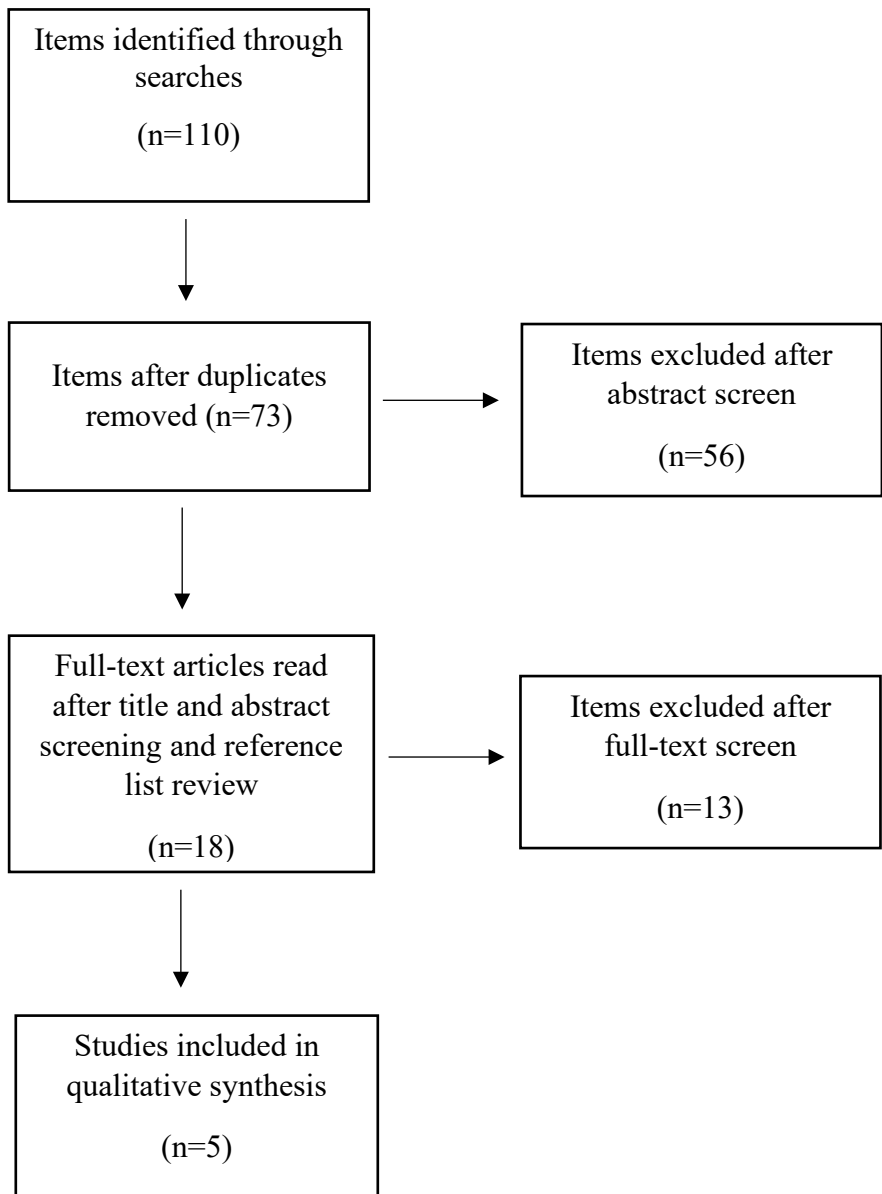


Table 1. Characteristics of studies included in the QIMS

Author	Qualitative Data Collection Method	(N)	Demographics of Respondents	Settings
Gonzales, 2019	Student Essays	30	Latinx students enrolled in Latino ethnic studies course	Public university in Midwestern U.S.
Castillo-Montoya & Verduzco Reyes, 2018	Open-ended survey and 1 classroom focus group	11	Latino/a students in academic course offered by a Latino Cultural Center	PWI in Northeast United States
Case & Hernandez, 2013	Individual interviews and 1 focus group	30	30 Latino/a students in leadership program; 26 first-generation college students; 24 had country of family of origin in Mexico; 26 were first-generation students	Private, liberal arts faith-based college in Northern Indiana
Teranishi, 2007	Journal Entries	11	10 female and 2 male university undergraduates with a majority of participants 2 nd , 3 rd , or 4 th generation U.S. citizens	Public University along the U.S. Southwest border; study abroad in Guanajuato, Mexico
Raymondi, 2005	Interviews, journals entries	5	4 female, 1 male university undergraduates; 1 st or 2 nd generation immigrants from Dominican Republic	Semester-long campus course at 4-year PWI (North Eastern United States); West Africa study abroad experience

Analysis

QIMS requires qualitative themes and quotations to be extracted from original studies and reviewed to synthesize new themes. Table 2 lists the original themes that were extracted

prior to synthesis. Deductive thematic analysis was used to synthesize new themes. Deductive analysis involves analyzing qualitative data through theoretically-driven coding (Pearse, 2019). The codebook was developed prior to coding and included all six dimensions of psychological wellbeing (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Several rounds of coding continued until the newly synthesized themes were identified across all the reviewed literature. Extracted quotations were organized and coded using NVIVO qualitative software.

Table 2. *Theme Extraction*

Study	Themes
Gonzales, 2019	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Small talk 2. Familismo: between mentors and mentees 3. The personal narrative essay: identity and family
Castillo-Montoya & Verduzco Reyes, 2018	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Latino Identity Inquiry 2. Course Contributed to Students' Critical Consciousness 3. Sociopolitical Capacity Around Latino Education Equity 4. Critical Mass of Latino Students and Faculty
Case & Hernandez, 2013	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Awakening (1st year) 2. Pride (1st year) 3. Affirmation (1st year) 4. Elevated Ethnic Consciousness (2nd Year) 5. Valuing the Ethnicity of Others (2nd Year) 6. Giving Back (2nd Year) 7. Acceptance (3rd Year) 8. From Knowledge to Engagement (3rd Year) 9. Contribution of the CITL Program (4th Year) 10. Bicultural Leaders (4th Year)
Teranishi, 2017	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self and Identity Development 2. Relational Development 3. Awareness of structural inequalities 4. Connectedness to community
Raymondi, 2005	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Journal entries in Senegal 2. Journal entries after Senegal

Results

Analysis of quotations from original themes produced six new synthesized themes to further understand how ethnic identity exploration interacted with psychological wellbeing during Latinx-specific programming. These themes are based on the Ryff and Keyes (1995) dimensions of wellbeing and include: (1) Autonomy, (2) Environmental Mastery, (3) Personal Growth, (4) Positive Relations with Others, (5) Purpose in Life, (6) Self-Acceptance. Table 3 provides a summary of new themes identified from original themes.

Table 3. *Theme Synthesis*

Synthesized Themes	Original Themes Extracted
Autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirmation (Case & Hernandez, 2013) • From Knowledge to Engagement (Case & Hernandez, 2013) • Bicultural Leaders (Case & Hernandez, 2013) • Self and Identity Development (Teranishi, 2007) • Awareness of Structural Inequalities (Teranishi, 2007) • Journal Entries in Senegal (Raymondi, 2005) • Journal Entries After Senegal (Raymondi, 2005)
Environmental Mastery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familismo: Between mentors and mentees (Gonzales, 2019) • Pride (Case & Hernandez, 2013) • Affirmation (Case & Hernandez, 2013) • Contribution of the CITL Program (Case & Hernandez, 2013) • Bicultural Leaders (Case & Hernandez, 2013) • Connectedness to Community (Teranishi, 2007)
Personal Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latino Identity Inquiry (Castillo-Montoya & Verduzco Reyes, 2018) • Awakening (Case & Hernandez, 2013) • Elevated Ethnic Consciousness (Case & Hernandez, 2013) • Valuing the Ethnicity of Others (Case & Hernandez, 2013) • Bicultural Leaders (Case & Hernandez, 2013) • Self and Identity Development (Teranishi, 2007) • Journal Entries in Senegal (Raymondi, 2005) • Journal Entries After Senegal (Raymondi, 2005)
Positive Relations with Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirmation (Case & Hernandez, 2013) • Giving Back (Case & Hernandez, 2013) • From Knowledge to Engagement (Case & Hernandez, 2013) • Contribution of the CITL Program (Case & Hernandez, 2013) • Familismo: between mentors and mentees (Gonzales, 2019)

Purpose in Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The personal narrative essay: Identity and family (Gonzales, 2019) • Sociopolitical capacity around Latino educational equity (Castillo-Montoya & Verduzco Reyes, 2018) • Giving back (Case & Hernandez, 2013) • Connectedness to Community (Teranishi, 2007) • Journal Entries in Senegal (Raymondi, 2005) • Journal Entries After Senegal (Raymondi, 2005) • The personal narrative essay: Identity and family (Gonzales, 2019)
Self-Acceptance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pride (Case & Hernandez, 2013) • Affirmation (Case & Hernandez, 2013) • Acceptance (Case & Hernandez, 2013) • From knowledge to engagement (Case & Hernandez, 2013) • Self and identity development (Teranishi, 2007) • Connectedness to community (Teranishi, 2007)

Theme 1: Autonomy

Autonomy is essential to wellbeing as it is one's ability to resist social pressures and determine what ways of thinking and behaving are best for themselves (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Latinx children are exposed to discrimination at an early age that can lead to feeling ashamed of one's ethnicity. Ema was part of a program to promote Latinx student success through her school's Center for Intercultural Teaching and Learning (CITL). This program invited Latinx students to cultivate leadership skills and explore ethnic identity. Ema alluded to past experiences that communicated engaging with her ethnic identity was unfavorable. Since being in a space where her culture is viewed as a strength, she is no longer ashamed of her ethnicity regardless of past pressure to assimilate. She said,

I think it's been encouraging and I don't have to be embarrassed because other people think you're weird or something . . . [A CITL program leader] is showing me that everybody is different, I guess, to be proud of your culture . . . hearing other people say that they're not ashamed either. So it's like cool, there are two people who aren't ashamed to eat this food that other people might call weird. (Case & Hernandez, 2013, p. 82)

Isabel also hints at past dissonance regarding her ethnicity. Her self-acceptance comes only after

being exposed to an accepting environment. When discussing this change, she said,

I feel like I have been more close to my heritage or culture more than I was back [at the beginning of the year]. Being in CITL has helped me realize that it's okay to be different, like you know racially, from other people and like embrace it and to also help people in your community who are like that too. (Case & Hernandez, 2013, p. 82)

For some students, participation in Latinx-specific programming helped them identify parts of their culture that may go against personal desires or beliefs. Zena expresses concern when two of her classmates decided to stay home instead of going on the community service trip to Guanajuato, Mexico. She believes that strong family connection is important, but always prioritizing family can be harmful to one's own growth. Attending this trip was a way to express her autonomy.

Two members of the class laud themselves for staying home and caring for their mothers. That is beautiful, to give back to your parents, but when the tie becomes a crutch for not leaving or creating one's identity, then I think unity backfires. Too many families... hold each other back. Some of my friends' parents would not let them leave for college even though it was their ardent desire.... Holding them back in order to "protect" them is harming them.... Family unity is the most beautiful aspect of the Mexican culture, but it is also the most detrimental. Love should be expansive and free—strength but not control. (Teranishi, 2007, p. 63)

Dominga grew up hearing messages from family that denied a part of her racial identity. Still, after her trip to Senegal she is dedicated to learning more about her African ancestry regardless of how her family feels. Embracing her African ancestry is part of being autonomous.

It is hard for my family to understand why I want to embrace Blackness. ... They want me to be less Afro-Latina, more American. I think it comes back to the fact that Dominicans have been conditioned throughout history to hate their Blackness... I guess the government imposed that on them. And even when they come to the United States, Blackness is seen as such a negative thing, so for me to embrace it, it's confusing to them. I became very much aware of my African ancestry after my trip to Senegal. ... I wanted to learn more of this aspect of my identity; an aspect that was kept from me for almost all of my life (because in school I was taught that Spain was Dominican Republic's motherland and that Latinos are not Black nor White, just Latino). I began reading on the Black experience in America, researching the actual history of the Dominican Republic. (Raymondi, 2004, p. 181)

Social pressures to assimilate don't always come from social interactions. Maria shares her struggle with government forms limiting options on race and ethnicity for Latinx individuals. After discussing race and ethnicity with faculty and peers, she chose not to answer the race category on the U.S. Census because the choices were not representative of how she defines herself. She said, "I did not fill it out as a White. It's like, I am not white." (Case & Hernandez, 2013, p. 85)

Theme 2: Environmental Mastery

Environmental mastery is the ability to engage in spaces that fit personal needs and values (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Using cultural wealth was shown to help students navigate the campus environment in ways that are not consistently recognized. For Olivia, participating in a leadership program promoted authenticity in any space on campus while attending a predominantly White institution:

So just being aware of who you are and where you come from just gives [awareness that] you add a little to the whole campus diversity. . . not rejecting [your ethnicity] but you know, yeah [I'm] Mexican, but it's not a big deal. To me it's important you know it makes up who I am. (Case & Hernandez, 2013, p. 81)

One peer mentor involved with a Latinx learning community eased a mother's concern by tapping into the cultural value of strong family connection. He communicates that family is a priority, and his role as a mentor is much like nurturing a younger sibling.

Yeah, like this one time, I was talking with a mother, who said to me, 'This is my only daughter.' And, she said she had seen the movies about all the parties and the drinking, and I said, 'Doña, I have a sister, too, and I understand your fear.' I tried to counter the machista and the stereotypes, by saying, 'I'm going to be there, ok? So, if you have any questions whatsoever, here's my number. You can call me. If you need me to go to the library to make sure she's at the library, I'll go to the library for you and make sure she's safe.' (Gonzales, 2019, p. 944)

Susana was in the leadership program for four years, and, as a senior, she was able to describe the program's impact as she navigates student teaching at an elementary school. Susana

takes an opportunity to question the current learning environment because of her knowledge of Spanish grammar.

Just being sensitive to different cultures and realizing that if your kid might not be writing his sentences properly, look at the Spanish translations. They'll translate something literally and it'll be backwards in English. One of my teachers was yelling at the kid, she's like, "You keep doing this wrong!" and I'm like, "Well his first language is Spanish." . . . Daily we're doing that and you have to be flexible. (Case & Hernandez, 2013, p. 86)

Theme 3: Personal Growth

Challenging one's perspective and being open to new experiences are components of personal growth (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Alex shares his excitement to hear other perspectives from peers as they discuss Latinx identity. He states, "Class today was very interesting. Once again different points of view make discussion more juicy. I am learning from each of my classmates, and I hope that everyone is learning from me" (Teranishi, 2007, p. 61).

Students were able to explore their ethnic identity in-depth when given the structured space. Some students started to deconstruct their original ideas of their ethnic identity after being exposed to other perspectives. Rafael shared how his thoughts on ethnic identity have been challenged since attending a Latinx identity specific course. He said, "It made me question what exactly is 'latino identity.' What factors influence the construction of latino identity, this includes learning about latinos in education." In this statement, Rafael acknowledged a sociological understanding of Latinx identity; that ethnic identity is socially constructed. He followed this statement by describing the demographics of the class: "You can see the variety of latinos. It has become interesting to hear my classmates' ideas about latino identity, which is influenced by their identity" (Castillo-Montoya & Verduzco Reyes, 2018, p. 8).

Personal growth was related to individual development and an appreciation of the ethnicity and culture of peers. Enrique grew past his biases as he moved through the leadership program. He states,

I definitely see a different side of people now. When I was a freshman, I used to judge a lot of people just based off of their ethnicity and stuff. Now, this year, I can definitely relate to a lot of those people. (Case & Hernandez, 2013, p. 83)

Ernesto let go of similar thoughts related to Mexican families after his trip to Guanajuato as well. He said,

The stereotypes I had of the Guanajuato families and culture proved to be wrong. The family I am staying with is very traditional and very united. This is very different from my life at home. My life in Laredo is very independent from my family and parents... The closeness between my extended family and myself is very prominent; however, everyone is independent doing their "own thing." For example, me leaving home to study abroad in Guanajuato is one of those independent things that some people of Guanajuato would not do. (Teranishi, 2007 p. 59)

Students also challenged thoughts on current systems. After attending a lecture on the history of education, Dominga had ideas relating to herself as well as society.

We are currently having an interesting debate. We are at a lecture on the educational school systems in Senegal and how colonialism has affected this. The lecturer is extremely informative and has got us thinking about education on a societal and political level. Colonialism has F---ED up so many things. Not only has colonialism brain washed many into thinking that White is superior to all, it has also distorted many cultures...Everyone is affected by colonialism, one way or another!! Me, for example! Who am I and what is my role in life? This seems elementary to many, but difficult for me!! I am in search for answers, and am finding these journeys emotionally draining...When will this bulls--- end?! When will the oppressor realize that they hold great powers!! When will skin color become more a phenotypical attribute, and not a basis of power and mobility? Our generation is trying to change the current situation for people of color, and humanity in general. This made me think what role do we play?...What will we focus on? Educating the masses on the control governments have over us, implementing policy to try and change discriminatory practices on various levels of society or perhaps focusing on the truth. Whatever it is, I know our people will be appreciative. Humanity is in dire need of guidance and renaissance. (Raymondi, 2005, p. 189)

Theme 4: Positive Relations with Others

Every article reviewed for this QIMS had at least one participant discuss the positive relationships developed from Latinx-specific programming. Positive relationships are meaningful connections in which an individual feels supported by someone while also giving support (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). One peer mentor shares a significant experience that goes beyond academic support for his mentee.

I was fortunate enough to go to a funeral with one of my current students, because he felt comfortable enough that when his grandmother died, his family said, ‘Can you come? I’d be grateful if you could spend that time with our family.’ (Gonzales, 2019, p. 944)

Participants in study abroad programs felt a strong connection with peers that appear to last beyond the experience. After Ana returned from Senegal, she started a graduate program. While she adjusts to a new environment, she reaches out to her peers for support.

Greetings Senegal Family,

Hope and pray each night that U are all doing great. I am in Big City College at the moment, like the rest, completely overwhelmed with work, trying to get adjusted to the city, trying to get used to the school (and the fact that I am the token in my classes) and trying to get used to this city, which I should say is trying hard to be NYC, but has nothing on us. This is the fourth week of school and I am hoping for December break already, this truly is different from being away at Wood University, being that the support system we had (of people of color, EOP, and great faculty) is something that do not have here. But hey, I am here to accomplish a Master's degree, so for I have to work toward that goal and allow everything else to fall into place with time. But I must say that I truly do miss U all, and hope to see everyone very soon, we should really have a reunion dinner. (Raymondi, 2005, p. 130-131)

Sara shares a similar longing for her classmates only after one day of being at home. She is committed to maintaining her relationships formed in Guanajuato:

Today I woke up in my bed in my room and called out, “Selma?” Then realized that I was in my own house...Tomorrow I am not going to pass up the opportunity to get together with my “sisters” and “brothers” to go have lunch. (Teranishi, 2007, p. 63)

The positive relationships also involved faculty, especially when Latinx faculty shared personal experiences related to their own ethnic identity development. Clarabel further describes

her experience with professors in her ethnic studies course. She said, “Latino/a professors teaching our...course provides students with more credibility. We can all relate to it.” She further stated, “The way our professors taught really helped me connect more to the course content. They provided us real-life examples” (Castillo-Montoya & Verduzco Reyes, 2018, p. 11).

Previous relationships were impacted as well. Juanita was inspired to reconnect with her family in the Dominican Republic after her trip to Senegal; one reason being continued ethnic identity exploration.

We have this constant struggle – are we Indigenous, are we European, are we Black?...I always ask my mother about my great grandparents and my great, great grandparents... God willing, I’m going back to the Dominican Republic in July to do extensive research... A lot of my aunts are really old—75 or 80 years old. They’re like my orators. God forbid, when they pass away, that’s it. I know my cousins in D.R.; they aren’t conflicted and aren’t really concerned about tracing our African roots. So, they’re not going to ask and I want to before it’s too late (Raymondi, 2005, p. 172).

Another student shared how her perspective on family changed and is now closer to family.

Family became a big part of my identity because of my time in Mexico. The reason family is so important to me is because you don’t know how long you have with a person and should cherish every moment with them. This effects my identity and helps define me because once a person gets to know me I treat them like family, always making sure they’re okay, checking in on them at random times to see how their doing and always going out of my way to help them if they need it. I wouldn’t have been this kind of person if it weren’t for my time in Mexico and learning from my Mexican heritage how important family is (Gonzals, 2019, p. 945).

Theme 5: Purpose in Life

Several students expressed a new or reinvigorated purpose in life after the intentional time cultivating their ethnic identity. This dimension of wellbeing describes the importance of having a sense of direction or purpose in life (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Jorge attributes the reflective exercises in the leadership program that helped him believe he could graduate college: “I can do it. My parents didn’t go to college. It shows me that I can do it. It shows me that I can graduate and be someone...CITL just gave me more perspectives” (Case & Hernandez, 2013).

Students also found the motivation to focus on helping the Latinx community. Rafael spoke of the educational disparities among Latinx students: “This class pushed me to not only become aware of the educational achievement gap but try to create a solution” (Castillo-Montoya & Verduzco Reyes, 2018, p. 11). Ana also considered working to help Latinx students attain their educational goals. She said,

It makes me want to consider guidance counseling as a profession so I can help students of an ethnic-populated school with academics or simply help them get on the right track to college-related future. (Castillo-Montoya & Verduzco Reyes, 2018 p. 11)

Some students also have a new goal of living and working outside of the United States.

Augustina realized she is called to fight for social justice outside of the U.S.

I have a desire now to learn about where my family is from in the Dominican Republic, to learn about my origins. I really want to learn the history and the social, political issues and the issues that are going on right now in that country. I still want to learn about U.S. history as well, African American history... This trip also allowed me to help me to realize my goal in life, to fight for social justice on an international level rather than focusing on a certain place... I realize how important history is to restore a person's sense of pride. (Raymondi, 2005 p. 144)

Ernesto describes the beginning plans of wanting to return to Guanajuato even before he left. He said,

My entire time here I have been thinking that I want to move up here. I can work as a school teacher and with the inexpensive rent I can totally make a life here for at least a year. I want to talk to [the professor] about it; hopefully she can give me some help with this. (Teranishi, 2019 p. 65)

Theme 6: Self-Acceptance

The final dimension of wellbeing is self-acceptance, or the ability to embrace all aspects of oneself (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Students often reported a sense of peace about their ethnic identity specifically because of participating in university programming that focused on Latinx identity exploration. For example, one student wrote, “It took the Latin American Studies Program in college for me to gain comfort in who I am. I am so proud of taking advantage of the

education my ancestors fought for” (Gonzales, 2019 p. 945). Beatriz also describes how her self-acceptance grew after participating in the leadership program.

I’ve been more willing to accept [ethnic identity] and be more proud of my background. I’ve always been proud of my background, but at the same time it’s not like I’ve ever been very expressive about it. . . I think that CITL has helped in the sense that we have activities where we talk about where we’re from and the things that have shaped us into who we are and how our Latino-ness has kind of created the person that we have become. (Case & Hernandez, 2013, p. 84)

The dimensions of wellbeing often overlap. One student describes a new life purpose continuing to cultivate a strong sense of self-acceptance. She writes,

Me siento totalmente diferente, con muchos deseo de ser yo misma, sin inhibiciones, sin escudos. Preciento que ahora si voy a poder lograr mi meta de concernerme a mi misma. [I feel totally different with the desire to be myself, without inhibitions, without a shield. I have the feeling that now I am going to attain my goal of knowing myself better]. (Teranashi, 2007, p. 59)

Self-acceptance does not require complete satisfaction but instead a level of comfort with knowing that one’s identity may never be fully clear or understandable. Various emotions fluctuated throughout Augustina's experience in Senegal that led to the conclusion that her ancestry is complex and she needs to embrace all parts.

I was always one to embrace my African ancestry and when I got to Goree [slave museum], it was like a reinforcement of how proud I should be of my ancestry but I also had feelings of guilt. Guilt, because I know that part of my mixed ancestry was European and I was like [experiencing] feelings of guilt, frustration and anger all at the same time, so it really wasn’t a good feeling. It made me realize that I’m not just African, I also have European in me and also have Indian and that’s something that really was confusing to me. I am beginning to realize that many of the Senegalese do not dwell on their slavery history. I spoke to my English partner Khoumah; he mentioned the need to forget about slavery, if not we will be bitter. But it is important that we all remember our history in order to work on our future. The African symbol Sankofa symbolizes the need to embrace your past and work on the future. I believe we must learn the truth about our history so that we can pride ourselves on who we are and who we will become. I look in the mirror and I see a woman who speaks for many people: Spanish, African, Caribbean and Arawak. All of these cultures coexisted in the Caribbean, in the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Cuba. Look at me!!...My hair and features (nose, lips, hands, feet, skin color). How can I deny my African ancestry? (Raymondi, 2005, p. 138)

Discussion

This QIMS aimed to understand how Latinx-specific programming shaped ethnic identity and wellbeing among Latinx college students. The results showed six newly synthesized themes based on the six dimensions of wellbeing (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The synthesis of qualitative data across the five articles reviewed offers evidence that supports intentional methods of ethnic identity development as ways to engage Latinx and impact all six dimensions of wellbeing.

The themes of autonomy and self-acceptance show how Latinx students embraced their heritage and resisted pressure to change when exposed to a nonjudgement space. Previous studies highlight the pressure to assimilate to Western ideals of success while attending college, creating distressing scenarios for some Latinx students. For example, Latinx students report having to choose between family obligations and school obligations with little understanding from faculty or staff (Graybill, 2019). Other sources of pressure come from microaggressions experienced on campus (Nadal et al., 2014) and exposure to only Western ideals in university curriculum (Graybill, 2019; Hernandez, 2013).

The current study shows that a sense of autonomy was cultivated within Latinx-specific programming, allowing students to embrace perspectives and choices influenced by their ethnic culture. When viewing ethnic identity through the lens of wellbeing, autonomy and self-acceptance are protective factors for Latinx students against microaggressions and other mental health concerns (Torres & Taknint, 2015).

Discussions on ethnic identity promoted another theme, personal growth, for participants. Through this personal growth, several students also reported a new or refreshed purpose in life. Both dimensions of wellbeing are essential for life satisfaction and motivation (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002).

Attending college is considered a significant life transition, especially for younger adults, with times of emotional instability (Arnett, 2000). Facilitating personal growth and finding purpose in life can promote degree attainment and provide an overall structure for future success (Gregor et al., 2021; Stevic & Ward, 2008). The studies reviewed in this QIMS showed focusing on ethnic identity development inspires Latinx students towards careers that focus on uplifting the Latinx community.

Latinx-specific programming also helped Latinx college students identify cultural strengths that assist in environmental mastery of campus culture and expectations. This is consistent with the growing literature around cultural wealth. The cultural wealth model identifies various forms of strengths and experiences that Latinx students bring to the college environment known as cultural capital. University culture can often make Latinx students feel like there is only one correct way to be successful, a “correct” way that encourages assimilation. The cultural wealth model validates cultural capital as tools of success, even when higher education overlooks these strengths (Yosso, 2005).

The final theme, positive relations with others, was found throughout participants' quotations in each article reviewed. Students found connection with peers as well as university employees. Valvida (2020) found that interacting with faculty from a similar ethnic background increased the sense of belonging on campus. Furthermore, Latinx students appreciate faculty who validate student's cultures (Kiyama et al., 2018). Without intentional university-initiated interventions, many Latinx students continue to feel out of place even with higher Latinx student representation. For example, current literature shows students can show ambivalence towards attending an HSI (Garcia & Dwyer, 2017) and still experience discrimination (Cuellar, 2018). On the other hand, Case and Hernandez (2013) pointed a spotlight on meaningful programming at a

PWI that facilitated meaningful relationships with peers and faculty just by discussing their ethnic identity.

Limitations

Qualitative research primarily focuses on exploring phenomena and amplifying the voices of participants' perspectives, meaning the results of this QIMS are not generalizable. Additionally, due to time constraints, the primary investigator was the only person to decide on articles, and the analysis was independently conducted, lacking triangulation of analysts beyond the triangulation of analysts present in the individual studies. Another limitation of a QIMS is a lack of full transcripts, making the original context of some quotations challenging to understand.

Finally, this QIMS uses the pan-ethnic label “Latinx,” which captures common experiences among participants with different cultural backgrounds. Using a pan-ethnic label has benefits of including multiple perspectives to find shared experiences. However, the study results are also a reminder that experiences within the Latinx community are still varied due to factors like country of origin, skin tone, and immigration status. Future studies should include a discussion of intersectionality when studying Latinx-specific programming.

Implications for Higher Education

While there are a growing number of Latinx-specific programs in higher education, ethnic identity is rarely a measured outcome reported in within scientific literature. Universities should consider developing more Latinx-specific programming with change in ethnic identity as a measured outcome. Latinx-specific programming that is already established could be adapted to incorporate self-reflection exercises and a completion of an ethnic identity measurement. For example, three of the sources for this QIMS included self-reflection assignments throughout the

programs. Measuring ethnic identity can be evaluated with validated measures like the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992) or change can be measured by directly asking about change in ethnic identity during class discussion or essays.

There is also opportunity to create programming that has a primary focus of exploring ethnic identity. School-led ethnic identity exploration has been used as an intervention for academic success at the middle and high school levels. Jones et al. (2017) found that ethnic identity and school engagement significantly increased when African American middle-school girls received six weeks of a cultural awareness group curriculum.

However, Latinx-specific Latinx-specific programming is not the only space to encourage ethnic identity. Intentional conversation on ethnic identity is applicable in any established part of campus. Phinney (1996) argues that universities should avoid shallow content related to other ethnicities (e.g., what is “known” about other ethnic groups) and instead focus on self-exploration. Self-exploration can happen in any course. For example, bringing up prominent non-White historical figures or sharing various perspectives on a subject can spark a class conversation or quiet self-reflection. A self-reflection paper that connects the curriculum content to a student’s identity can also become part the semester’s course assignments.

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CHAPTER 3
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF LATINX RESOURCES
ON COLLEGE COUNSELING WEBSITES

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ABSTRACT

Counseling center websites are often the first point of contact for students. Counseling centers should be mindful about creating culturally validating spaces, and website content can be a method of communicating support for Latinx students. Using the Multidimensional Conceptual Framework of Servingness in Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) as a guide, the current study will use constructive content analysis to a) identify to what extent HSI college counseling centers include culturally validating messages specific to Latinx students on their websites and b) to identify any societal influences that predict culturally relevant communication on HSI counseling websites. Results found Latinx-specific content was rarely present throughout HSI counseling websites. Results also revealed statistically significant predictors for culturally relevant communication on HSI counseling websites. Recommendations for website changes and higher education policy recommendations are provided.

Keywords: Hispanic-Serving Institutions; Latinx mental health; college counseling centers; constructive content analysis

A Content Analysis of Latinx Resources on College Counseling Center Websites

Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) are only recognized by their enrollment levels of Latinx undergraduates, leaving little guidance on how to best "serve" Latinx students once they arrive on campus (Garcia, 2019). The lack of guidance has led to troubling consequences. For example, Vargas and Villa-Palomino (2018) reviewed successful federal grant abstracts intended for developing HSIs between 2016 and 2019 and found that most funded program efforts did not have a specific focus on Latinx students. On an individual level, discrimination, harassment, and microaggressions remain part of many Latinx students' college experience regardless of HSI attendance (Serpas, 2021). It is evident that HSIs could benefit from clearer guidelines on how to best support Latinx students.

Garcia et al. (2019) recently proposed a new framework that defines "servingness" as a multidimensional concept. One of the main dimensions, "structures for serving," identifies several university characteristics that influence Latinx students' experiences in academia. External influences such as local political ideology can influence what structures for serving, if any, are prioritized. While characteristics and external influences can be viewed at a campus level, it may be possible to use this framework for evaluating Latinx student support within various departments. For example, structures for serving within HSI counseling centers should be evaluated because of the ongoing underutilization of services by Latinx students (Davidson et al., 2004; Lipson et al., 2022).

Counseling centers provide a space to directly discuss culture, ethnicity, and on-campus experiences that may not exist anywhere else on campus (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). While there are several factors that influence use of counseling services, previous studies identified Latinx students worry that counselors lack understanding of cultural experiences (Hayes et al.,

2011; Shae et al., 2019). A possible approach for communicating a welcoming environment is through the counseling center website.

Counseling center websites are most likely the first interaction students have with on-campus mental health services (Hrogan & Sweeney, 2010). They host information on programs and services, but other implicit and explicit messages can influence whether Latinx students will feel welcomed enough to make an appointment. Using the Multidimensional Conceptual Framework of Servingness in HSIs as a guide, the current study used constructive content analysis to a) identify to what extent HSI college counseling centers include culturally validating messages specific to Latinx students on their websites and b) to identify any societal influences that predict culturally relevant communication on HSI counseling websites.

Framework for Content Analysis

HSI researchers recommend clarity on what “serving” means beyond the federal enrollment criteria (Hurtado, 2012). The Multidimensional Conceptual Framework of Servingness in HSIs was formed through synthesizing previous research conceptualizations of how other scholars defined serving. As a result, four dimensions arose: student outcomes (both academic and nonacademic); student experiences while attending an HSI; HSI characteristics; and societal influences (Garcia et al., 2019). When viewing these dimensions together, HSI characteristics influenced by societal factors, shape campus culture and largely influence student outcomes and experiences.

Each dimension includes its own set of characteristics that can be explored independently or in combination. This study focuses on HSI characteristics, which are underexplored compared to other dimensions like student outcomes and experiences (Garcia et al., 2019). Under this

framework, HSI characteristics are labeled “structures for serving.” There are eleven structures included in this framework, including mission and values statements, diversity plans, HSI grants, institutional advancement activities, engagement with the Latinx community, compositional diversity, culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy, programs and services for minoritized students, leadership and decision-making practices, incentive structures, and external boundary management. Some of the structures are clear, while others may need further conceptualization for research.

Garcia et al. (2019) mention that measuring structures for serving is more challenging than measuring individual student outcomes. However, there is a need to explore these structures further as they are evidence of intentional efforts by HSIs to better support Latinx students. Current recommendations for future research include content analysis of HSI documents (Garcia et al., 2019).

Counseling Center Websites

On-campus counseling centers are an essential part of providing support for students. It has been shown that attending counseling services on-campus positively impacts academic outcomes and lowers mental health symptoms (Schwitzer et al., 2018). Unfortunately, mental health service disparities remain among Latinx students relative to white, non-Latinx students (Davidson et al., 2004; Lipson et al., 2022). Previous studies indicate there is a desire to feel cultural validation from counselors (Miville & Constantine, 2006; Ramos-Sanchez & Atkinson, 2011) that emphasizes the importance of effective communication with Latinx students.

Latinx students are more likely to seek help if they have knowledge of mental health concerns (Rickwood et al., 2007). The Internet is often used as a tool to gain knowledge and

support regarding mental health (Horgan & Sweeney, 2010). The counseling center website is an opportunity to empower Latinx students to consider accessing mental health services.

There are a small number of studies that examine education-based counseling center websites. One study analyzed the websites of 203 college counseling centers and found less than a third of websites had any mention of LGBT-specific content (Wright & McKinley, 2010). A few years later, a second content analysis confirmed that LGBT-specific content remained relatively low (McKinley et al., 2015). Another study analyzed high school counseling websites for the presence of diverse messaging and found that content specific to students with disabilities, immigration status, sexual orientation, and race and ethnicity was rare (Kennedy & Baker, 2014). There is no known content analysis focusing on HSI counseling websites and the communication aimed at Latinx students.

Method

The purpose of this study was to use constructive content analysis to a) identify to what extent HSI college counseling centers include culturally validating messages specific to Latinx students on their websites and b) to identify any societal influences that predict culturally relevant communication on HSI counseling websites. A conceptual content analysis was conducted to examine the frequency of words or phrases on HSI counseling center websites that represent structures for serving. Conceptual content analysis focuses on identifying the occurrence of implicit or explicit terms pre-determined by the researcher (Busch et al., 2005). Terms selected can be informed by theoretical frameworks, existing literature, or the researcher's personal experiences (Kleinhekel, 2020). The terms selected for this study were informed by the characteristics included within the structures for serving dimension of the Multidimensional Framework for Servingness (Garcia et al., 2019)

Sampling

The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities shares an annual list of qualifying HSIs. The 2020-2021 list of HSIs included a total of 142 4-year public institution within the continental United States. A final total of websites (n=120) was identified after schools with no counseling service or website were excluded.

Measures

Structures for Serving

Prior to the formal content analysis, a preliminary search was conducted to see what characteristics from the structures for serving dimension could be operationalized by reviewing web pages. Four out of the eleven structures for serving were identified as feasible to evaluate in this study, including mission and values statements, compositional diversity, culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy, and programs and services for minoritized students. A coding system was developed to evaluate the presence of Latinx-specific content for each variable, and a composite score for each school was developed to represent an overall score to represent structures for serving.

Mission and values statements. Most post-secondary institution departments typically have a mission and values statements that are based on the institution's mission and values. The statements were reviewed as one variable using the 0-4 scale. "0" = the variable was not present on the website; "1" = the variable was present, but no mention of racial/ethnic identity; "2" = the variable was present and content alluded to ethnic/racial identity (e.g., mentions of "diversity" or "inclusion"); "3" = variable was present and content directly mentioned ethnic/racial identity not

specific to Latinx; and “4” = variable was present and content specifically mentions Latinx identity.

Compositional diversity. Having Latinx representation among university employees students improves a sense of belonging and cultural validation for Latinx students (Garcia et al., 2019). College counseling websites typically include counselor biographies. These biographies were searched to identify any term or phrase that describes the counselor being a part of the Latinx community. Key phrases such as “Latinx,” “Hispanic,” “Puerto Rican,” “Mexican American,” or other common Latinx ethnic labels must be explicit to avoid assumptions of race or ethnicity. This variable was reviewed using the 0-4 scale to identify Latinx-specific content.

Culturally relevant curriculum & pedagogy. This characteristic originally described curriculum choices within academic departments. However, this variable was operationalized as staff trainings or clinical expertise mentioned in counseling biographies. Biographical statements were searched for specific terms or phrases that indicate the presence of clinical knowledge or training in working with the Latinx community. This variable was reviewed using the 0-4 scale to identify Latinx-specific content. A second variable was included in this concept, which was presence of web page content in Spanish. Providing opportunities to incorporate Spanish is a recommended intervention for inclusivity (Rodríguez et al., 2021). This variable was reviewed using the 0-1 scale (not present or present).

Programs and services for minoritized students. This final structure for services was defined by two variables. First, the 0-4 scale was applied to the identify Latinx-specific programming and services. Programs and services are frequently listed on college counseling websites with descriptions of programs. The second variable, counseling services offered in Spanish was coded using the 0 (not present) and 1 (present) attributes.

Societal Influences

Societal influences are factors that should be considered within social or political context (Garcia et al., 2019). The first variable is the total percentage of Latinx undergraduate enrollment. This represents social context that possibly encourages the consideration of inclusive responses.

Another contextual factor is the university's commitment to prioritizing HSI status. Policy initiatives at the highest level are expected to be implemented throughout campus programs. This was operationalized through the presence of HSI-related language in the university strategic plan; whether a university has received an HSI federal grant; and whether the university received an *Excelencia* award. *Excelencia in Education* is an organization that researches best practices for Latinx student success and advocates for inclusive policies and practices. Annual awards are given to schools with evidence of providing effective support for Latinx student success (Excelencia in Education, 2022).

A final set of variables represents political context. The two variables included whether the university is in a state with an HSI congressional caucus member and whether the state provides DACA tuition support. All variables listed in this section were coded 0-1, "not present" or "present."

Analysis

A hierarchical multiple regression was used to determine what societal influences predict structures identified on HSI counseling center websites. The first model included percentage of Latinx undergraduates because HSI status should encourage serving Latinx students. The second model included variables representing the university's commitment to serving Latinx students.

The final model included state-level political influence. The dependent variable, structures for serving, was a composite score of the rankings used in the content analysis tool. The scores were totaled and used to run the multiple regression. The possible scores range from zero to eighteen, with higher numbers indicating a higher presence of Latinx-specific content. Cronbach's alpha was used to test for reliability ($\alpha = .775$).

Prior to running multiple logistic regression, tests were run to confirm assumptions were met, including normality of distributions, correlations between structures for serving scores and societal influences, and multicollinearity. The scores of structures for serving scores were positively skewed, and a log transformation was conducted to meet the assumption of normality. VIF and tolerance scores showed no multicollinearity. The analysis was run using IBM SPSS 28 statistical software. Qualitative data were also analyzed to provide examples of Latinx-specific content.

Results

A total of 120 websites were reviewed for this study. The average percentage of undergraduate Latinx enrollment was 44.6% ($SD=17.59\%$) (See Table 1 for descriptive statistics of each variable.). Table 2 provides a breakdown of each structure for serving variable used in obtaining a summed score. Of the counseling websites, 19.2% of had a score of zero, and 86.7% of websites had a score of less ten or less.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics of Variables (N=120)*

Variables	Frequency (%)	Mean	SD
Structures for Serving Score (0-18) Present Societal Influences		4.98	4.46

Latinx Enrollment (Percent)		44.36	17.59
Seal of Excelencia	20 (16.7)		
Strategic Plan	33 (27.5)		
HSI Grant	52 (43.3)		
DACA Tuition	115 (95.8)		
HSI Caucus Member	86 (71.7)		

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics of Structures for Serving Variables*

Variable	Frequency (%)
Mission and Values	
Not Present	72(60)
Present, no mention of race/ethnicity	16(13.3)
Present, alluding to race/ethnicity	25(20.8)
Present, not Latinx-specific	7(5.8)
Present, Latinx-specific	0(0)
Ethnic/Racial Identity of Staff	
Not Present	59(49.2)
Present, no mention of race/ethnicity	39(32.5)
Present, alluding to race/ethnicity	7(5.8)
Present, not Latinx-specific	5(4.8)
Present, Latinx-specific	10(8.3)
Trainings/Areas of Interest	
Not Present	52(43.3)
Present, no mention of race/ethnicity	19(15.8)
Present, alluding to race/ethnicity	11(9.2)
Present, not Latinx-specific	17(14.2)
Present, Latinx-specific	21(17.5)
Student Programming	
Not Present	34(28.3)
Present, no mention of race/ethnicity	40(33.3)
Present, alluding to race/ethnicity	11(9.2)
Present, not Latinx-specific	23(19.2)
Present, Latinx-specific	12(10)
Spanish-Speaking Services	
Present	15(12.5)
Not Present	105(87.5)
Website Content in Spanish	
Present	33(27.5)
Not Present	87(72.5)

Hierarchical Multiple Regression

A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to evaluate what societal influences predict structures identified on college counseling center websites. After assumptions were confirmed to be met, a three-stage hierarchical multiple regression was performed. Regression analysis for each model and unique variable are shown in Table 3. The percentage of Latinx student enrollment was placed in the first model. This first block revealed the model was not statistically significant. The second model represented university commitment to serving Latinx students. This model was statistically significant ($F_{(3,93)} = 2.39, p = .003$) and accounted for an additional 5.5% of the variation compared to the first model. The third model, political influences, was also statistically significant and explained an additional 15.2% of the variation when introduced to the overall model ($F_{(2,88)} = 6.11, p = .021$). The final model accounted for 20.6% of variation in structures for service scores. When looking at unique variables within the last model, the percentage of Latinx undergraduate enrollment was statistically significant ($B = -.007, p = .004$). For every Latinx student, the structures for serving score is reduced by .007 points. Being in a state with an HSI caucus member was statistically significant ($B = .29, p < .001$). When an HSI resides in a state with an HSI congressional caucus member, the structures for serving score increases by an average of .29 points, holding all other factors constant.

Table 3. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Structures of Serving among HSI Counseling Center Websites ($N = 120$)

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β
Latinx Enrollment	0.00	0.00	-0.15	-0.01	0.00	-0.22*	-0.01	0.00	-0.31**
Excelencia				0.26	0.10	0.26*	0.20	0.09	0.20
Strategic Plan				0.05	0.09	-0.06	-0.02	0.08	-0.03

HSI Grant		0.07	0.08	0.09	0.08	0.07	0.11
DACA Tuition					0.05	0.17	0.03
HSI Caucus Member					0.29	0.08	0.40***
R2	0.15		0.31			0.45	
Adjusted R2	0.02		0.09			0.21	
F for Change in R2	2.25		2.39			6.11**	

$N=120$; * $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$, *** $p<.001$

Examples of Latinx-Specific Messaging

Mission and Values Statements. There was no mention of HSI status or the Latinx community in mission and values statements. In fact, 60% of websites did not include counseling center mission and values statements. The primary messaging of these statements was broad and included words or phrases that alluded to race and ethnicity, including commitment “social justice” or “embracing diversity.”

Compositional diversity. Eighty-one percent of websites either had no counseling staff biographies or no mention of personal ethnic or racial identity. When counselors self-disclosed Latinx identities, it was common practice for the majority of counselors to explicitly share personal identities including race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and history of immigration status. A high scoring university within this category was The University of Arizona. Their website allowed students to filter counseling staff biographies by identities. Additionally, Rhode Island College allowed students to communicate counselor identity preferences when making an appointment online.

Culturally relevant curriculum. While personal identities were less often shared, more counselors mentioned specific clinical training and areas of clinical interest. Of the 21 biographies that mentioned Latinx-specific content, two included formal training experience, and two mentioned affiliations with professional organizations specific to the Latinx community.

Four counseling centers confirmed there are Latinx counseling specialists on-staff, with two embedded within cultural centers. The remainder of content was counseling biographies including Latinx students to be a clinical area of interest.

Web pages were also reviewed for content in Spanish. Only 15 websites incorporated content in Spanish. While most of the content in Spanish was related to crisis hotline information, The University of Texas at El Paso, California State University Northridge, and California State East Bay locations included videos in Spanish related to meditation and self-care. These videos were included among other videos made by counseling staff. Texas State University and California State-Santa Cruz provided information for parents on student mental health in Spanish.

Programs and services for minoritized students. This concept was operationalized with two variables. First, web pages were reviewed for verification of Spanish-speaking services. Out of the 120 university websites reviewed, 33 websites verified Spanish-speaking services were available at the counseling center. This information was typically on individual counselor biographies. Only two schools had explicit information on how to request Spanish-speaking services on their front page.

The second variable was counseling services specific to Latinx students. A total of twelve schools included information regarding Latinx-specific programming on their websites. All programming specific to Latinx students was in the form of support groups. Topics to discuss during groups included cultural identity, balancing school and family, and navigating difficult relationships. Humboldt State University listed a Latinx Focused therapist on staff.

Some content was noted but not part of the variables included in this study. For example, 14 websites had external links to community resources and mental health websites that were specific to the Latinx community. Colleges also hosted webinars that invited all students of color to attend. For example, the CUNY Graduate School hosts a webinar on how to respond to microaggressions as a graduate student.

Discussion

The first research aim was to identify to what extent HSI college counseling centers include culturally validating messages specific to Latinx students on their websites. Descriptive statistics showed that the overall inclusion of culturally relevant messaging towards Latinx students was low. Furthermore, the presence of chosen variables representing societal influences, particularly university commitment to Latinx support, was low as well. These results indicate an overall lack of inclusive messaging for Latinx students within HSIs.

The second aim of this study was to identify any external predictors of the inclusion of structures for serving on counseling websites. The results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis revealed the final model for societal influences was statistically significant in predicting structures for serving found on HSI counseling center websites. In particular, Latinx undergraduate enrollment percentages and being in a state with an HSI congressional caucus member were found to be statistically significant predictors for Latinx-specific messaging on HSI counseling center websites. Surprisingly, Latinx student enrollment was negatively correlated, with lower structure for serving scores decreasing with higher Latinx student enrollment. Scores were more likely to increase when the university was located in a state with an HSI caucus member.

Though the final model was statistically significant, it only accounted for 20.6% of variation in structures for serving scores. This indicates that first, variables chosen within this study do not have as much influence as hypothesized. Particularly looking at university commitment, the lack of statistical significance for this concept suggests possible barriers for implementing culturally relevant responses even when university messaging encourages serving Latinx students. Second, only two variables were found to be statistically significant, indicating unidentified factors influencing Latinx-specific messaging.

In reviewing qualitative content, an overwhelming majority of websites did not have inclusive messaging towards Latinx students. Some schools had higher scores, indicating more inclusive messaging. This high score was demonstrated through counseling websites including information on Latinx-specific counseling services, online resources for Latinx students, and counselor self-disclosure of Latinx identity or interest in working with Latinx students. Latinx representation among faculty and staff is beneficial to Latinx students (Flores, 2017; Tovar, 2014), and self-disclosure of race and ethnicity are appreciated among Latinx students (Castillo-Montoya & Verduzco Reyes, 2018). Unfortunately, counseling centers are missing opportunities to connect in this way with Latinx students.

These findings highlight a common concern within HSI literature; inconsistencies exist between messages of university commitment and the implementation of culturally relevant responses (Flores & Dianey, 2022). Casellas Connors (2022) reviewed ten HSI equity reports and rarely found meaningful discussion of Latinx students. Moreover, recent studies report HSIs often use HSI grants to develop programming that is not specific to Latinx students (Vargas & Villa-Palomino, 2018) or the advancement of Latinx faculty (Vargas et al., 2020).

Students can feel the inconsistencies within their interactions at HSIs. For example, qualitative interviews with Latinx students at HSIs expressed student concerns about the lack of inclusive messaging around campus ranging from a lack of faculty and staff representation (Garcia & Dwyer, 2017) to the physical space absent of Latinx culture (Garcia & Zaragoza, 2020). Including more Latinx-specific programming can communicate that Latinx culture is valued and worthy of discussion within academic spaces.

Limitations

The main limitation within this study is the scale constructed for multiple regression analysis. The development of the scale included four scaling variables and two dichotomous variables. The scores were added together without standardizing the scores. Furthermore, this scale was not validated prior to its use. Another limitation within this study is that it does not include multiple sources of content for analysis. The primary focus was on counseling center websites, but there are possibly other ways that counseling centers are providing inclusive services such as social media messages or culturally relevant campus outreach. Furthermore, strategic plans and counseling staff perspectives are not always communicated through websites. Future research should include more evidence so that more characteristics of structures for serving can be represented in the results.

Implications for Counseling Centers

Based on the present results, along with the knowledge of lower service utilization among Latinx students, it is important for counseling centers to consider including more Latinx-specific content on their websites. For example, most web pages did not include staff biographies that are helpful for connecting with students. Although self-disclosure is often avoided among mental

health professionals, culturally relevant practices include direct discussion of identity.

Counselors disclosed their racial and ethnic identity in a concise way and frequently connected it to their work with students. The following statements extracted from websites provide a template for possible changes to counselor biographies.

- “Coming from a South Asian community, she is very passionate about bringing more awareness of mental health to underserved communities and being a resource for South Asian youth in a way that she never had growing up.”
- “As a first generation to college, Latina, I am mindful of my own story, how that has shaped my worldview and the importance of cultivating a space of inclusivity.”
- “[Name] is a Mexican immigrant.”
- “I am a licensed clinical psychologist, first generation college student, Jamaican immigrant, comic book enthusiast, and prior service active duty Marine and Persian Gulf War veteran.”

A second consideration is placing Latinx-specific content on high-traffic pages, possibly the main page. For example, acknowledgement of HSI status is a simple strategy that was not found on any website. Adding information about mental health concerns unique to Latinx students and recommended coping strategies could be a small way to connect with Latinx students that may never seek direct counseling services. As stated in the results, some counseling centers created their own content that was in Spanish or discussed Latinx-specific mental health concerns. This type of outreach can reach students over longer periods of time with little maintenance once created.

A final recommendation for counseling centers is to create or administer student surveys to identify barriers to counseling that are unique to their campus. The Revised Fit, Stigma, and Value Scale (FSV), a scale appraising barriers to counseling, was recently validated with students attending HSIs (Kalkbrenner et al., 2022). This scale could be placed on counseling center websites or included in first-year experience courses. Understanding barriers to counseling can inform future programming and policies for the counseling center.

Higher Education Policy

An unexpected finding identified the lack of Latinx-specific discussion within HSI strategic planning. The lack of inclusive planning perpetuates the cycle of shallow efforts made to serve Latinx students. Flores and Leal (2020) conducted a content analysis of HSI strategic plans and share examples of Latinx-serving plans. However, developing strategic plans are not enough. Evaluating implementation within each on-campus department is an important part creating an inclusive campus environment.

Conclusion

The original aims of this study were to a) identify to what extent HSI college counseling centers include culturally validating messages specific to Latinx students on their websites and b) to identify any societal influences that predict culturally relevant communication on HSI counseling websites. Regarding the first research aim, Latinx-specific content was rarely found throughout HSI counseling websites. The results of the second research aim indicate a disconnection between campus policy and implementation of culturally relevant responses. Counseling centers can make small changes to their website to communicate cultural validation and encourage Latinx students to attend counseling services.

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CHAPTER 4
HOW COUNSELORS AT HISPANIC-SERVING INSTITUTIONS PERCEIVE AND
RESPOND TO LATINX PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

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ABSTRACT

The current study explores perceptions of college counselors working at 4-year public Hispanic-Serving Institutions. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted to identify how college counselors perceive and respond to Latinx student psychological distress. Four main themes emerged from the interviews including 1) Family: “You’ve gotta be super successful in college, but we don’t know how to help you;” 2) Higher Education: “It’s a White Supremacy culture if you asked me;” 3) The Counseling Center: “...at least I hope, people find it a little oasis;” and 4) Commitment to Improving the Campus Experience. Recommendations for culturally relevant interventions are discussed.

Keywords: Hispanic-Serving Institutions, college counseling, Latinx, student mental health

How Counselors at Hispanic-Serving Institutions Perceive and Respond to Latinx Psychological Distress

Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) are rapidly growing, with a reported 569 post-secondary institutions meeting the enrollment requirement of 25% or more Latinx students (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, 2021). As HSIs increase, the conversation shifts from enrollment strategies to identifying ways of supporting Latinx from admission to graduation (Garcia et al., 2019). This shift is necessary because high enrollment rates are not leading to growth in degree attainment (Loveland, 2018; Tajalli & Ortiz, 2018). One way to support Latinx students is to provide effective on-campus mental health interventions since previous studies on college student mental health report persistent psychological distress, with Latinx college students being at higher risk of suicidal ideation and self-harm (Chesin & Jeglic, 2012; Madubata et al., 2020).

Latinx mental health can be negatively impacted in various ways at college, including on-campus discrimination (Stevens et al., 2018) and isolation (Chang et al., 2019; Rodriguez & Blaney, 2021). Unfortunately, the Latinx community underutilizes mental health services. A recent study reported that Latinx college students were more likely to experience trauma than attend mental health services (Menendez et al., 2020). Furthermore, when Latinx college students perceive or experience discrepancies between their culture and a counselor's culture, they are less likely to seek counseling (Shea et al., 2019).

Practice recommendations from previous studies describe ways to provide culturally validating counseling. Shea et al. (2019) suggest helping the client understand the counseling process to minimize negative perceptions. They also emphasized the importance of hiring

culturally diverse staff to help with concerns regarding cultural barriers. Other studies emphasize the importance of college counselors validating cultural experiences (Choi et al., 2019; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2011; Menendez et al., 2020). Though culturally validating counseling is often recommended, it is unclear how college counseling employees respond to Latinx mental health concerns in a culturally validating way.

Current Study

Research Aim

Current literature says that culturally validating practices are beneficial to the wellbeing of Latinx college students. However, there are no known studies that explore how college counseling centers are incorporating cultural validation in the counseling process. The purpose of this study is to gain a deep understanding on how counselors at HSIs perceive and respond to Latinx mental health concerns.

Author's Positionality Statement

The current study is viewed through an interpretivist lens. I believe each human, including myself, has unique characteristics and lived experiences that shape beliefs and values. Social interaction is required to engage with another perspective fully, and it is required to prove that another perspective is understood (Pulla & Carter, 2018). Interpretivism complements my values as a social worker as it amplifies individual voices while connecting shared experiences that inform future research, policy, and practice.

Because everyone has a unique world lens, it is important that I disclose my views that influence my motivation for completing this research study. From an interpretivist perspective,

acknowledging bias is required to openly explore other perspectives (Tuohy et al., 2013). First and foremost, my social work values inform my research. My commitment to social justice means conducting research that prioritizes the elimination of systemic barriers.

Before entering a doctoral program, I practiced as a therapist within an HSI university counseling center. I participated in many university conversations on creating inclusive environments, but recommendations were always general and were not as easily adaptable to college counseling centers. I am also a first-generation Latina college student. At times, navigating college has been an isolating experience, which has led me to seek mental health services on campus. I remember my counselor encouraging me to talk about my culture and family while giving recommendations that felt unhelpful because they were not in line with my beliefs and values. My identities as a Latinx college student and a former college counselor make me an insider with participants in this study.

Method

The researcher conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews with counselors at HSI counseling centers to explore their knowledge of and response to Latinx mental health concerns. The research interview guide was based on psychosociocultural issues identified by Gloria and Rodriguez (2000). In their article, Gloria and Rodriguez (2000) argued that college counselors should be aware of psychosociocultural issues that impact Latinx college student mental health. The issues include university cultural environment, ethnic identity, acculturation, and social support.

Population and Sample

As mentioned previously, HSI status is met when 25% or more of full-time undergraduates are Latinx/Hispanic. There are currently 16 states that have at least one 4-year public HSI. Participants for this study were recruited from 4-year public HSIs. The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities annually updates a list of colleges that meet HSI enrollment guidelines. The 2020-2021 list of 4-year public HSIs had a total of 142 schools within the continental U.S. After reviewing each school's mental health services, a total of 120 had on-campus counseling centers.

Inclusion criteria for this study included employment at one of the campuses listed as a 4-year public HSI either full-time or part-time within the continental U.S. Employee positions included in this study were administrative staff, counseling staff, and leadership staff. These positions were included because of their daily interactions with college students. Interns and practicum students were excluded from this study due to their temporary employment. Employees to include in the sample were identified through the counseling centers' websites, and employee emails were collected for recruitment. The sample was stratified by state, and names were randomly selected from each state for recruitment. During the recruitment phase, 191 counseling employees were sent recruitment emails until saturation was reached. A total of ten counseling employees participated in this study. and 10 counseling employees agreed to participate in this study.

Procedures

Upon IRB approval, recruitment emails were sent between August 2022 and October 2022. Recruitment emails included a link to the consent form and a brief demographics questionnaire (See Appendices A and B for details). Once the consent was signed and the

questionnaire completed, participants were directed to a virtual calendar to select a date and time for their interview. Semi-structured interviews were conducted by the first author virtually until saturation was met (see Appendix C for the interview guide). Each interview was approximately one hour, and each participant received a \$20 gift card for their participation. The interviews were recorded and transcribed through Microsoft Teams. After analysis, results were sent to participants to review and provide feedback if desired toward member checking.

Data Analysis

Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to inductively identify themes throughout each interview. IPA attempts to balance individual and collective experiences throughout analysis and reporting results. This method of analysis also values the researcher's subjective interpretation of how the individual makes sense of the world. It is common in IPA for researchers to look beyond what is said at face value and explore themes that the participant may be less aware of. Smith's and Osborne's (2008) IPA guide was used to analyze and interpret results.

The first step in analysis was to identify themes within the first transcript. During this phase, the researcher read the interview several times, making notes that eventually developed into emerging themes. From there, connections were made among emerging themes until the researcher could produce relevant themes for the first transcript. Each transcript was analyzed in this method with the researcher attempting to read each transcript independent of the knowledge gained from other transcripts. After several rounds of individual coding, themes were reviewed as a collective and clustered together themes relevant to the individual and collective perspective.

To increase reliability, the researcher incorporated strategies such as reflexive journaling and consultations with her dissertation chair. Member-checking was also conducted post analysis to confirm participants' perspectives were accurately captured. NVivo 12, a qualitative analysis software, was used to assist in the IPA process.

Results

Ten interviews were conducted and analyzed. Table 1 reports general characteristics of the participants. Four themes were identified, including 1) Family: "You've gotta be super successful in college, but we don't know how to help you;" 2) Higher Education: "It's a White Supremacy culture if you ask me;" 3) The Counseling Center: "...at least I hope, people find it a little oasis;" and 4) Commitment to Improving the Campus Experience.

Table 1. *Characteristics of Participants*

Name*	Latinx	Role	Type of Mental Health Professional	Region	HSI Percentage
Rose	Non-Latinx	Counseling	Psychologist	Northeast	58%
Edgar	Latinx	Counseling	LCSW	West	28%
Joshua	Non-Latinx	Counseling	Psychologist	South	86%
Mark	Latinx	Counseling	LMHC	West	56%
Julia	Non-Latinx	Counseling	LCSW	West	28%
Nadia	Latinx	Counseling	LICSW	West	40%
Stephanie	Non-Latinx	Leadership	Psychologist	Northeast	25%
Mariana	Latinx	Counseling	LMHC	West	56%
Brooke	Non-Latinx	Counseling	Psy.D	West	36%
Taylor	Non-Latinx	Leadership	LCSW	South	32%

*Names were changed

Family: "You've Gotta be Super Successful in College, But We Don't Know How to Help You."

All participants in this study reported family being a main topic of counseling sessions. Counseling staff spoke about the strong connections between Latinx students and their families. From their perspective, parents are proud of their child attending college, but they may not understand how this experience impacts them. Brooke mentions the dissonance between parents having high expectations for academic success without knowing what it takes to achieve it.

It's a lot of pressure from parents and family to be successful as the first person to go to college, but also lack of knowledge from the family because they're like, 'We don't know what to do, but you've gotta be super successful in college, but we have no idea how to help you.' I see students struggle a lot. I would say that's probably the biggest struggle for sure.

Parents can be confused about the amount of time needed to attend school activities and complete assignments. Brooke continues to use paraphrasing to share that some students may feel a lack of emotional support from families.

I think it goes back a lot of times to being a first gen student of like, you know, "I tell my mom that I'm stressed and she's like, 'why are you stressed? Just go to class.' Like they don't understand, I'm juggling 5 classes and a lab, and I'm trying to do extra things to get into grad school, and I'm working two jobs." Like, that's difficult.

These quotations represent a general discussion about first-generation Latinx students transitioning to a new, unknown experience. Though participants discussed this issue from the student's perspective, the quotations highlight that parents are experiencing dissonance during this transition as well. The joy for their child's academic achievement is mixed with pragmatic concerns about the current and future state of the family's wellness. Participants see how these mixed messages create pressure to prioritize both family and school. Taylor mentioned what she views as an expectation of being physically present at home.

If there's something that I see, and I think those are the women in our anxiety group, it's that, how do they manage these expectations at home? So, they still have, it feels it to me, like they still have these expectations at home, and we see a lot of kids from rural communities around [City Name]. So, tons of our kids are an hour or two hours away. So,

they have to go home a lot, and that's the expectation, but there's also this expectation that you've been given this opportunity to go to college.

As Taylor mentioned, the expectation to be home is just as much importance as being successful in school.

There was some mention of needing to contribute financially as a reason for needing to be close by to home. Mark spoke about many of his students coming from farm working families that need another family member to continue contributing financially. However, when discussing the need to be home, most counselors identified pressure stems from students needing to keep their previous family role intact while attending school. Rose mentions that this impacts social interactions that might be helpful in developing a sense of belonging on campus.

I see it as more with the younger [students], and you know and not exclusively, that sometimes their families are somewhat restrictive in terms of, you know when and how much the kids go out. And so sometimes I think that affects their ability to engage in more like social stuff on campus or more active, you know, extracurricular type stuff because you know the families want them to come home right after school or are nervous about transportation or things like that.

Participants also see this family pressure come up in conversations about their future. Parents may not explicitly tell students to choose a high-paying career, but students feel like their career plans are locked in. Rose says students are “very careful” about choosing a career path because of “pressure to support their families financially in the future.” Participants are concerned about the strong influence family has over picking a career. For example, Mariana discusses the consequences of choosing a career based only on family pressure.

I do get a lot of students who talk about their families and this pressure of like, ‘I don't wanna let my family down.’ A lot are like, ‘I'm doing this because of my family and I'm not doing it because I want to do it.’ So, then I see them struggling through their classes and pursuing careers that they might not enjoy. But it's like, ‘My family wants me to go into this.’

The final quotation is from Edgar. He is an embedded counselor within a Latinx cultural

center. He often hears about the conflicting family messages in his work with Latinx students. In fact, it comes up so often, it's a phenomenon that is on the forefront of his mind. His quotation, the last one of this theme, seems to effectively summarize what other counselors reported.

I'm trying to figure out how to say...I've been thinking about it all summer. I guess, like familial support, that's not actually supportive. So, I've talked with a lot of students about it, you know, my personal experience too, like pushing for certain things. It's like, 'But that doesn't really make me happy.' But the parents are pushing, the uncles are pushing, somebody pushing for something that just isn't part of what the student really wants. And so, you know, the family thinks that are being supported by telling them to go to college or hurry up and graduate so you can get a job, you know, that sort of like, stick motivation when the student really wants the carrot motivation, you know? And both can be considered support or, you know, motivation in a way, but, you know, one is definitely more productive than the other. And so, especially with the students who live at home, or the students that are closer to the family is, you know, this idea that college is all class and study, class and study, class and study, and that's just not the reality. Students just feel very not supported, even though the parents are trying to say supportive things like, "You should really go back to study, or you should really get a tutor or you should really..." You know, all these things that they think is supportive, but for the student it's just added pressure or just contributing to a life that's a little bit out of balance because they're working too hard...Or, you know, sometimes it's just the idea of trying to achieve this semblance of the American Dream but not really what the student wants, you know, they wanna do something else. They wanna pursue something else for other reasons, and that can be really difficult aligning those priorities, between what you feel on the inside and then what your family is saying on the outside, has been really difficult for some of my students.

Higher Education: "It's a White Supremacy culture if you asked me."

The second theme revealed during analysis involves the systemic barriers that students face within higher education. Though family was identified as a primary concern for students, participants were persistent on drawing attention to institutional barriers that impact Latinx student experiences. Nearly every participant mentioned these systemic barriers within the context of White Supremacy.

The conversation with Nadia had a strong focus on the impact of White Supremacy within higher education and echo what other participants mentioned throughout their interviews.

We will begin this theme with a connection to the previous theme on family. Nadia shifted the perspective from individual and family issues to the barriers within higher education that exacerbate family conflict. She says,

I think there is something unique that happens for Latinx students and Latinx families, especially first gen students where, again, there's a certain part of yourself that you have to give up and a certain part of your family and your family life that you have to give up to succeed in the way that things are and currently structured and institutionalized. And so that creates a stress within a family system where, you know, a student may need to be leaned on to care for other people in the family, or to attend a funeral in Mexico, and our educational system isn't set up to just have those very responsive, to make those allowance, to have that flexibility. You know, you've got policies that say if you miss two or three days in a row, you can be kicked out of a class. That's pretty harsh for people who would have to travel for a family emergency or situation and potentially gone for a week.

Nadia identifies a cultural conflict that Latinx students must choose between family and school. She views higher education expectations as rigid and not factoring in student priorities outside of their education. Nadia continues to provide insights into the current structure of higher education. She mentions the messages, or lack thereof, are not welcoming of Latinx students. Being part of the Latinx community, she also feels a lack of connection with the campus environment.

You wouldn't know by being on our campus or looking at it from the outside that we are an HSI, that we are predominantly Hispanic or Latinx students. There just isn't that visual representation of our culture and our people. Or sounds, you know? Our people are all about the bright colors and, you know, murals and music and spaces of comfort, and yeah, there's none of that here. It feels really cold and detached.

The way Nadia mentions "our culture" alludes to her own sense of belonging on campus. There was another example of Latinx faculty feeling uneasy about the campus environment. Taylor shares a time when she and a Latinx faculty member were concerned about the shallow efforts made to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month.

And then, for Hispanic Heritage Month, one of my favorite people on campus... she and I talked about how there was gonna be like a Taco Tuesday. And so, we ended up talking to the Diversity Officer about how that just doesn't encompass all of Hispanic [culture], you know?

Nadia continues to connect her own encounters with predominantly White faculty and staff to student interactions. The microaggressions she's experienced on campus give her an indication that these also happen to students.

I think the most pervasive [issue] is just bias and how our students are perceived and treated. There's a lot of assumptions made about them, and that is apparent from how they're greeted to how they are included in a classroom discussion or in, you know, leadership roles... I think wherever they move, whether it's receiving their financial aid, when they go to ask a question at registration, if they are primarily being served by White faculty and staff who have not done the intentional work of examining their own biases in racism and how they are perceiving and treating people, that's what our students are encountering. We know because as faculty and staff of color, we talk to each other about our own experiences that we have on campus and the times when we have received racist acts and microaggressions and been mistaken for students and therefore treated more poorly. So, yeah, we hear it from our students. We know what they're going through.

Unfortunately, other participants also discussed concerns with faculty and staff interactions with students. In the following quotation from Stephanie, she shares that professors are quick to judge Latinx students rather than provide them information that is helpful to their success.

Yeah. This is a huge thing. It comes up every year. We talk about it all the time. I can think of like specific examples like, where a student gets accused of plagiarism, and it's not plagiarism. It's like, I mean, maybe technically it is, but the student is actually really confused, but the professor comes down really hard, and the student just wants to know how to make it right.

When discussing student concerns outside of school such as immigration of financial instability, Joshua speaks on the exploitation of student labor. Because of the power dynamic, students feel pressure to work without raising any concerns. His thoughts give more context to Nadia's original statement of Latinx students being treated "more poorly" at times.

The perceived power that sometimes professors have will lead to students feeling exploited in the amount of work that they do for a project or a lab. You know, [Latinx students] are not really feeling as capable of advocating for themselves because of some of the risks... We don't have an ombudsman. We don't have a neutral third-party mediator for student concern. It all goes through, you know, the person in charge of wherever the person is complaining.

As the interview continued, Nadia continued to speak directly about the pressure to conform to higher education standards that are rooted in White culture. Throughout the conversation Nadia seemed relaxed when sharing her perspective. However, when the topic of assimilation was brought up, she seemed especially protective of Latinx students. Her tone was more serious, like it was especially important to share this message. She said,

I don't see it as a student issue. I think that institutions and the White people within these institutions are the ones that have issues and have the work to do. And I don't believe that our students should have to assimilate if that means giving up who they are to fit into Whiteness and White culture. We shouldn't be judging them and rewarding them by how well they can White... I think it puts a lot of stress on students. Whether they're aware of it or not, they are using emotional, psychological, and physical energy to move into these systems that are not created for them, right?

This powerful statement on the "Whiteness" of higher education was expressed by other participants as well. Nadia ends her statement with concerns about how it impacts mental health. Edgar sees the impact of White Supremacy on student wellbeing, too. He said, "[White Supremacy] is affecting the student's ability to trust the environment." As the conversation continued, he elaborated about how institutions contribute to mental health concerns.

They can feel it, people reacting to them differently because of what they look like or who they are, and that can again have an impact on the way that they integrate themselves with community or the way that they trust the community, which again contributes to that loneliness that contributes to the homesickness, which in turn just exacerbates any depression or anxiety that they might be feeling just because they're in a new environment.

The comments on White Supremacy and pressure to assimilate serve as a reminder that enrollment status is not the only factor that makes a student feel welcomed. Like family, there

are mixed messages from higher education. On one hand, the higher numbers of Latinx students can help students feel connected, which is what two participants mentioned. On the other, the predominantly White faculty and staff can make a student question if they are meant to pursue higher education. Stephanie continues to express concerns of Latinx students interacting with predominantly White employees. She concludes by mentioning HSI status, which subtly questions whether Latinx students are truly being “served.”

The school isn't always the best at helping students get what they need. You get told to go here, then you get told to go there, and then at the end it takes you an extra year to graduate because no one actually gave you what you needed. And a lot of people are trying to address, but I think especially for students that maybe don't feel at home on a college campus...encountering mostly White faces in these offices where they're going to look for help and maybe don't identify with that. I think it can feel especially alienating to be [sent from place to place] when you also don't know how much you belong. Even though this is an HSI right?

Taylor is more direct in her opinion about HSIs. On her campus, Latinx students have experienced discrimination by both students and employees with delayed responses from administration. When discussing the delayed response to discrimination, she succinctly stated, “It’s White Supremacy culture if you ask me. We put these constructs in place that are driven by the majority and they don’t take into account other people.” She also finds the label misleading at times. She says, “Even though we hold ourselves out as an HSI and that your kids are gonna be safe here with us, and your kids are gonna be respected with us, in practice, sometimes, that's not always the case.”

Nadia’s final perspective is on changing campus culture to be more inclusive. She recognizes administrative efforts trying to prioritize support for Latinx students, but it’s difficult to change perspectives. She says,

It’s an ongoing struggle...to make sure that faculty and staff are keeping [student hardships] in mind when they are interacting with a student. When they’re, you know, watching somebody struggle, again, not to make assumptions that it’s a willful thing, or

that it's about laziness or lack of motivation or whatever individual things that may place on what they're observing. There's larger factors at play.

Brooke offers an idea of what a more inclusive environment could look like. She reports administration acknowledges institutionalized White Supremacy, and the university community participates in conversations around supporting Latinx students. She gives examples of the campus changing the physical space in various ways, such as colorful murals and signs in Spanish and English. Brooke also shares anecdotes of employees, including herself, helping students connect with various departments. Administration also responds quickly to any news that could impact Latinx students. She provides an example regarding the possible repeal of DACA.

Our president of the campus, I think, does a pretty good job. He'll send out emails whenever there is either an issue locally or an issue globally. So, as far as like DACA rulings, you know the President will send out information on, like "We support DACA students. If you need legal assistance, here are the places you can go." He'll advertise student health and counseling if folks need support.

Brooke recognizes that she could be "totally off base" with her perspective, but she appears to understand the historical oppression within higher education and recognizes the change actively taking place.

When you're coming to an institution that you probably typically associate with upper middle class white people, which is who these institutions were initially formed for 100 years ago. You know, that idea that do I belong? That's how I felt as a student. Like kind of walk around like hi my imposing? Am I bothering you by asking for some help? And I so I'm just really proud that our school. You know the faculty, our administration that we were like, 'No we really value our program we value our community our students.' That we are, you know, making sure that happens. And so, I think students feel a lot more confident, a lot more empowered.

The Counseling Center: "...at least I hope, people find it a little Oasis"

Participants viewed the pressure to maintain family roles and succeed in higher education as harmful to wellbeing. Participants shared how counseling centers can be a "little oasis" for

wary Latinx students on their educational journey. For example, some participants spoke of the importance of visual messages that welcome Latinx students. Murals that included people of color and information in Spanish were mentioned as a way to send a message of belonging. However, having a diverse staff was often mentioned as the most important visual message of belonging. Mariana summarizes this sentiment in the following statement:

You know, they're seeing this brown person that looks like them. And so even just me being in this room is something that is really cool. I try to make sure that my office is reflective and has pictures of people of color and part of my culture as well, right? Talking about representation and being able to see yourself not only in the people that are there, but also in the spaces that are surrounding you.

She is also grateful for the opportunity to speak in Spanish with students. When asked if there were any last comments before ending the interview, Mariana wanted to highlight her experiences with bilingual counseling.

I think the one thing I would like to mention is that it is helpful...going to a therapist that looks like you and talks like you. I have had a few students who prefer to do our appointments in Spanish. So, it's just really cool to be like, 'Oh yeah, I'm bilingual. Like if you wanna talk in Spanish we could do our appointment in Spanish. If you want to do a little bit of both like we can do that.' I can think of a specific student like when I told them that they were so relieved. They were like, 'Oh, thank goodness because Spanish just comes a lot easier to me.' So, it's always really cool to have those experiences.

Through sharing this client experience, Mariana indicates the belonging is mutually validated within this space, and the connection is rewarding. Edgar shares a similar sense of pride when he gave another example of discussing shared identities in counseling sessions.

Sometimes, throughout the depths of the despair, seeing somebody who has lived that experience and come out of it, and, you know, looks as put together as we can be these days [laughs], can be inspiring to them. And then sometimes it comes out at the end of sessions. The student will say, 'Thank you,' and you know, and I'll say like, 'We've been seeing each other for a couple of weeks. [Why] say thank you now?' I had a student just out of the blue [say], "Just having a Latino counselor, a queer, Latino counselor has been so helpful to me." I thought, 'Damn! I wish I could record that as testimonial [laughs]'.

Even though shared identities can be helpful, there are other ways of creating a safe environment for students to process emotions and thoughts. Rose is conscious of the possibility of Latinx

students feeling hesitant to share with a White counselor. She is intentional in bringing up race and ethnicity when appropriate.

I try very deliberately to create an atmosphere where students can be transparent about their feelings and, you know, it's different for everyone, their degree of comfort. But like, you know, I've definitely had students talk openly about what it's like to be a person of color in general and, you know, working with professionals who are White, like myself. I always hope that people feel they can talk about that. You know, I'm also aware that just, you know, my showing up and looking like I do, you know, may sometimes prevent that open disclosure unless I'm actively inviting it and making them feel comfortable enough.

Rose's thoughts are connected with other counselors who mentioned the importance of creating a space for students to find their own voice. As mentioned previously, participants see Latinx students struggle with finding the "correct" choice that satisfies family and higher education. Edgar prioritizes guiding students to identify what they want regardless of other influences.

...It's just sort of drawing out the student's own opinions, or the student's own ideas, of what they want to do. If it's out in the open, then at least we know what we're dealing with, and we can see it. If you really don't want to be a doctor, just say it. You can go and become a doctor anyway, but at least say that you don't want to do it because then it's no longer hiding in the dark, and you're no longer experiencing this hair loss because you're so stressed out. It's out in the open now. We can acknowledge it. So, drawing out, what do *you* want? You know, what do *you* want in all of this?

Julia shared a similar experience with helping a student voice her own feelings and thoughts. The student had previously worked with two other therapists that were critical and did not allow the student to explore without judgement. She shared,

So [the student] had two horrible experiences prior to walking into my office, so I was very, I'm normally this way, but even especially so, very attentative. [I] really listened to her, really reflected back what I heard her issues were, her story was, what her needs were...She made an appointment right away that day for the next [session] and said, "I feel like you were the first person who has really heard me in the last five years."

When asked for clarification on what it takes to create a safe space to talk, Julia said,

It's about asking the right questions. It's about really listening intentionally and really trying to reflect back and let that person know that they're understood, that you

understand them. And I always have a very team approach with my clients. We're going to work together as a team to address these issues, and I'm going to check in with you, and I want you to let me know if anything doesn't feel comfortable or right for you, you let me know. I really want them to feel heard and seen and comfortable, and that their voice is important. We often will talk about situations that they felt they didn't have a voice.

Mark concludes this theme with highlighting what was said throughout each interview.

Mark serves as both an academic advisor and mental health counselor. Most students come into his office with the intent of reviewing their academic progress, but he is intentional with checking in. He said,

I think what I love about my job was just getting to know students, you know, where are you from? What's going on in your life? Right. So, if I'm working with a student, we could be picking a class, maybe I'm helping someone apply for graduation. OK. that's what you came for, but there's always opportunity. Like, hey, so where are you going next? You gonna transfer, right? Trying to nudge them towards like, you know, you have other plans?...I'm always looking to help a student out and kind of plant these seeds.

He notes that this may surprise students. For example, he describes an experience he's had with students when they begin to talk about their personal life and possibly see the decorations in his office, including a "Counseling" plaque, they will ask, "Hold on. You're a counselor? We can talk about these things?" His physical space and inviting questions encourage students explore their personal lives. His ultimate goal is to make students feel comfortable connecting with an employee on campus.

I think more importantly what I want my students to feel is welcomed...I want you to know I'm here to help you. You're not imposing on me. I'm not like someone else you may have encountered around the corner...that was probably White because mostly White people work here, who maybe just have a different vibe. I want you to know that you have people here who care about you, and you know you're safe here and you know, come on back.

Commitment to Improving the Campus Experience

Each interview discussion eventually led to the personal work that counselors are doing to appropriately respond to Latinx students. Every participant was committed to improving the campus experience for Latinx students in some way whether through internal work, direct work with students, or challenging systemic barriers. Joshua is a White man providing counseling services at an HSI with 86% of the population being Latinx. He spent much of the interview discussing his journey of challenging his privilege and using it to challenge systemic barriers. When discussing personal work, Joshua said he was grateful to attend a psychology program that challenged him to think about his identities. He began by saying his program didn't have "a lot of room to hide." He continued saying,

...And we just had to get really real about a lot of shit and really understand the value and the healing that each person brings into their work...and how...one of my friends calls it being multiculturally mindful, which I really like, is being in this space of understanding the worldview of other people, and how I interact with that. And how they experience me and how my experience influences them, what their reality may have been, and how I connect on a person-to-person level.

Brooke also mentioned how her program helped her learn the importance of talking about culture.

One, is like my training as a psychologist, you know, I had opportunities in my program, you know, to talk about culture. And then as part of my training, I did a one-year practicum at [University Name]. I did two years there, but one of the years was focused just on cultural competence and things like that. And so, we got to talk about it a lot.

Both Joshua and Brooke mentioned these experiences before becoming licensed have shaped their practice to this day. Through active discussions within his program, Joshua realized that his perspective is just one of many ways of life. This doesn't mean that his perspective is completely erased in session. Instead, whenever he hears a student share something he doesn't always agree with he "just sits with it" instead of challenging a student's perspective. He's

noticed the positive response to providing a non-judgmental space. He later said, “I feel like that’s why I gotta be quiet now if I don’t understand.” Joshua shared he actively continues to seek formal trainings and informal interactions with the Latinx community both out of enjoyment of connecting with others and continuing to improve his clinical practice. Stephanie also intentionally finds ways to discuss culture within her practice.

I’m a part of like, multiple groups that put out CEs for psychologists, and so I’m always trying to kind of push the anti-racism angle. I started consultation groups. I’ve also tried starting things here, and, um, so what I’ll say is I get a lot of... when I’m off and I’m teaching the training seminars for our interns, and when I’m doing that, I have a whole curriculum about having these conversations about our own identities, about our client’s identities, about how they come together.

Rose also emphasized the value of learning more about different cultures. She said,

Yeah. I guess you know one other one thing that I’ve found very enriching as a clinician is, like even learning about different sources of information from the students I work with. Like, one of the students that I was seeing for therapy had this whole panel discussion about like colorism within Latinx communities and just like invited me to listen in... I try not to, like, rely on the clients to be like educating me. But when they voluntarily do, like, provide extra information like that’s so enriching and really helps me in the way that I really relate to, you know, all the students.

Her openness and curiosity are characteristics that seem to appear in session as well. In previous themes, counselors identified the hesitance to interact with faculty and staff at times, particularly when they are White. One of her clients was so comfortable with Rose, they were willing to invite her to an event that was important to them. While rapport was most likely already strong, Rose’s attendance communicated to the client that their perspective is an important part of the campus community.

Participants’ perspectives also provided insight into how they respond to concerns related to culture and ethnic identity. Most participants shared that part of their response is helping students connect their concerns to systemic barriers. As Mark said, many Latinx students “don’t fully understand really what they’re enduring, and they’ve lived in the for so long it’s become

their baseline.” This direct conversation on oppression is often one that students hadn’t had prior to attending counseling. Joshua uses cultural exploration to help identify some of the factors that are contributing to a student’s mental health. He said,

What's interesting is that a lot of those students that don't often identify their race, ethnicity or identity in being Latinx as sort of the primary reason for therapy, right? It's only in some amount of self-discovery that they sort of you know identify like, “Oh, I have trouble talking about my feelings because nobody in my family talks about feelings because I'm a man in a Latinx family and Latinx families don't talk about feelings.

Other times, students may already understand how their race, ethnicity, and culture are sources of contention, especially within higher education. Stephanie told a story of an Afro-Latina student being told her hair was “unprofessional” within her academic program. When the student shared this story in a counseling session, this is how Stephanie responded, “I just said like, ‘You know, that sounds racist to me,’ and she I think she was surprised that I was saying that as a White person.” In this example, labeling was not necessary for the student’s understanding, but it was just as important for Stephanie, a White university employee, to label this as discrimination. Nadia connects each perspective together by discussing the importance of validating Latinx student experiences to challenge the feelings of shame and isolation.

Yeah, I think for some students, it really helps to normalize their experience and for them to also gain more of a collective perspective. It may not do much, just with understanding to change their current experience...but I think it does provide some relief and perspective and normalization to realize like, ‘Oh, it’s not just that I’m failing here an individual.’ This is an experience that the majority of people that I see walking around are having and hopefully it will relieve some shame, too.

It should be noted that oppression isn’t the only thing that is being identified. Joshua also takes time to help recognize strengths within the client.

There’s a lot of very high performing students at undergraduate and graduate level. They're kicking ass...You know, sometimes it's like showing them, and saying like. ‘Yeah, some of these kids, like went to Ivy League schools, or they had a different starting position maybe than you did, but look at look at how much further you've come, and look at how talented you are.’

Incorporating discussions on ethnic identity appears to be a valuable tool for change both within counseling and within the campus environment. As discussed in previous themes, students struggle with balancing family and school. Instead of forcing students to make a choice, Joshua integrates the importance of family as part of his work. He avoids villainizing families for their perspectives on school or past trauma.

So, if we try to talk about some of the harm that's done for them and it's this intergenerational stuff. Like if we don't provide that, that hook for compassion, it's gonna be hard to get them to even acknowledge the pain. There's gonna be so much like familiar resistance because, 'I don't want to think of my parents...Or, I don't know if I'm allowed to think of my parents as ever done anything bad, because that would be disrespectful'

He continues to focus on compassion. The distress students experience impacts both family relationships and academic progress, but it can be hard to have Latinx students “buy-in” to the idea of focusing on individual needs. He often poses the question, “How do you take care of yourself so you can be there for your family?” He continues to explain,

I call them leverage points, like spaces where we convince people to start to invest to themselves. Sometimes, like, you know, especially since coming to therapy, part of the reason they're there is they don't feel like they're worth it, but they got huge love for their family.

A final experience within this theme includes the advocacy that counseling staff do to bring change within the campus community. As reported in the second theme, participants were often dissatisfied with inclusion at HSIs. Even with the higher numbers of Latinx students compared to other campuses, many participants shared that interactions within higher education are frequently the topic of concern Latinx students. Though outside advocacy efforts may not be included in their job description, some participants spoke of advocacy being an important part of their role in supporting students. For example, Mark discusses a time when he reached out to faculty when a student was experiencing intimate partner violence.

You know, for some clients it might even really just be again that that kind of advocacy and assistance. I had one girl show up, Latina, not that it should matter what she looks like, with a black eye...And she was embarrassed to come to school, and she [is] super quiet, very introverted. She's like, 'I don't wanna have to explain this to my instructors. Can you?' I said, 'No problem. I'll write an e-mail to them, and I'll let them know what's going on, and we hope that they can really not bring attention to you.'

Without this extra effort from Mark, it is possible that faculty could make negative assumptions about why she was not attending school.

Other participants discussed the importance of being part of inter-campus committees to offer insights to faculty and staff that might now recognize actions that contribute to student distress. Stephanie is looking for ways to connect with other departments to provide culturally relevant trainings. Several participants mentioned that students do not want to report discrimination on campus. While Stephanie respects this decision, she also acknowledges that it shouldn't be an excuse for those in power to avoid difficult discussions. She says,

Sometimes students don't want to pursue stuff, and, in those cases, I might wait till some time has passed and then try to figure out like, the way I could like offer training to this group of faculty or talk to someone who could do that. I'm trying to find ways to sort of like address some of these bigger patterns that I hear in the system, and now I'm in a leadership role, so I hope to have a little more leeway to do some of this, or to partner with the other people on campus who roles it is to do that.

Advocacy was an important part of the counseling for all participants in this study. Each person described practices that prioritize improving Latinx student experiences on campus. For some, it meant personal reflection that challenged biases. For others, it meant empowering students to feel as though they belong in academia. Participants also shared the importance of being part of changing the campus environment.

Discussion

The current study produced four themes. The first theme identified was focused on family pressure as a source of stress for Latinx students. This conflict seems to come from the student's

desire to be close with family and keep with educational demands. Sy and Romero (2008) found similar results during their examination of family responsibilities among Latina college students. Students consistently described family as a priority and did not feel “obligation” to support family in any way. Instead, students viewed taking care of family as a valued part of life. A similar study interviewed Latina doctoral students about their roles within family and school. While participants acknowledged balancing family and school was stressful, they had found ways to either explain their academic needs to family or compartmentalize the two worlds (Espinoza, 2010). Participants in the current study seemed to collectively view family support cautiously. On one hand, they respect collectivism within Latinx families, but they are still concerned that support from parents may be translated into pressure by students.

The second theme identified that counselors perceive higher education to include systemic barriers that higher Latinx enrollment alone cannot solve. In fact, it was important for many participants to shift the conversation to systemic change rather than forcing families and students to have more separate lives. This shift in examining higher education roles is happening throughout research. A recent study interviewed faculty and higher education administrators to examine how Whiteness and White culture is maintained within HSIs (Scott et al., 2022). Furthermore, HSIs are being encouraged to further examine “serving” Latinx students (Garcia et al., 2019). The main concern participants identified was how faculty and staff viewed Latinx students. Their commitment to school was questioned when students prioritized family, and academic concerns were viewed through the lens of laziness rather than a lack of understanding the implicit expectations of higher education. Ching (2022) also identified faculty to have a “deficit” perception instead of acknowledging cultural strengths among Latinx students.

Within the third theme, participants shared how counseling centers can be a safe place for

students to explore thoughts and feelings. There are no known studies on what Latinx students experience during counseling sessions at HSIs, but the positive experiences are not often shared within the literature. Most studies on Latinx students focus on barriers that prevent students from attending counseling sessions (Lipson et al, 2022). Another large portion of the literature is theoretical (Baron & Constantine, 1997; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000; Ruiz & Casas, 1981) and application remains unexplored.

Only program evaluation was identified within the literature that focused on providing counseling support to African American and Latinx students in a grant-funded program focused on degree attainment. This program included culturally relevant counseling and resulted in high graduation rates (Juneau Mahan et al., 2004). The semi-structured interviews conducted for this study, were grounded in Gloria and Rodriguez's (2000) recommendations for college counselors to provide culturally validating counseling. It appears that participants were familiar with the psychosociocultural factors Gloria and Rodriguez identified and knew how they interacted with student mental health.

The final theme in this study identified participant's commitment to improving on-campus experiences for Latinx students. This finding was consistent with previous literature. Though knowledge advocacy at the college counseling level is limited, Storlie and Toomey (2016) found that professional school counselors often advocated for students through community referrals and actively pursuing trainings to increase cultural competence. Participant efforts to advocate for students across campus are validated through Ratts and Greenleaf's (2018) call to expand advocacy into the role of clinical practitioners.

Limitations

There are two main limitations to this study. First, participants for this study were most likely considering culturally relevant interventions prior to recruitment. The larger population of college counseling employees may not have the same passion or perspective and chose not to participate in this study. This bias possibly highlights only one perspective that is in tune with Latinx student needs. Second, this study invited participation from all counseling employees, including administrative support, direct counseling, and leadership. There were no participants representing administrative support, and the two participants in leadership focused more on direct practice experiences. As discussed in the current study along with previous studies, faculty and staff at HSIs do not always appear helpful to Latinx students. Counselors often have formal training on working with people with various identities and different backgrounds. Future research should include more perspectives from different roles, including administrative support that interacts with students and leadership to see how counseling center practices outside of therapy sessions impact Latinx students.

Implications for Research, and Practice

To the researcher's knowledge, this is the only study that focuses on counseling staff's response to Latinx student mental health needs. The current study focused on individual counselors' experiences. Future research should focus on understanding whether counseling centers are developing programs or policies specific to Latinx student needs. Additionally, researchers should also attempt to capture Latinx student experiences within HSI counseling centers. Previous research focuses mainly on factors that contribute to mental health or identifying help-seeking behaviors that influence counseling attendance (Schwitzer & Burnett, n.d.). However, little is known about how Latinx students perceive services during or after attendance.

Shifting focus to direct practice, this study offers tangible suggestions for college counselors. First, it is important for counselors to consider family dynamics. Though family pressure may cause distress, Latinx students may not always consider White orientations around boundaries and separation to be feasible or desired. Involving family in mental health services could be beneficial and serve as a novel approach in providing culturally relevant practices. An easy way to accomplish this is by providing mental health information for Latinx parents on the counseling center website. The counseling center can also be involved in parent orientation for incoming freshmen and transfer students, with an emphasis on providing ways to support students on their academic journey. A more involved approach could be inviting families to student sessions, or possibly providing family therapy services. Inviting families to student therapy sessions can help therapists empathize with other family members who are also impacted by the transition to college. There may be opportunities to explore this transition and potentially identify concerns that could be alleviated through community resources.

The results also showed an importance in direct conversations about race and ethnicity. As some counselors mentioned, Latinx students may not connect their individual concerns to oppressive systems. Helping students name this oppression can be the start of ethnic identity exploration and identifying cultural strengths that can be used within higher education. Ethnic identity exploration can be applied during individual sessions, but groups may offer an opportunity to build peer relationships as well. If the discussion of race and ethnicity is intimidating, there are formal trainings for providing therapy to Latinx students. For example, the Institute of Chicana/o Psychology offers trainings throughout the year on various topics, including ways to approach culture authentically in direct practice (Institute of Chicana/o Psychology, 2022).

A second suggestion for direct practice includes building bridges with on-campus resources. While it is common for counselors to refer students to other departments, it's been reported in this study along with previous research that faculty and staff may appear dismissive to Latinx students. Counselors could improve these connections by providing case management during sessions. Intentionally connecting with faculty and staff from other departments can help counselors prepare students on what to expect, including names of employees and information that will be requested from the student. Knowing employees from different departments allows for follow up conversations if necessary. Though case management might not always be considered within clinical practice, it could be argued that this approach is more culturally responsive, particularly with first generation Latinx students.

The last suggestion for college counselors does not involve individual work with students but a call to action at a systemic level. Every participant in this study mentioned the systemic barriers across campus. For change to take place, the unique perspective of mental health professionals cannot stay within the walls of the counseling center. College counselors should consider participation in interdisciplinary committees to encourage prioritizing student mental health across campus. Counseling centers can also extend invitations for tours or trainings to engage faculty and staff regarding student mental health.

Finally, the implications for higher education are straightforward. The positive experiences with Latinx counselors indicate a strong need for more Latinx faculty and staff at HSIs. The most recent information estimates the average Latinx student to Latinx faculty ratio is 146:1, which is much higher than the 10:1 ratio of White student to White faculty (Vargas, 2020). Realistically, it will take time to have more Latinx representation among faculty and staff. In the meantime, trainings for White faculty and staff are needed to reduce microaggressions and

enhance inclusion. The White counselors who participated in this study provide insights on how White faculty and staff can actively challenge implicit bias and embrace student perspectives that may be different from their own.

Conclusion

The themes presented in this study indicate that college counseling centers can be a major asset in assisting Hispanic-Serving Institutions with creating opportunities to serve Latinx students. Counseling centers offer a space to explore ethnic identity, which is associated with various components of academic success. Counselors can also mediate student interactions with other departments by making strong connections with faculty and staff across campus. Higher education should consider amplifying voices within the counseling center when developing programs and policies.

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Appendix A – Recruitment Email

Dear Counselor,

My name is Sarah Herrera, and I am a doctoral student at the University of Texas at Arlington in the School of Social Work. I am seeking college counselors to interview for my dissertation study. The purpose of this study is to understand the perspectives of college counselors providing mental health services to Latinx students while working at a Hispanic Serving Institution.

To participate in this study, you must:

Be employed at an on-campus counseling center within a Hispanic Serving Institution (practicum students and interns will not be interviewed at this time)
Have a reliable internet connection to attend a Zoom meeting

If you are interested in participating in this study, please click the link below to review and sign the consent form and sign up for a time to be interviewed.

LINK WILL GO HERE

For more information about this study, please contact the principal investigator, Sarah Herrera, LCSW, by email at sarah.herrera@uta.edu. In your email, please include your phone number, email address, and the best days/time to contact you. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Regina Praetorius, LMSW-AP-S for any questions or concerns by email at rtpraetorius@uta.edu

Thank you,

Sarah Herrera, LCSW
Principal Investigator

Study Title: Working Title: The Perspectives of College Counselors Providing Mental Health Services to Latinx Students at a Hispanic-Serving Institution

Appendix B – Online Informed Consent and Pre-Questionnaire

INFORMED CONSENT - PLEASE READ BEFORE CONTINUING WITH SURVEY:

Principal Investigator: Sarah Herrera, LCSW-S

Title of Project: The Perspectives of College Counselors Providing Mental Health Services to Latinx Students at a Hispanic-Serving Institution

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to understand how mental health counselors working within a Hispanic-Serving Institution perceive cultural validation as it relates to Latinx students?

Duration: You are being asked to complete (1) pre-screening questionnaire followed by (1) virtual interview through Zoom. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes. The results of this research will be shared with you to confirm whether your experience was accurately interpreted. Reviewing the results will take approximately 30-45 minutes.

Number of Participants: We expect up to 30 participations to complete this study.

Procedures: After reading through this informed consent, you will be given the option to agree to participate in this study. If you agree, you will complete the following pre-screening questionnaire. You will be asked some demographic information along with preferences for time/date to complete the interview. Once this questionnaire is completed, you will be sent a Zoom link by email to attend your scheduled interview. The results of this study will be shared after analysis to confirm whether your experience was accurately interpreted. The results will be shared with an option to reply directly to the email or schedule a second interview.

Possible benefits: If you take part in this project, there may or may not be a direct benefit to you.

Possible risks/discomforts: Some questions and responses may be sensitive. If you feel upset or uncomfortable, please tell the researcher. You have the right to refuse to answer any question and to quit the study at any time with no consequence.

Compensation: There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Alternative procedures: There are no other ways to participate in this study, but you can refuse to participate or quit at any time with no penalty.

Voluntary participation: Taking part in this project is up to you—it is your choice. You have the right to not take part in any or all of what we will do in the project or quit at any time without penalty. The information is for use by UTA researchers only.

Privacy: Every attempt will be made to ensure that your responses are kept confidential. All data collected in this study will be stored on a password-protected UTA cloud drive for three (3) years after the study ends. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings and conferences, without naming you as a participant. We cannot promise absolute privacy, though. If you

choose to tell us about current abuse of children or older adults or are currently thinking about harming someone else or yourself, we must notify the police or appropriate protective services. The Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the UTA Institutional Review Board (IRB), and research staff have access to the project records. Your records will be kept private according to legal requirements and will not be revealed unless required by law described above. The IRB at UTA has reviewed and approved this project and the information within this consent form. In the unlikely event that it becomes necessary for the IRB to review your research records, UTA will protect the privacy of those records to the extent permitted by law.

Contact for questions: Questions about this research study may be directed to Sarah Herrera sarah.herrera@uta.edu. You may also contact my faculty sponsor, Dr. Regina Praetorius rpraetorius@uta.edu. Any questions you may have about your rights as a research participant or a research-related injury may be directed to the Office of Research Administration; Regulatory Services at 817-272-3723 or regulatoryservices@uta.edu.

Online Consent:

You are providing your informed consent to participate in this study by moving forward with this questionnaire. By clicking the button below to move to the next question, you are stating that you are 18 years of age or older and have read or had this document read to you. By consenting to participate in this study, you are not waiving any of your legal rights. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may stop participating in the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits, to which you are otherwise entitled.

Name

Pronouns

Name of University

Location of University (City, State)

Job Title

If you have a professional license, please list credentials (do NOT include license number)

Email Address

Is there a reason you are not collecting race/ethnicity? I could imagine reviewers might like to see this in your sample description.

Appendix C – Semi-Structured Interview Script

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. To protect your identity, I will use pseudonyms when reporting results of this study. Could you please think of a pseudonym I can use when referring to you?

As a reminder, I am interviewing you to better understand your perspective on providing culturally relevant mental health services to Latinx students within a Hispanic-Serving Institution. There are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions. Participation in this study is voluntary and your decision to participate, or not participate will not be shared with your employer. The interview should take approximately one hour depending on how much information you would like to share. With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview because I don't want to miss any of your comments. Are there any questions about what I have just explained? May I begin recording?

Initial Questions

How did you begin working at a college counseling center?

What are some common issues that cause Latinx students to seek counseling?

When did you first learn your institution was an HSI?

Semi-structured guide for sub-question 1: How do mental health counselors perceive cultural validation when working individually with Latinx students?

What comes to mind when you think of cultural validation? How does it relate to your work with Latinx students?

How comfortable do you feel discussing racial/ethnic identity with Latinx students?

Semi-structured guide for sub-question 2: How do mental health counselors perceive the counseling center's efforts in creating culturally validating spaces for Latinx students?

Does your counseling center create culturally validating spaces for Latinx students outside of your personal approach? Why do you think this?

Possible prompt: What kind of resources are available to further your knowledge on culturally validating practices?

Possible prompt: What discussions take place at the counseling center that are related to HSI status or serving Latinx students?

Thank you very much for your time and the information you shared today. Before we leave, I'd like your permission to contact you after all interviews have been collected and analyzed. I want to share my findings to check if they are consistent with your experience. Is this ok? If so, what is the best way to contact you? Do you have any questions for me before we end this interview?

Follow up questions during member checking second interview.

Thank you again for your initial interview with me. I want to share my analysis with you and explore any thoughts you have related to the results.

Prompts: Does this match your experience?

Prompts: Do you want to change anything?

Prompts: Is there something missing that you would want to add?

Please note that this guide only represents the main themes to be discussed with the participants and as such does not include the various prompts that may also be used (examples given for each question). Non-leading and general prompts will also be used, such as “Can you please tell me a little bit more about that?” and “What does that look like for you”.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

Conclusion

The three articles in this dissertation aimed to explore culturally relevant responses within higher education. The first article identified how ethnic identity and psychological wellbeing are strengthened within Latinx-specific programming. All six dimensions of psychological wellbeing were represented with the study, and examples of ethnic identity exploration were found within each dimension. Additionally, components of Latinx-specific programming that encourage identity exploration were revealed.

The second article had two research aims. The first aim was to identify to what extent HSI counseling websites communicate information specific to Latinx students. Descriptive statistics reported from a constructive content analysis revealed HSI counseling websites rarely had content specific to Latinx students. The second aim was to identify what societal influences predict website content specific to Latinx students. The results of a hierarchical multiple regression found a statistically significant model that included Latinx student enrollment, awarding of the *Seal of Excelencia*, HSI strategic plans, awarding of HSI grant, being in a state with a member of the HSI congressional caucus, and being in a state that provided DACA tuition assistance. Out of these variables included in the model, it was found that these variables accounted for 20.6% of variance of variables representing culturally relevant messaging on counseling center websites. Latinx student enrollment and having an HSI congressional caucus member were the only significant variables in the final model. The results of this study indicate a disconnect between campus initiatives promoting Latinx student success and implementation of these initiatives.

The final study explored college counselor perspectives on factors influencing Latinx student mental health and how they respond during within their role. Four themes emerged from

this study, which include 1) Family: “You’ve gotta be super successful in college, but we don’t know how to help you;” 2) Higher Education: “It’s a White Supremacy culture if you asked me;” 3) The Counseling Center: “...at least I hope, people find it a little oasis;” and 4) Commitment to Improving the Campus Experience. These results indicate college counselors are in tune with Latinx student mental health and comfortable discussing complex topics like systemic oppression and ethnic identity. Strong relationships were built during counseling sessions, including positive interactions between Latinx students and Latinx counselors. There was also a shared frustration with campus culture outside of the counseling center. Participants shared various anecdotes regarding negative experiences between students and university employees.

Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice within Higher Education

The results of each study share a similar conclusion that student enrollment is not enough to create inclusive environments. Universities should be intentional with creating inclusive spaces, but this is not a common practice. Strategic plans should incorporate goals and objectives related to HSI status and serving Latinx students. Additionally, HSI grant applications should include programming and resources specific to Latinx students instead of general student success. If possible, requests should include funding to hire more Latinx faculty and staff due to the strong connection between faculty interactions and student Latinx student success. Future research should focus on identifying successful programs within higher education that serve Latinx students. Case studies of how strategic plans are implemented and evaluated should also be identified to identify tangible recommendations for best practice.

Focusing on college counseling centers, it appears that counselors have an inclusive perspective. However, these perspectives may stay within individual counseling sessions. Counselors and counseling centers should focus on collaborating with other departments to

implement wellbeing initiatives outside of the counseling center. This is especially important to do within HSIs because of the service utilization gap among Latinx students and the importance of creating a culturally validating campus environment. These efforts can help with the overall growing concern of college student mental health.

Though the results of the second and third article provide helpful information to counseling centers, these studies did not include a student perspective. Research on Latinx college mental health is mostly quantitative with a focus on barriers to service utilization. Little is known about the experiences of students who participate in on-campus counseling. Future research should incorporate more qualitative interviews with Latinx college students and their experiences with on-campus mental health services.