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A Qualitative Exploration of Undergraduate Students' Experiences of Psychological Safety in the Classroom

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A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IN THE CLASSROOM

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

MASTER'S THESIS

This is to certify that the Thesis of

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Abstract

Psychological safety is defined as an individual's perceptions that the space is safe for interpersonal risk-taking, such as asking questions or proposing an idea. The current study explored student experiences of psychological safety in the metaphorical, interpersonal undergraduate classroom learning environment. Twenty-two students were interviewed. Several themes emerged from the study, including students' internal perceptions and external experiences of the classroom learning environment. Findings offer insight for higher education practitioners.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Student engagement is the coin of the realm for higher education. Educators open spaces inside and outside the classroom in which students can engage and explore new ideas together. Recently, conversation surrounding these spaces has brought a new term into the dialogue: *safe space*. However, no clear, consistent definition of a "safe space" exists in the literature (Barrett, 2010).

For educators, providing a literal and metaphorical space hospitable for students to engage is important (Hunter, 2008). Literature describes overlapping descriptions of safety (Edmondson, 1999; Hunter, 2008). On the one hand, protecting students from physical violence, such as gun violence, is imperative; on the other hand, educators must also provide an environment hospitable for exploring and engaging in new ideas and honest dialogue in the classroom. The current study seeks to explore the latter.

Psychological Safety

One aspect of safety as defined in literature from the field of business management is that of psychological safety. Psychological safety is one's ability to engage him- or herself in work or school (Kahn, 1990) and take interpersonal risks (Edmondson, 1999). According to Edmondson (2003), psychological safety is both an outcome created by those in authority—such as managers or professors—as well as the perceptions of persons within the environment of the interpersonal space created by all

individuals in the group. Along the same vein, studies in the business context have been conducted under the working definition of psychological safety as an outcome to be achieved and a measurement of the perceptions of individuals within a team or group (e.g., Brown & Leigh, 1996; Edmondson, 2003; Shao, Feng, & Wang, 2017). To the contrary, Hunter (2008) described a safe space within a classroom as something to be cultivated rather than a psychological outcome to be achieved. While much literature exists studying psychological safety in the context of work and classroom environments, it is clear that scholars have no common definition of psychological safety.

Edmondson and Lei (2014) suggested the need for consistency in measuring and defining psychological safety. Most studies of psychological safety come from the business world. While some literature exists studying psychological safety in educational contexts, educators need a clearer understanding of what constitutes psychological safety as it pertains to college and university classroom environments. The current study does not seek to redefine psychological safety; rather, it seeks to provide a vivid description of student experiences of psychological safety in the classroom.

Classroom Learning Environment

Merriam-Webster defines *classroom* as "a place where classes meet" ("Classroom," n.d.) and *class* as "a body of students meeting regularly to study the same subject" ("Class," n.d.). The space can be a literal, physical room with four walls, desks, windows, and a podium, as well as metaphorical and having a singular purpose (Hunter, 2008). For example, given the current Covid-19 global pandemic, most classes at U.S. institutions are no longer able to gather in a physical location but still maintain their

purpose when meeting virtually. The current study explored aspects specifically within the physical classroom.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore undergraduate students' experiences of psychological safety in the classroom and compare those experiences to the literature. The research project sought to gain a better understanding of the impact of professors and peers, barriers to engagement, student experiences with failure, and other factors outlined in literature as influential towards psychological safety. The following question guided the study: How have undergraduate students experienced psychological safety in the classroom learning environment?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In order to understand the complexity of what constitutes a psychologically safe classroom, one must first delineate its various components. Literature outlines many definitions of learning spaces and safe spaces. Specifically, the construct of psychological safety has largely been studied in the field of management, but literature exists applying the term to educational contexts such as the classroom. The classroom can be literal or figurative, and a plethora of other factors impact the space. Below is an overview of the literature and definitions of terms used in the study.

Classroom as a Safe Space

Many educators agree students need a safe classroom space to learn, but a single, shared definition of "safe space" does not exist (Barrett, 2010; Turner & Braine, 2015). Hunter (2008) suggested four components of a safe learning environment. First, the space has a literal, physical dimension. Second, the space has a metaphorical component. The name of the space indicates its meaning and purpose. For example, "classroom" can be a physical space, but its name also gives a designation as to how the space should be used. Third, a degree of familiarity exists between those within the space. Lastly, according to Hunter (2008), a space is safe when it facilitates creative risk-taking. The space is hospitable for the individuals within it to explore ideas and ask questions without fear of repercussion.

Classroom Learning Environment

The current study focused on Hunter's (2008) definition of a classroom learning environment and the interpersonal dynamics within it. The classroom learning environment consists of an ecosystem of factors within the physical space (Sardinha, Almeida, & Pedro, 2017), including but not limited to relationships with peers and professors (Fredrickson, 2013), pedagogy (Harris, 2010), perceptions of risk (Clifford, 1991; Edmondson, 2003), and perceived interpersonal climate (Boostrom, 1998; Brown & Leigh, 1996; Hall & Sandler, 1982). Evans-Harvey (1995) noted the importance of the learning environment: "Faculty should promote a positive learning climate in the classroom by getting to know students, celebrating student diversity, distributing and following well-organized syllabi, building student self-esteem, creating team spirit, and paying attention to the dynamics of class discussions" (p. 1). The current study sought to explore the manifestation of the mixture of influences as outlined by Evans-Harvey (1995) in the learning space defined by (Hunter, 2008) in a concept from the management literature: psychological safety.

Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is a term first used by Kahn (1990) to describe how individuals employed themselves in particular situations and contexts. The concept has since been developed in the work of Edmondson (e.g., Edmondson, 2003; Edmondson, Higgins, Singer, & Weiner, 2016). Psychological safety is a group-level construct that emerges from a combination of factors such as trust, respect, and care for one another within an interpersonal environment (Edmondson et al., 2016; Mathieu, Maynard, Rapp,

& Gilson, 2008). Edmondson (1999) defined psychological safety as "a shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking" (p. 350).

Psychological safety has proven to play a large role in the workplace. It is a key factor in determining employee engagement and retention (Edmondson et al., 2016; Kahn, 1990). When working on a team with a high sense of psychological safety, individuals feel safe, less threatened by embarrassment or failure, and more engaged (Edmondson et al., 2016). Supportive, clear, and constructive leadership has been shown to have a positive effect on team psychological safety (Binyamin, Friedman, & Carmeli, 2018; Edmondson et al., 2016; Kahn, 1990). In educational settings, teachers serve an important role in creating psychologically safe learning environments for students (Kulikova & Maliy, 2017).

Interpersonal Risk

Psychological safety is a measure of an individual's perceived interpersonal risk in a given context. Edmondson (2003) posited four risks individuals face in a group setting: being seen as ignorant, incompetent, negative, or disruptive. Someone with a fear of being seen as ignorant might withhold a question that comes to mind, with the belief that the answer to his question is something he should already have known. "Most of us can think of a time when we hesitated to ask a question because it seemed that no one else was asking, or perhaps we believed that the information was something we were expected to know already" (Edmondson, 2003, p. 256). Second, the belief that admitting mistakes or asking for assistance will be negatively viewed by peers can lead to the fear of being seen as incompetent—lacking the skills or ability necessary to be successful. Third, individuals tend to preserve their own image by withholding negative feedback or

critical assessment of other ideas. Fourth, individuals avoid feedback or help for fear of intruding on others' time and becoming burdensome (Brown, 1990, as cited in Edmondson, 2003), which leads to the fear of being viewed as disruptive. The four risks given above are fears of others' perceptions. Specifically, individuals can fear the perceptions of their peers or their leader/superior.

Leadership and Psychological Safety

Those in leadership also have an impact on individuals' perceptions of psychological safety. The impact of leadership on psychological safety has largely been studied in the context of business and healthcare organizations (Appelbaum, Dow, Mazmanian, Jundt, & Appelbaum, 2016; Shao et al., 2017). Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon, and Ziv (2010) found psychological safety to be a mediating factor between leadership and team member involvement. Creating this environment has also been shown to increase team member engagement, innovative behaviors, and creativity (Binyamin et al., 2018). Leaders can positively influence group members' perceptions of psychological safety by creating caring, supportive environments through strong relationships (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004).

Peer Perceptions

The team leader is not the only individual who has an effect on a team's psychological safety; individuals within a team also have an effect on one another's perceptions. Argyris (1990) found that individuals have instinctual social defense mechanisms to avoid feeling threatened or humiliated, and organizations should shift governing values to reduce these behaviors. Argyris' findings are consistent with the later work of Edmondson (2003) in that individuals perceive threats or risks and adapt

their behavior to the perceived threat. Within teams that frequently meet face-to-face, such as a classroom, perceived psychological safety tends to be shared among all individuals of the work group (Edmondson, 2004).

Interconnectedness of Psychological Safety

Within a working group, several factors either affect individuals' psychological safety or are affected by an individual's psychological safety. Specifically, listening behaviors within the group can serve as catalysts for participation, creativity, and idea sharing (Castro, Anseel, Kluger, Lloyd, & Turjeman-Levi, 2018). Hood, Bachrach, Zivnuska, and Bendoly (2016) found that listening is especially important in highly specialized, high-functioning work teams. Additionally, behaviors of persons in leadership positions can have a positive or negative effect on the listening behaviors of individuals within their team. Those listening behaviors, in turn, affect how individuals perceive the work environment.

Furthermore, listening is an important factor within the dynamics of a group and can influence a team's creativity. Allowing others to be heard increases the likelihood that they will share new ideas (Castro et al., 2018). Conversely, ideas withheld by team members within a team context are wasted creative opportunities. A sense of psychological safety has a positive effect on listening behavior, increases the number of ideas shared, and has a multiplicative effect on the number of social and psychological resources available to the team (Agarwal & Farndale, 2017).

Psychological safety corresponds with several factors that all contribute to or curtail efforts to create psychologically safe work and learning environments. Sardinha et al. (2017) reported good leadership can help or hinder group dynamics. The

researchers found good leadership contributed to a high level of perceived psychological safety, which reduced stress, anxiety, and increased participation of individuals within the group. Leaders played a strong role in creating an environment in which individuals felt psychologically safe to explore, be creative, listen, and engage with others. Psychological safety affects team learning, which affects team creativity, which affects performance (Ortega, Van den Bossche, Sánchez-Manzanares, Rico, & Gil, 2014). Given the vast literature on psychological safety, some scholars question whether it is a state to be achieved or a process in which individuals within a space can engage (Entwistle, 2005; Hunter, 2008).

Psychological Safety as a Process

Hunter (2008) proposed that psychological safety and the creation of safe space within the classroom is not a state to be achieved but a process in which individuals engage. "The implication here is that safe space is therefore cultivated in differing dimensions according to how individuals collaborate in the process of producing that physical, metaphorical, social, or creative space" (p. 19). Cultivating the space, Hunter argued, is less about prescribing cognitive conditions and more about thoughtful acknowledgement of and reflection upon the generation of "moments of presence" (p. 19). These moments encourage collaboration and connection within the space. Hunter used the term *cultivation* to acknowledge the "as-yet unexplored temporal dimension in this safe space dynamic" (p. 16). Contrary to most research on psychological safety, Hunter argued that a safe space is continually being produced, not a stationary outcome. Psychologically safe spaces are spaces in which individuals are invited to learn how to engage and contribute to the ever-changing climate.

Accordingly, Sardinha et al. (2017) described the learning space as an ecosystem. In accordance with scholars such as Hunter (2008) and others, Sardinha et al. (2017) outlined a classroom as physical/architectural, metaphorical, and social. They also included two additional factors: cultural and technological. The researchers acknowledged the dynamic, interactive, multiplicative effect of a range of forces within a classroom learning environment. As noted, the current study sought to explore the manifestation of these influences, among others, within the perceived psychological safety of undergraduate students.

Psychological Safety and Higher Education

Research on psychological safety and safe spaces is vast but has potential to provide tremendous insight for higher education professionals. Literature shows that psychological safety is an internal belief among individuals (Edmondson, 1999), is impacted by group dynamics (Frazier, Fainshmidt, Klinger, Pezeshkan, & Vracheva, 2017; Mathieu et al., 2008), speaks to the fears of individuals and the risks they face, and involves trust, respect, and care of all within a space (Binyamin et al., 2018). Research has shown psychological safety to be a key factor in team learning (Edmondson, 1999; Hood et al., 2016), and scholars have found the role of leadership significant in its effects on team psychological safety (Binyamin et al., 2018; Edmondson et al., 2016; Kahn, 1990). Cultivating a caring, supportive environment increases psychological safety, team member engagement, and creativity (Binyamin et al., 2018). Research shows that a plethora of factors interact to create a learning environment.

This study sought to learn how the influences of psychological safety outlined in management literature manifest themselves with the metaphorical, interpersonal

classroom learning environment. How have undergraduate students experienced psychological safety in the classroom learning environment? Are the experiences of students consistent with literature? What can educators learn from students' experiences, and how can those experiences provide insight into future research opportunities? The current study explored these questions.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This study explored undergraduate students' experiences of psychological safety in the classroom learning environment. The classroom consists of the physical setting in which a particular class is being taught—four walls, eight windows, 25 stationary desks and chairs—as well as the metaphorical relational "space" that exists between the professor and students of the class. This study sought to explore students' experiences of psychological safety within the classroom and compare their experiences with previous literature. The hermeneutical phenomenological design consisted of purposeful sampling followed by semi-structured interviews. The researcher solicited senior students as participants to encapsulate four years of experiences in the undergraduate classroom.

Design

The research sought to better understand the question, "How have undergraduate students experienced psychological safety in the classroom?" The qualitative research was an exploratory study and used a hermeneutical phenomenological design (Creswell, 2013; Zahavi, 2003). The researcher chose this specific design because it allowed for adequate exploration of students' lived experiences of psychological safety. Furthermore, the research design led to the development of a thick, rich description of undergraduate students' experiences of psychological safety in the classroom. The study

sought not only to describe the lived experience of students but also to make meaning of those experiences.

Context

This study took place at a small, private, faith-based, liberal arts institution in the Midwest region of the United States. The university has approximately 1900 undergraduate students. Most students are between the ages of 18-22 and live on campus in the residence halls. Approximately 57% of residents are female, and 43% are male.

Participants

The study sought to include an equivalent number of male and female students in the sample. Thirteen female students and 9 male students participated in the study, totaling 22 participants. The researcher solicited participants using random purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013).

Procedure

Solicitation. Participants were solicited via email. The researcher emailed all senior students from the institution, including two follow-up emails. Students were blind carbon copied on the email in order to protect the identities of participants.

Interviews. Interviews were conducted one-on-one over a two-week period. The researcher emailed participants individually to establish interview times. The interviews took place in one of three conference rooms and lasted approximately 45 minutes. The interview protocol is outlined in Appendix A.

Recording, transcribing, and coding. The researcher recorded each interview. Interviews were then transcribed using Rev, an automated, secure, web-based service. Next, the researcher read through each transcript to get a sense of the data (Creswell,

2013). The researcher read through each interview a second time and notated individual codes of ideas that surfaced in the interviews. Once a list of codes was generated for each interview, the codes were compiled into a single list of representative quotes. Then, the researcher read through unmarked transcripts using the list of codes to count the prevalence of each and ensure the accuracy of the collective list of codes.

Analysis. The researcher sorted a composite list of coded segments into general themes and subthemes. The themes were analyzed to make meaning of students' experiences (Zahavi, 2003). The themes are interpreted and presented in this study as a description of student experiences of psychological safety (Creswell, 2013).

Validation. Peer review and member checking validation strategies were employed (Creswell, 2013). The researcher's thesis supervisor, methodologist, and the Institutional Review Board reviewed the protocol for solicitation and the interviews. The researcher sent the initial analysis of each interview via email to the corresponding participant to verify its accuracy. The researcher's thesis supervisor reviewed the collective analysis. The researcher used the two validation strategies of peer review and member checking help mitigate researcher bias and ensure accuracy of the analysis.

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this study was to understand undergraduate student experiences and perceptions of a psychologically safe classroom learning environment. Comments from participants gravitated around two primary themes: *individual perceptions* of the classroom learning environment and the impact of *external influences*. Additionally, nine subthemes emerged from the research. Figure 1 provides an overview of the themes and subthemes from the study. The number beside each theme represents the number of coded excerpts pertaining to each theme. Responses from the 22 student participants generated 547 total coded excerpts.

Undergraduate Student Themes
Theme #1: Internal Perceptions (278)
Subtheme #1a: Receptive Environment (101)
Subtheme #1b: Fears (74)
Subtheme #1c: Failure (63)
Subtheme #1d: Self / Student (37)
Subtheme #1e: Institution (3)
Theme #2: External Influences (269)
Subtheme #2a: Interpersonal (132)
Subtheme #2b: Pedagogy (71)
Subtheme #2c: Physical Space (35)
Subtheme #2d: Content (31)

Figure 1. Theme outlines for undergraduate students

The following discussion provides a description and frequency of each theme and subtheme, connections between subthemes, and differences between male and female responses.

Theme 1: Internal Perceptions (278)

Slightly more than half of the participants described feelings, fears, or impressions of outside influences. The theme *internal perceptions* describes ways in which participants perceived the learning environment. Examples include participants describing the receptivity of peers and professors to one's own thoughts and questions, one's own confidence and approach to the learning environment, feelings of fear, and experiences with failure in the classroom.

Participants were asked to define psychological safety as well as a safe classroom learning environment. Other questions asked participants to describe their participation in class, the impact of peers and professors on their engagement, the dynamic between peers in the classroom, factors needed for students to do their best work in the classroom, and others. Participants' responses gravitated around four subthemes, including *receptive environment*, *fears*, *failure*, and *self/student*.

Subtheme 1a: Receptive environment (101). *Receptive environment* refers to the student perceiving other individuals in the classroom to be open to others' perspectives and the ability to freely engage with others in the space. One student noted the importance of "feeling that your thoughts and opinions are validated within classroom settings. Do you feel like your thoughts are going to be validated and taken, or do you feel like you've been kinda brushed off" (SF12)? Other participants mentioned the need for receptivity to minority voices, such as students of color, students who identify as

LGBTQ, or other students with unpopular opinions counter to mainline university culture. However, responses also indicated spaces and contexts in which voices were not welcomed and the risks those students faced when wanting to engage in class:

> I also feel a lot of risk in like, there's a lot of times where I feel like maybe my perspective isn't always welcome on certain things. So if we're talking about politics or if we're talking about race or if we're talking about like LGBTQ plus or like whatever, there's oftentimes this like weight of like here we go again, where we're going to speak up and then everybody's going to react and feel uncomfortable or not engage well or respond in really unhelpful or defensive ways or aggressive ways. (SM10)

Evident in these and many other responses is the need for classrooms that welcome all voices to the table, so that every student feels he or she can participate in class.

Subtheme 1b: Fears (74). The subtheme *fears* comprises individual respondents' fears and anxieties related to engaging in class: others' perceptions, appearing ignorant or incompetent, revealing one's true self, and the fear of earning bad grades, among others. Reponses indicated various fears manifesting as barriers to learning and engagement. One student discussed the paralyzing effect of fear, saying "It can be pretty terrifying and paralyzing to be asking questions because you don't want to offend or look insensitive or that sort of thing" (SF3). Fear, in this case, stemmed from the student's perception of how others in the class would receive and interact with her engagement

Subtheme 1c: Failure (63). *Failure* is another clear subtheme that emerged from the data. *Failure* represents comments from participants referencing ideas such as the

freedom to fail and make mistakes in class, how professors approached and responded to failure, and seeing failure as part of the learning process and not detrimental to one's overall grade. For example, one respondent described a positive learning experience that involved failure:

> And I just felt comfortable in a lot of my Spanish classes knowing that I'm going to make mistakes, but that's also how I'm going to learn. And I felt more comfortable that I didn't know. I think the class that you feel more comfortable making mistakes is when you know it's okay to not know. (SF11)

In addition, one respondent described class experiences in which failure was welcomed and his overall grade was not the end goal:

> When the grade is the end goal, it feels a lot scarier to fail. But, in classes where it's kind of appreciated by everyone and by the professor that the grade, while it is the measure of like what the professor does, it's not the end product. (SM2)

Overall, respondents indicated the need for supportive professors, freedom from fear of earning bad grades, and freedom to make mistakes in class.

Subtheme 1d: Self/Student (37). The subtheme *self/student* represents respondents' views of themselves and their abilities. *Self/student* describes participants' views of their own confidence, preparedness, ability or inability to express themselves, and desire to engage and learn. One participant remarked:

> I was confident in my ability and my place in the class. It was easier to participate in the conversation and the discussion because I was coming from a place of groundedness [*sic*] and security. Whereas in other classes sometimes it's

> really hard to participate because I'm not as confident in the subject or my knowledge on the subject. (SF9)

Her response touched on many other subthemes from the research, which are discussed later.

Subtheme 1e: Institution (3). The subtheme *institution* engirds participants' perceptions of the university context and stance of university administration on particular issues, which then influenced the participants' felt abilities to engage in class. This subtheme is incorporated under the *internal perceptions* primary theme because, while the responses reflect some truth about the institution, the responses plainly represented students' perceptions of the university context. Though only three comments mentioned the impact of the institutional context, the researcher deemed it important based on the weight of responses from participants. For example, one student spoke to the specific influence of the institution on the classroom environment:

> That can be difficult. I think the larger [university] atmosphere overwhelms in specific class atmospheres, because it is well-known that those sorts of ideas aren't welcomed - or encouraged maybe is a better word. Yeah, so kind of no matter how open or interested your professor might be, it might be difficult to talk about that stuff sometimes. (SF3)

The theme of *internal perceptions* and subsequent subthemes characterize how students viewed themselves and their environment. Furthermore, student participants also described the specific influence of external factors.

Theme 2: External Influences (269)

The theme *external influences* encompasses participant responses regarding factors influencing his or her subjective experience that are outside his or her control. Participants commented on relationships with peers and professors, giving and receiving feedback to and from peers and professors, the professor's teaching style, the physical layout of the classroom, and the content of the class. The following quotation represents many of the subthemes found in the data:

> I don't know if that's just because of the nature of that department of everyone being so close and willing to help, but anytime there's feedback, positive or negative, it makes me more comfortable with those people. I think being in those classes since freshman year, with the same people and constantly giving feedback, had a snowball effect of getting more comfortable. (SM3)

Of the 547 coded responses, 269 referred to external influences of students' experiences in the classroom. The theme *external influences* includes four subthemes of *interpersonal*, *pedagogy*, *physical space*, and *content*.

Subtheme 2a: Interpersonal (132). The subtheme *interpersonal* is the most prominent subtheme that surfaced in the study. *Interpersonal* encapsulates responses referencing relationships with professors and peers, as well as experiences giving and receiving feedback to and from peers and professors. All 22 respondents mentioned the importance of having a relationship with peers in the classroom. One participant noted:

> We were really good class friends and bonded a lot over that. And I think a lot of it is the class friends that, in my experience, are the best people in the best learning environment is where you're not really friends outside of class but you

> are really good friends in class. Then you don't have anything else to talk about except for class. (SF7)

Additionally, 16 of the 22 respondents referenced the positive impact of a good relationship with their professors.

Positive and negative responses giving and receiving feedback were also included in the *interpersonal* subtheme. Many participants who mentioned an experience with giving or receiving feedback also mentioned the importance of the relationship with the person with whom they were giving or receiving. One respondent reflected on her experience with feedback:

> I think too, I'm more capable of listening to constructive criticism from a professor that I respect and have an established relationship with rather than someone I don't know and I'm just in their class for a gen ed or for whatever reason. (SF10)

Along with relationships and feedback, respondents also discussed course delivery method.

Subtheme 2b: Pedagogy (71). The subtheme *pedagogy* represents the effect of course delivery method and the professor's teaching style on the classroom learning environment. Participants expressed a preference for discussion-based classes. Half of the participants stated an opposition to courses delivered via lecture. One respondent expounded on the importance of discussion-based classes for learning about difficult topics and the influence of professors who deliver courses via lectures without allowing students to contribute to the discussion:

> In the classes I take that are mostly discussion-based—and they're not easy discussion-based classes, they're hard topics—having that space where everyone is seen, everyone feels important, and everyone can talk is important . . . I think the way that professors ask questions or other people in the class ask questions. Oftentimes the professor is telling me what they think is true, but doesn't offer up a space, like what if I don't agree with that? Is there a space to ask questions? You're talking about how [professor] often times—while [they] are a great professor—says [their] opinion and there's no room for difference, like "this is definitely right." (SF12)

In addition to course delivery method, 14 of the 22 respondents mentioned the impact of individual professors' teaching styles; this includes passion, giving clear expectations, setting the tone for the class, and intentionally welcoming others' views. One respondent commented:

> The only times he only made any qualifications about participation is—there were some students who raised their hands after every question—and he would say "alright let's give someone else a chance to have some thoughts." So, the only time [professor] discouraged participation was in order to hear more voices. (SM4)

According to this participant, it is important for professors not only to open space for all voices but also to limit some of the more prominent voices to allow for others in class to speak.

Subtheme 2c: Physical space (35). The subtheme *physical space* derived from participant comments referencing class size or tangible qualities of the classroom. Many

participants mentioned the negative impact of a large number of students in the class, the benefits of a small number of classmates, and the positive impact of seating arrangements and having windows. One participant commented on her engagement in class with respect to class size, "Well, if it's a big class, I would say I don't ever [participate]" (SF5). In contrast, another participant discussed the impact of a smaller class: "Smaller class sizes usually are better for my performance. In that regard, I feel a more intimate setting helps with that as well. The more comfortable you feel with people in the class, the more you can engage freely" (SM4).

Participants also described the importance of the physical layout of the classroom. Five participants mentioned the positive impact of arranging desks to sit in a circle, including this student: "In some of my classes we sit in circles, and I think that's important because it helps everyone feel included. It's including everyone and no one can hide" (SF12). Students also mentioned windows as a key feature for class engagement: "I like windows. I think the classes I've had that don't have windows just suck, and you get really tired or out of it or you always feel like it's a rainy day" (SM3). Finally, in addition to the physical layout of a space, students also valued the subject matter of the course as important for engagement.

Subtheme 2d: Content (31). The subtheme *content* emerged from the data within the *external influences* theme. *Content* includes comments from participants pertaining to the subject matter of the class, whether the class was a general education course, and the impact of discussing sensitive issues such as race. Sixteen of the 22 participants mentioned the importance of the subject or content being covered in class. Seven students expounded on the lack of engagement in general education courses. One

student mentioned, “I think a lot about my general education courses. It’s A, no one wants to participate sort of thing, because they don't care. And B, don't know anyone. I'd say that hinders [participation]” (SF11).

Students also mentioned the impact of sensitive issues discussed in class. One student commented, “I've been afraid in situations where the topics are controversial or if it's like in history class and we're talking about racism, I don't know what to say about it” (SM10). While coded segments such as this give evidence for one primary subtheme, participant comments largely touched on more than one idea, indicating several connections between subthemes.

Connections between Subthemes

The dynamic between the nine subthemes is complex, but many connections can be drawn out of participant responses. *Interpersonal* was the predominant subtheme from the study. Relationships with peers and professors saturated student responses in connection to other factors. For example, one student’s response indicated an interplay between the dynamic with his peers and the relationship with their professor:

> Some peers really hurt my ability to engage, and some peers—which is also another sign of a good professor—When a professor can, even with like the most rowdy guys or whatever, when he or she can enter into that space and actually be rowdy a little bit too with the guys, then bring us back. That is a skill that I get so hype about. (SM7)

These relationships also impact the dynamic within the classroom, and responses indicated a connection with the subtheme *receptive environment*:

> At first we didn't know our classmates super well, but we started off with testimonies, which I think always opens people up and makes people feel comfortable. Then throughout the class we just deepened those relationships and by the end I was like, no, I can say whatever I need to say. (SF8)

Interpersonal encapsulates many aspects of relationships within the classroom and the impact those relationships have on other factors for psychological safety. Responses indicated relationships serve as a buffer or catalyst in relation to other subthemes, including *receptive environment*, *fears*, *failure*, *pedagogy*, and *content*.

Conversely, responses indicated an impactful relationship between other subthemes and *interpersonal*, including *self/student* and *physical space*. Participants indicated a negative impact between their own confidence or engagement and the classroom dynamic. Responses also included an effectual relationship between small class size and student connections with peers and professor.

With less frequency, participants gave responses suggesting relationships between subthemes such as *pedagogy* and *failure*, *institution* and *fears*, as well as between *physical space* and *fears*. For example, one respondent's comment referenced the benefit of professors incorporating productive failure into how they taught courses, pointing to a potential relationship between the subthemes of *pedagogy* and *failure*:

> [The class is] very conducive to making mistakes because you know that according to his standards, you probably are going to make some mistakes because he holds us to high standards, but he's going to work with us every step of the way to make fewer mistakes—to become better [at what we do]. (SM4)

The magnitude of the subtheme *institution* comes in its relation to *fears*. As previously quoted, one respondent connected the larger institutional influence on students' fears to engage in class:

> That can be difficult. I think the larger [university] atmosphere overwhelms in specific class atmospheres, because it is well-known that those sorts of ideas aren't welcomed—or encouraged maybe is a better word. Yeah, so kind of no matter how open or interested your professor might be, it might be difficult to talk about that stuff sometimes. (SF3)

Similarly, students mentioned class sizes in relation to their willingness to engage, suggesting a connection between the subthemes *physical space* and *fears* as well as *physical space* and *receptive environment*. Even with the many connections delineated here, responses indicated no factor to be completely isolated, but rather part of an ecosystem of interconnected influences within the classroom environment.

Comparisons between Male and Female Participants

While no substantial gender differences were found, a few noteworthy comparisons are worth mentioning. The study had 13 female participants and nine male participants. Female participants disproportionately responded in seven ways:

- When describing a receptive classroom environment, 6 of the 13 female participants mentioned the ability or inability to share thoughts and questions; only one of the nine male participants answered in this way.
- Six of the 13 female participants stated fears of others' perceptions of them, compared to the male participants who made no explicit reference to fear of others' perceptions.

- Seven of the 13 female respondents made specific mention of either experiencing grace and care or the need for grace and care from professors when dealing with *failure*, in contrast to just two of nine male respondents making similar mention.
- For the subtheme of *institution*, three female participants mentioned the negative impact of a conservative, faith-based institution, compared to zero male participants.
- Six of 13 female participants made specific reference to the negative aspects of general education courses on their willingness to engage in class, compared to only one male student.
- Seven female students mentioned the negative impact of a large class size, and nine mentioned the positive impact of small classes; only three male students responded in similar fashion.
- Five female participants discussed the benefits of discussion-based classes, compared to only one male participant.

The implications of these differences for future studies are further discussed in Chapter 5.

Summary

The analysis of the data fosters an understanding of the essence of student experiences of psychological safety in the classroom. Two primary themes and nine subthemes emerged from the data. The first theme, *internal perceptions*, contained the subthemes *receptive environment*, *fears*, *failure*, *self/student*, and *intuition*. The second theme, *external influences*, included the subthemes *interpersonal*, *pedagogy*, *physical space*, and *content*. Participants largely described their experiences in the classroom in similar ways. Key findings include the following:

1. Students desire to have a relationship with their peers and professors, and these relationships impact how students engage in the classroom.
2. Students desire a classroom environment—fostered by peers and professors—that is open to questions, the sharing of their own experiences, and the voices of minority students of color, LGBTQ students, and unwelcome/unpopular opinions.
3. Students desire small, discussion-based classes as opposed to large lecture-style classes.
4. The physical layout of the classroom impacts student perceptions of the learning environment.
5. Students engage in class based on their own self-confidence along with their fears of how their peers will receive and perceive their engagement.
6. Student engagement in class may be impacted by the content/subject of the class and the professor's teaching style.
7. Student engagement in the classroom may be impacted by the larger institutional culture.

The findings revealed the complexity of psychological safety and resulted in an increased understanding of undergraduate student experiences in the classroom.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The current study sought to gain a better understanding of undergraduate students' experiences of psychological safety in the undergraduate classroom, as well as which factors might have an impact on students' experiences. The study developed a set of questions (see Appendix A) based on literature regarding psychological safety and related themes (Edmondson, 1999, 2003; Hunter, 2008; Kahn, 1990). The present research sought to learn about student experiences in light of literature.

Some scholars suggest the responsibility of leadership to create an environment hospitable for risk-taking and learning (Edmondson, 2003; Lightle, Castellano, & Baker, 2017). However, in accordance with other literature (Castro et al., 2018; Hood et al., 2016; May et al., 2004), findings shed light on the interconnectedness of various factors related to psychological safety. While the impact of professors in classroom leadership is important, relationships with peers and professor surfaced as the most prevalent influence in the study. Other less prevalent but equally noteworthy findings are also discussed.

Connection of Findings to Literature

Finding #1. *Students desire to have a relationship with their peers and professors, and these relationships impact how students engage in the classroom.* This finding is most significant and consistent with literature. Relationships can positively impact engagement in class and motivation (Astin, 1984; Wilson, Ryan, & Pugh, 2010),

indicating a positive impact on psychological safety. Relationships with peers greatly influence how students perceive the learning environment (Frisby & Martin, 2010; Harper & White, 2013). According to Fredrickson (2013), even basic body language such as maintaining eye contact and smiling at students improves student perceptions of relationships and the learning environment. The students in the current study clearly expressed a desire to have a sense of connection to those with whom and from whom they learned.

Finding #2. *Students desire an open and welcoming classroom environment—fostered mostly by peers and professors—that is open to questions, the sharing of their own experiences, and the voices of minority students of color, LGBTQ students, and unwelcome/unpopular opinions*. This finding is congruous with literature. Six male and six female students mentioned the importance of an open environment where all voices are welcomed. The way students perceive the learning environment directly impacts their engagement with the environment as well as their learning outcomes (Lizzio, Wilson, & Simons, 2002).

However, some participants also mentioned the inability to share their own thoughts or instances when their peers were unable to share. Specifically, six of the 13 female participants mentioned classes in which they did not perceive their voice to be welcomed. Further, three of those female students specifically mentioned their voice was least welcomed in religious classes. As Hall and Sandler (1982) discovered in their chilly climate study, voices of female students may not always be welcomed, encouraged, or supported in the classroom.

Additionally, two students mentioned the environment of their classes not being hospitable or welcoming for students of color, those who identify as LGBTQ, or those of minority/unpopular opinions. It is important for professors to understand the needs of an increasingly diverse student body and provide a classroom space in which all feel welcome (Neumann, 2005). Students value the ability to openly speak in class, regardless of their personal backgrounds or how they identify, and they desire a learning environment that welcomes their voices.

Finding #3. *Students desire small, discussion-based classes as opposed to large lecture-style classes*. This finding is, again, consistent with literature. Students expressed a desire for small class sizes with a discussion-based pedagogy, as opposed to a large, lecture-style class. Entwistle (1991) found lecturing to be an ineffective method of teaching and that it negatively impacts students' perceptions of the learning environment. Lage, Platt, and Treglia (2000) found students to be largely opposed to lecture classes.

Finding #4. *The physical layout of the classroom impacts student perceptions of the learning environment*. Along with class size and pedagogy, the literal physical space also matters within a learning environment (Harris, 2010). Three students in the study specifically mentioned the need for a classroom to have outward-facing windows and that a lack of windows negatively impacted the learning environment. Educators should consider the many factors within the literal physical space of the learning environment and how they influence student learning and engagement.

Finding #5. *Students engage in class based on their own sense of self-confidence as well as their fears of how their peers will receive and perceive their engagement*.

Edmondson (2003) posited that individuals who feel psychologically safe feel confident to fully engage without fear of retribution or negative perceptions of peers. Eight students described an innate confidence in their own ability to engage in class. Participants also reported fears of feedback or criticism, bad grades, others' perceptions, appearing ignorant or incompetent, or revealing their true selves. These responses fall in line with the research of Edmondson (2003): individuals risk being seen as ignorant, incompetent, disruptive/negative, and of seeking feedback. The balance between students' own self-efficacy and how they perceive the learning environment will significantly prime their engagement within that environment (Wanless, 2016a).

Finding #6. *Students engage in class based on the content/subject of the class, and the professor's teaching style.* Participants in the study described the importance of both pedagogy and subject matter within the classroom. In accordance with literature, leadership style impacts follower engagement (Bruner, 2005; Edmondson, 2003; Ortega et al., 2014; Shao et al., 2017; Trammell & Aldrich, 2016; Walters & Diab, 2016). In the present study, 14 of 22 students spoke of the importance of the teaching style of the professor. A professor's pedagogy sets the tone for the semester and is important to making students feel included and welcomed (deLuse, 2018), thus increasing psychological safety.

Additionally, participants reported the relevance of the class content. Certain subjects illicit a greater desire to engage than others, and some subjects bring about a natural fear or discomfort with engagement. Scholars have reported the importance of psychological safety in classes covering sensitive content such as racism or feminism (Ludlow, 2004; Williams, Woodson, & Wallace, 2016). Students in the study described

feeling less inclined to share their thoughts if posed with a greater risk of being wrong or not being received well by peers because of a differing opinion, based on the subject matter of class.

Furthermore, eight participants viewed failure as a necessary part of the learning process, and ten participants mentioned the importance of professors' approaches to failure. Carmeli et al. (2010) found the importance of openness and availability led to greater creativity and risk-taking among team members. The responsibility of creating an environment for students to feel free to take risks, ask questions, and make mistakes largely falls on the professor. Clifford (1991) reported greater learning in students who took greater risks and made more mistakes, in congruence with Sanford's (1966) theory of challenge and support (as cited by Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). Professors must create a learning environment in which students are not afraid to explore difficult ideas, take risks, and make mistakes.

Finding #7. *Student engagement in the classroom may be impacted by the larger institutional culture*. The weight of this finding is significant due to the limited amount of research on the topic. Cuellar, Krist, Nichols, and Kuzel (2018) studied the psychological safety of healthcare teams in light of the influence of ownership and company culture. They found the institution to indirectly impact employees' perceptions of psychological safety via its management structure. The magnitude of the finding from the current study is in the specific ways participants mentioned the institutional influence. The context for the study was a private, faith-based institution. The religious affiliation impacted students' perceptions of psychological safety in the classroom.

Implications for Practice

The current findings, in aggregate and in parallel with student development theory, have significant relevance for higher education. Astin's (1984) student involvement theory includes engagement in the classroom as one important aspect. Psychological safety is a notable component of engagement in the classroom. In the current study, relationships with peers and professors surfaced as the most significant finding. Intentionality from professors and other educators to build rapport with students can help build psychological safety; this should start with the first day of class.

First-day class activities can help the students get to know each other and their professors (deLuse, 2018), as opposed to only covering the syllabus and delving into course content. In their interviews, some participants also mentioned ways in which the relational dynamic changes throughout their four years. Building relationships—or perceiving that one's professors are warm, inviting, and open to developing a personal relationship—should start early in students' academic careers.

Students vary in their views as to what makes a good professor (Trammell & Aldrich, 2016; Valdez, 2015). Professors should work to include all voices and perspectives, especially those of students of color, female students, and students with contrary beliefs or opinions. Three female students from the study specifically mentioned they felt their voices were least welcomed in religious classes. It is important for professors to understand that the content of the class may cause some students to feel psychologically unsafe, and these professors may need to make a concerted effort in their pedagogy to include minoritized student voices. Thus, building relationships with students and getting to know their stories becomes ever more important for educators.

In addition to relationships, good pedagogy is a necessary part of the process of cultivating a psychologically safe learning environment (Harris, 2010; Hunter, 2008). Relationships with peers and professors can help mitigate less effective pedagogy, but highly effective teaching methods invite students into the process and further increase their positive perceptions of the learning environment. Administrators should seek to limit the number of large, lecture-style classes offered to students (Entwistle 1991, 2005). While students described large classes as a negative influence of their ability to engage, their descriptions often paired negative experiences with lecture-style classes. Professors can venture away from lecturing and towards more interactive pedagogies when teaching large classes. Though connecting individually with students becomes increasingly difficult with larger class sizes, relationships and rapport help cultivate an open and inviting space, ideal for teaching methods seeking student engagement (Kahn, 2014).

Cultivating a psychologically safe learning environment involves teachers clearly and consistently communicating to students that they are free to make mistakes, explore, and fail as part of the learning process. This includes building productive failure into the course curriculum (Opdecam, Everaert, Van Keer, & Buysschaert, 2014), such as resubmission of work and flexibility with deadlines. The ability to iterate connects with the learning cycles proposed by Kolb and Goldman (1973). Giving students challenging work with the ability to fail, a safety net so that failure will not negatively impact grades, and a supportive class environment can increase learning and psychological safety (Rassuli & Manzer, 2005). Even with best efforts of professors to provide students a challenging yet supportive learning environment, each student approaches learning and failure differently and will respond accordingly (Kolb & Goldman, 1973). Thus,

professors must also provide frequent, timely, and clear feedback on coursework so that each student may incorporate it into his or her own learning.

Altogether, it is important for educators to view the classroom not only as cause and effect of individual factors but also as an ecosystem (Sardinha et al., 2017); they must take into consideration the simultaneous, interactive impact of a multitude of factors. Professors must invite the voices and experiences of all students in the physical classroom into the metaphorical classroom space, especially those outside of the majority. Educators must also understand the potential impact of larger university culture within each classroom, particularly at private, faith-based institutions. In the current study, the religious affiliation of the institution inhibited the ways in which some students felt they could participate in various classes. A multitude of elements internal and external to students' experiences influence the ways they experience the classroom, and professors should see their own efforts in the classroom in light of this finding.

Implications for Future Research

The current study sheds light on several aspects of undergraduate student experiences of psychological safety in the classroom, but it also provides insight into future research opportunities. First, further inquiry is needed into the differences between male and female experiences of psychological safety in the classroom. Female participants in the study noted feeling less psychologically safe and less welcomed to voice their opinions in classes with more men, in classes taught by male professors, and in classes covering particular topics on which peers had stronger opinions. Future studies could provide additional insight by exploring these differences and others.

Additionally, the qualitative, exploratory nature of the study provided general insights into student experiences of psychological safety. However, the study did not take into account race, ethnicity, hometown, sexuality, or any other demographic identifiers of the interview participants other than gender. Participant responses suggested that experiences of students of color, LGBTQ students, and other minority populations may differ from those of students in majority populations. A tremendous opportunity exists to explore these issues as they pertain to student experiences of psychological safety in the classroom.

Along a similar vein, institutional context surfaced as a potentially impactful influence for students at small, faith-based institutions. How does the religious affiliation of an institution impact students' experiences of psychological safety in the classroom, especially minority students or those of minority/oppositional positions on sensitive topics? Additional research is needed to explore this idea.

Finally, the current study did not include the perspectives of professors. How do professors perceive their own creative efforts towards a psychologically safe learning environment, and how does this differ from their students' experiences? Further research should explore the comparative differences between perceptions of professors and the reality of student experiences.

Limitations

Though many findings surfaced in the study, some limitations existed. First, the research sought participants from a private, faith-based, liberal arts institution in the Midwest. The sample group is not representative of all students from every U.S. institution, and results should be adapted accordingly. Second, personal bias of the

researcher may likely be present. Given the nature of the study as a hermeneutical phenomenology, the researcher derived meaning from the data, which required personal judgement. Another researcher interpreting the same data may have slightly different results, though steps in data analysis were taken to ensure this discrepancy would not be substantial (see Chapter 3). Finally, while the results note a few differences between male and female students, this was not the design of the study. The scope of distinctions made in the study is limited. As noted above, future studies should investigate experiential differences between male and female students. Despite the study's limitations, the findings remain relevant for college and university educators.

Conclusion

Educators must continue learning, preparing, and improving their efforts in the classroom towards the cultivation of a psychologically safe learning environment for all students. They must work harder to include experiences and voices of female students, students of color, LGBTQ students, and other minoritized populations in class discussions. Additionally, students value relationships with their peers and professors. This is an area for educators to have a tremendous impact starting on the first day of class. Professors should take some time in class to get to know their students, and allow their students to get to know them, before covering class logistics such as the syllabus.

Furthermore, students prefer smaller classes and dislike larger classes, especially lectures. Regardless of actual class size, professors can work to make classes feel small by having students work in small groups and making class more interactive. More effective pedagogy can make large classes feel smaller and less interesting subjects feel more interesting.

Professors should also incorporate productive failure into their pedagogy and course curriculum. Students learn through failure, but they fear how others will perceive them if they make a mistake. Educators should give students space to fail, knowing they are free to make mistakes and receive feedback while also providing care and support when they do. This will increase their sense of psychological safety and, as a result, their engagement and learning outcomes.

In conclusion, student experiences of psychological safety are impacted by a plethora of factors. Professors play a central role in helping create, cultivate, and maintain a psychologically safe learning environment. They should also understand that even the best professors are no match for factors outside their control, such as institutional context or the variation in student experiences based on their own perceptions. Nevertheless, the findings from this study should be encouraging and insightful for professors to increase their positive impact on student experiences of psychological safety in the classroom.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Thank you for taking part in this research. The purpose of this study is to examine student experiences of psychological safety in the classroom. Your participation is voluntary, and you may opt to stop at any point in this process. Your participation will be completely anonymous and at no time will your name or any identifying information about you be reported to anyone other than the researcher.

All interviews are being recorded and then transcribed. The transcriptions will be analyzed by the researcher and only the researcher will have access to any of this information. The results of the analysis will be reported in aggregate form and again no individual identifying information will be reported.

If at any time during the interview discussion you have any questions, please ask.

Are you ready to begin?

1. Tell me about a class you've most enjoyed during undergrad.
    a. When in attendance, did you feel you were always able to participate in class? Why or why not?
    b. How would you compare that experience to a class you did not enjoy as much?
2. What factors would you say have impacted your willingness to engage in class? Why?

3. What would you say, generally, are the risks to participating in class?
4. Have you ever been afraid or hesitant to participate in class? Why or why not?
5. How would you say your peers impacted your willingness to engage in class?
6. What impact did you have on your peers' willingness to engage in class?
7. Have you ever withheld a comment, question, etc. for fear of how others might perceive you? Why or why not?
8. What factors would you say are important for students to do their best work in the classroom?
9. What comes to mind when you hear the term "psychological safety"?
10. How would you define a "safe" classroom learning environment?
11. How important or unimportant is the dynamic between peers in the classroom learning environment?
12. In your classes, how would you describe your ability to express your own ideas and thoughts? What in your experience has helped or hindered this ability?
13. How have you experienced giving and receiving feedback in the classroom?
    a. Has this been beneficial for classroom dynamics? Why or why not?
14. How do you typically respond to feedback or criticism (from the professor or from peers)?
15. How have you experienced failure in the classroom?
    a. Can you describe an experience where you felt the class was conducive to making mistakes?
    b. Was this beneficial? Why or why not?
    c. How would you say your professor impacted this experience?

Appendix B

Informed Consent

TAYLOR UNIVERSITY INFORMED CONSENT

You are invited to participate in a research study of senior-level undergraduate student experiences of psychological safety in the classroom during their undergraduate studies. You were selected as a possible subject because you are a senior-level undergraduate student. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you many have before agreeing to be in the study.

STUDY PURPOSE
The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of senior-level students' experiences of psychological safety in the classroom during their undergraduate studies.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:
If you agree to participate, you will be individually interviewed by the researcher. Approximately 15 subjects are participating in the study.

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY:
If you agree to be in the study, you will meet the researcher at the designated space for the interview and participate in an individual interview. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes and consist of 15 questions. You may view the questions before signing this consent form, if you determine it necessary to make an informed decision.

RISKS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:
Participants may face the following risks:

- discomfort in answering certain questions
- loss of confidentiality

To minimize the risk of facing discomfort, you may tell the researcher you feel uncomfortable or do not care to answer a particular question. You may stop the interview at any time without any negative outcomes. To minimize the risk of loss of

confidentiality, your name and any other personally identifying information will be redacted or removed from any published results.

BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:
The benefit to participation is reflecting upon and sharing personal experiences from time spent in the classroom during one's undergraduate studies. The analysis gathered will be used to make a contribution to the literature and, hopefully, benefit future undergraduate students.

ALTERNATIVES TO TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:
There is no alternative to taking part in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Your identity will be held in confidence in reports in which the study may be published. Only the researchers will have access to the recordings of the interviews, and the recordings will be deleted following the completions of the research study.

Organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis include groups such as the study investigator and his/her research associates, the Taylor University Institutional Review Board or its designees, and (as allowed by law) state or federal agencies, specifically the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) etc., who may need to access your research records.
Interviews will be recorded on a password-protected recording device. Personal, identifying information will be removed or replaced during the transcription process, so as to maintain integrity of the data gathered while protecting participant anonymity. Transcriptions will be stored on a password-protected computer. Consent forms, audio recordings, and transcriptions will be destroyed upon completion of the research project, no later than Friday, May 8, 2020.

COSTS
There is no cost to participate in this study.

PAYMENT
You will not receive payment for taking part in this study.

COMPENSATION FOR INJURY

No risk of injury exists in the study. No compensation will be provided in the extremely unlikely event of injury.

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

For questions about the study or a research-related injury, contact the researcher Josh Meredith at 317.604.7200 or josh_meredith@taylor.edu. Inquiries regarding the nature of the research, your rights as a subject, or any other aspect of the research as it relates to your participation as a subject can be directed to Taylor University's Institutional Review Board at IRB@taylor.edu.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF STUDY

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. You decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with Taylor University or any of the researchers involved in this study

SUBJECT'S CONSENT

In consideration of all of the above, I give my consent to participate in this research study.

I will be given a copy of this informed consent document to keep for my records. I agree to take part in this study.

Subject's Printed Name: _____

Subject's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Date: _____