

February 2019

Supervision Strategies Used to Support Spanish-Speaking Bilingual Counselors

Heather Trepal

University of Texas at San Antonio

Angelica Tello

University of Houston-Clear Lake

Maria Haiyasoso

Texas State University

Nancy Castellon

University of Texas at San Antonio

Jessenia Garcia

University of Texas at San Antonio

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: <https://trace.tennessee.edu/tsc>



Part of the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Trepal, Heather; Tello, Angelica; Haiyasoso, Maria; Castellon, Nancy; Garcia, Jessenia; and Martinez-Smith, Cristina (2019) "Supervision Strategies Used to Support Spanish-Speaking Bilingual Counselors," *Teaching and Supervision in Counseling*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 1 , Article 3.

<https://doi.org/10.7290/tsc010103>

Available at: <https://trace.tennessee.edu/tsc/vol1/iss1/3>

This article is brought to you freely and openly by Volunteer, Open-access, Library-hosted Journals (VOL Journals), published in partnership with The University of Tennessee (UT) University Libraries. This article has been accepted for inclusion in Teaching and Supervision in Counseling by an authorized editor. For more information, please visit <https://trace.tennessee.edu/tsc>.

Supervision Strategies Used to Support Spanish-Speaking Bilingual Counselors

Authors

Heather Trepal, Angelica Tello, Maria Haiyasoso, Nancy Castellon, Jessenia Garcia, and Cristina Martinez-Smith

Supervision Strategies Used to Support Spanish-Speaking Bilingual Counselors

Heather Trepal, Angelica Tello, Maria Haiyasoso, Nancy Castellon, Jessenia Garcia, Cristina Martinez-Smith

■ Multilingual diversity is increasing in the United States, with Spanish being the nation's second-most common spoken language (United States Census Bureau, 2016). In response, more Spanish-speaking bilingual counselors are providing bilingual counseling services. These counselors face unique experiences related to the constellation of language, culture, and professional development. However, little is known about the experiences or specific supervision strategies used by the supervisors working with these counselors. This article presents the results of interviews with supervisors (N = 8) of Spanish-speaking bilingual counselors regarding their supervision strategies. Implications for supervisors are provided.

Keywords: Supervision, bilingual, strategies

Bilingual counseling services are in high demand throughout the United States as multilingual diversity increases. The United States Census Bureau (2016) estimated that approximately 63,172,059 individuals over 5 years of age speak a language other than English at home, with Spanish being the most common. Although most counselor training occurs in English, bilingual counselors should be equipped to meet the demands of linguistically diverse Spanish-speaking clients (Peters, Sawyer, Guzman, & Graziani, 2014). Few mental health provider training programs focused on Spanish language and Latinx culture are available. Of the existing programs,

most focus on school psychology or include immersion programs, such as study abroad programs (Kohrt & Kennedy, 2015). Despite the lack of formal training, research is emerging on the experiences of bilingual Spanish-speaking counselors and counselors in training. Many feel unprepared to deliver counseling services in Spanish, and most report a desire for culturally competent supervision (Castaño, Biever, Gonzalez, & Anderson, 2007; Trepal, Ivers, & Lopez, 2014; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009). However, even less is known about how supervisors approach supervision with these counselors. Thus, to more fully understand how to best support these counselors in training,

Angelica Tello, The University of Houston-Clear Lake; Maria Haiyasoso, Texas State University; Nancy Castellon, The University of Texas at San Antonio; Jessenia Garcia, The University of Texas at San Antonio; Cristina Martinez-Smith, The University of Texas at San Antonio

a closer examination regarding what happens during supervision is warranted.

Literature Review

Supervision is vital to counselors’ professional development (Fuertes, 2004). Existing professional mandates assert that supervisors must attend to multicultural issues, including language. The American Counseling Association’s (ACA, 2014) Code of Ethics clearly states the need for counselors and supervisors to attend to multicultural issues in both counseling and supervision. According to sections A.2.c. and E.8., counselors should attend to clients’ language preferences to maintain cultural sensitivity, ensure comprehension, and account for client diversity in areas such as assessment and informed consent.

While the ACA code mentions the importance of counselors attending to the language preferences of clients, there is no mention of how the language used in counseling should be addressed by supervisors. Fortunately, the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES, 2011) endorsed the ACES Best Practices in Clinical Supervision, which documents the need for supervisors to focus on cultural factors, including language. Section 6, a. iii. states,

The supervisor attends to the full range of cultural factors, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, privilege, ability status, family characteristics and dynamics, country of origin, language, historical processes (e.g., history, migration), worldview, spirituality and religion, and values. (ACES, 2011, p. 9)

Although the guidelines address cultural and linguistic differences between clients and counselors and between counselors and supervisors, further strategies are needed for supervisors of bilingual counselors to address these dimensions in supervision.

Despite these professional mandates, few studies have empirically researched supervisors of bilingual Spanish-speaking supervisees. Ramirez (2002) surveyed supervisors who worked with clinicians serving a Mexican American population

regarding ethnic-sensitive practices. Overall, he found that both Latinx and non-Latinx supervisors attended to ethnic-sensitive supervision approaches, such as evaluating their supervisees’ cultural competences and skills, when working with this client population. However, Latinx supervisors were more likely than their non-Latinx counterparts to emphasize the use of the Spanish language in clinical settings.

Gonzalez, Ivers, Noyola, Murillo-Herrera, and Davis (2015) presented reflections of bilingual Spanish-speaking supervisor–supervisee dyads. Both supervisors were European Americans fluent in Spanish, while both supervisees were Latinas. The supervisors reflected on their preparation strategies to supervise Spanish-speaking bilingual supervisees. The supervisors examined their awareness of language and culture based on their status of being non-Latinx and speaking English as their first language. One supervisor assessed her supervisee’s level of fluency prior to the onset of supervision, while the other practiced his own Spanish-speaking skills to prepare for supervision. Both supervisors checked in with their supervisees about linguistic and cultural understandings and asked their supervisees to correct any misinterpretations. Finally, the supervisors reflected on the need to connect their supervisees with Spanish-language resources for their clients. Although Ramirez (2002) and Gonzalez et al. (2015) provided important information regarding supervisors of bilingual Spanish-speaking counselors, no empirical studies detail the strategies these supervisors use in supervision.

Unique Factors in Bilingual Counseling

Although little is known about supervision practices with bilingual counselors in training, some key elements are associated with bilingual counseling. Fuertes (2004) was an early advocate for an emphasis on bilingual supervisees’ supervision needs as well as the special dynamics associated with this supervision modality. He deemed bilingual counseling, and in conjunction the supervision of bilingual counselors, “a special form of counseling that involves assessment

and intervention on two levels” (Fuertes, 2004, p. 85). The first level includes attending to all the clinical skills present in monolingual counseling (e.g., assessment, skills, interventions), and the second level includes supervisors’ attention to issues related to language and culture (e.g., language acquisition, cultural and political realities related to immigration, second language/culture adjustments).

Bilingual counseling entails unique factors around not only language but also cultural competency. To maximize a client’s treatment through counseling, supervisors working with bilingual counselors must become aware of language as a dimension of personal identity that interconnects with other identity statuses (Arredondo, Gallardo-Cooper, Delgado-Romero, & Zapata, 2014). Supervisors should be informed of the unique factors their bilingual supervisees must navigate, including code switching, bicultural identity, and professional development.

Code Switching

Bilingual counselors face several considerations in their professional development related to language and culture. Santiago-Rivera, Altarriba, Poll, Gonzalez-Miller, and Cragun (2009) found that clients switched to their first languages when describing emotional experiences. Researchers termed the phenomenon of changing from one language to another code switching or language switching (Bialystok, Craik, Green, & Gollan, 2009). Santiago-Rivera et al. (2009) also noted that counselors must use code switching to better connect and build rapport with their clients.

Bicultural Identity

Biculturalism refers to individuals continuously exposed to two different cultures, thus developing “two cultural knowledge systems” (David, Okazaki, & Saw, 2009, p. 211). LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993) developed bicultural theory to explore the psychological impact of being bicultural and not to conceptualize experiences from “the linear model of cultural acquisition” and acculturation (LaFromboise et al., 1993, p. 395). Bicultural individuals develop

cultural identities that incorporate characteristics and qualities from both cultures. Supervisors providing bilingual supervision must also be aware of the bicultural identities of their supervisees and the clients they serve. In the past, Spanish-speaking clients were viewed through the lens of acculturation (Fuertes, 2004). Acculturation is noted as the multidimensional process of adapting to a new culture (i.e., U.S. cultural norms and values; Lara, Gamboa, Kahramanian, Morales, & Bautista, 2005). However, acculturation is often discussed in a linear model that categorizes individuals into various stages of adopting their receiving culture (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010) and that does not reflect the experiences of many bilingual supervisees and clients.

According to David et al. (2009), challenges can arise for bicultural individuals who constantly negotiate two cultural identities with two sets of cultural norms and values. However, bicultural individuals have unique cultural capital in that they can bridge both cultures (Tello, 2015). This cultural knowledge is a strength bilingual counselors bring into supervision. It is important for supervisors to create environments in which supervisees’ bicultural identities can be explored.

Professional Development

Supervisors working with bilingual counselors should foster a strong supervisory alliance to ensure positive professional development in their supervisees. As previously stated, bilingualism is a more complicated process than merely translating words because it also involves translating emotional language, thought processes, and code switching. Thus, supervisors working with bilingual counselors should allow their supervisees to use their preferred languages in supervision, which can lead to stronger working alliances between supervisors and supervisees (Gonzalez et al., 2015).

Professional development also involves acknowledging how a bilingual counselor’s culture and identity development influence their work. Millán (2010) discussed his experiences as a Latino supervisor

and shared the many ways in which culture played a role in the therapeutic dynamic, including the need for processing Latinx values, such as familismo, person-alismo, respeto, and fatalismo. Millán (2010) argued that supervisors must go beyond helping supervisees understand definitions and push them to process ques-tions such as “What does it mean to me that my client values family and group more than the individual?” (p. 8). Therefore, supervisors of bilingual counselors must be able to identify how their own identities and world-views influence case conceptualizations.

The professional mandates for multicultur-ally competent counseling and supervision are clear (ACA, 2014; ACES, 2011), and research on the unique experiences of bilingual Spanish-speaking counsel-ors is emerging (Gonzalez et al., 2015; Trepal et al., 2014; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009). The literature points to a unique constellation of language, culture, and professional development. However, little is known about the actual experiences of supervisors who work with bilingual Spanish-speaking supervisees and the strategies used in supervision to address these con-cerns. The researchers for this study sought to remedy that gap. The following research question guided the current study: “How do supervisors experience using strategies to support Spanish-speaking bilingual coun-selors in supervision?”

Method

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a constructivist, qualitative research method used to understand the depth and meaning of participants’ experiences (Hays & Singh, 2012). We chose this method to learn about supervi-sors’ lived experiences of supervising Spanish/English bilingual counselors. Our research team included four females: a professor who identifies as White with a research background in supervision and experience supervising Spanish-English bilingual counselors; two doctoral students (one bilingual student who identifies as a Latina and Mexican American and has experi-ence supervising Spanish-English bilingual counselors

and one student who identifies as Mexican American Latina and has experience supervising bilingual Span-ish-English counselors); and a master’s-level student who identifies as Mexican American and worked as a Spanish-English bilingual counselor in training. All the researchers shared an interest in supervising bilin-gual counselors.

Participants

After receiving institutional review board ap-proval, participants were recruited through postings on state and national counselor education and supervision listservs (e.g., the Counselor Education and Supervi-sion Network and the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development’s Latinx listserv). Partic-ipants were eligible for the study if they identified as a counseling supervisor who had supervised counselors’ bilingual in English and Spanish. Approximately 15 responses were received, and the first author contacted all individuals who expressed interest via e-mail. Al-though recommended sample sizes for phenomenolog-ical studies range from approximately five to 25 partic-ipants (Polkinghorne, 1989), interviews were conducted until no new themes (i.e., no new perspectives on the phenomenon) emerged. Our final sample involved eight participants. The first three authors conducted these interviews. All eight participants identified as females who worked in counselor education programs. Included in our study sample were four assistant pro-fessors, two associate professors, one full professor, and one adjunct professor whose primary position was a middle school head counselor. All participants live in the Southern, Western, or Rocky Mountain regions of ACES. Participants’ experiences in supervising bilin-gual Spanish-speaking counselors ranged from teach-ing clinical courses (e.g., practicums and internships; n = 8) and supervising post-degree pre-independent licensure supervisees (n = 2) to supervising practicing school counselors (n = 1). Seven of the eight partic-ipants indicated that they were bilingual in Spanish and English, with two identifying Spanish as their first language. Two of the participants who considered Spanish their first language immigrated from Mexico

as children and acquired English by attending school and living in the United States. Five of the participants considered English their first language; they acquired Spanish through courses, immersion (travel), and interactions and communications with their family members. One participant identified as monolingual (English).

Data Collection

We collected data via phone interviews lasting between one and one and a half hours. We used exist-ing literature and personal experiences with supervis-ing bilingual Spanish-speaking counselors to inform the interview questions. The interviews, which were semi-structured, included the following questions: (a) “Tell me a little bit about your supervision and linguis-tic background”; (b) “What have been your experienc-es with bilingual supervision?”; (c) “What have been your experiences with language use in supervision?”; and (d) “How do you see language/culture integrated in counseling and in supervision?”

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed according to phenome-nological procedures recommended by Moustakas (1994). Four steps are involved in the process. Ini-tially, the researchers were cognizant of bracketing out their assumptions and experiences with supervising bilingual counselors. This allowed the researchers to understand the phenomenon through the direct experiences of supervisors of bilingual Spanish-English speaking counselors. The next step, horizontalization, involved each researcher reviewing each transcribed interview line by line to discover repeated words and concepts. Those that do not repeat or overlap are called invariant meaning units. Next, the researchers met to share their initial observations and create a textural analysis by noting clustering in the invariant meaning units (e.g., common experiences) found in the participants’ data. Finally, the researchers ques-tioned and investigated the textural analysis to con-struct a structural analysis of the themes indicating the depth and breadth of the participants’ experiences. For

an example of our structural analysis process, the team examined the participants’ non-overlapping statements and clustered them into textural themes. We attempt-ed to make sense of the themes and noticed that they seemed to represent strategies the participants used to make sense of their supervision experiences. The resulting strategies are an example of our textural/structural description analysis (Moustakas, 1994).

Trustworthiness

An external auditor, who identified as a Lat-inx female doctoral student bilingual in Spanish and English and with experience supervising bilingual counselors, reviewed each transcript and the analysis to confirm findings. The external auditor provided feedback that helped confirm and clarify the research team’s analysis of the participants’ experiences as strategies they used to supervise bilingual counselors. Member-checking of the initial findings was conduct-ed with the participants via email. Participants who responded to the member check were supportive of the themes. The participants were also asked to read their transcripts for accuracy.

Results

We identified five themes from our analysis of the interviews with eight supervisors of bilingual Spanish-English counselors and counselors in training. We conceptualized these themes as strategies partici-pants used when supervising bilingual counselors. The researchers clustered the strategies into the following categories: (a) strategies to explore the roles of culture and language, (b) training strategies between super-visors and supervisees, (c) training strategies between supervisees and clients, (d) strategies for supervision sessions, and (e) strategies for future growth. Quotes from participants further illustrate the themes.

Strategies to Explore the Roles of Culture and Lan-guage

A prominent theme that emerged from the par-ticipants’ interviews was the interplay of culture and

language in bilingual supervision. Strategies around exploring the roles of culture and language include the following: (a) invite cultural topics into supervision, (b) involve linguistic and cultural components, (c) use creativity, (d) assess the comfort level of supervisees with counseling in Spanish, (e) use counseling role of supervision, and (f) use the teaching role of supervision. Some of these strategies are further illustrated below.

According to the participants in the study, fear keeps supervisees from using Spanish in supervision. The participants expressed that supervisees were fearful of using the wrong Spanish word or not fully understanding their supervisors. Therefore, it was important for many of the supervisors to introduce cultural topics into supervision. Furthermore, supervisors recognized that this was not solely due to translation issues but also the cultural diversity of the Spanish language. They reported that some supervisees described being worried about understanding regional differences in Spanish accents and dialects. For instance, some supervisors described some supervisees who were comfortable with the Spanish spoken in Mexico but unfamiliar with the Spanish accent, dialect, and colloquial terms used in El Salvador.

Participants discussed assessing supervisees' comfort levels with providing counseling in Spanish. As mentioned, supervisees often feared using Spanish in supervision due to a lack of training in providing counseling services in Spanish. The participants stated that all their counseling courses, assignments, and skills trainings were in English, and their supervisees shared these experiences. Thus, even though some supervisees had strong Spanish-language abilities, they did not have practice prior to undertaking clinical work in utilizing Spanish in counseling. Supervisors in this study felt it necessary to discuss with supervisees their comfort utilizing Spanish in counseling. Through these discussions, supervisors could help normalize supervisees' worries and concerns.

After participants became aware of the worries supervisees had regarding their comfort levels with using Spanish with clients, supervisors utilized

the counseling role of supervision to help supervisees process their comfort levels. Participant 6 stated:

With the counselors at the clinic, a lot of their sessions were in English. And so a lot of the processing was...for them to be mindful of their own self, their body language, their thoughts, their feelings.

Training Strategies: Supervisor/Supervisee

Participants discussed using various training strategies to support bilingual supervisees' skill development. The first set of training strategies related to the supervisor-supervisee relationship. The training strategies used with bilingual supervisees included the following: (a) have supervisees observe sessions in Spanish, (b) perform role-plays in Spanish, (c) allow supervisees to turn in assignments in Spanish, (d) have supervisees present cases in Spanish, (e) help supervisees learn technical terms in Spanish, (f) use a basic skills book translated in Spanish, (g) give supervisees extra time for exams and paperwork if English is their second language, (h) assist supervisees with translation and professionalism in documentation, (i) be knowledgeable about language switching in supervisees, and (j) educate supervisees about language switching in clients.

Participants described having supervisees observe counseling sessions in Spanish. For many, this was their first time viewing a counseling session in Spanish. Supervisors used role-plays in Spanish to help supervisees practice bilingual counseling skills and to gauge supervisees' skill levels in Spanish. Participant 2 shared, "If they start speaking Spanish, I answer in Spanish, but if we're role-playing, then I, of course, I speak Spanish so they can role-play as if I was a client."

Participants also allowed supervisees to turn in assignments in Spanish. Participants noticed that bilingual supervisees were doing twice the work since they had to translate assignments from Spanish to English. In addition, some words or phrases did not have direct Spanish-to-English translations, which meant some concepts were lost in translation. Therefore, supervisors allowed supervisees to complete case

presentations and transcript assignments in Spanish without translating them into English.

Furthermore, supervisors had bilingual supervisees present their audio or video recordings of sessions conducted in Spanish with their English-speaking peers in class or group supervision. Many of the participants felt supervisees counseling in Spanish were being left out of group supervision. They worried that these supervisees felt isolated and that they did not receive peer feedback. Participant 8 echoed this sentiment:

But I just didn't want the students providing counseling services in Spanish to know their supervision experience is going to be isolated...and that they would have the same kind of opportunity to have feedback from future colleagues, like in a class. Supervisors would ask non-Spanish-speaking class or group supervision peers to provide feedback on tone and body language.

Many of the participants also employed the training strategy of helping supervisees learn technical terms in Spanish. Supervisees noticed the lack of information on technical counseling terms translated from English to Spanish. Participant 6 stated, "I would have to say [supervisees have] limited Spanish knowledge especially the technical terms. ... it's mainly that limitation." This led to the next training strategy: using a basic skills book translated into Spanish. As mentioned, all participants shared that all the training their supervisees received was in English. Participant 7 discussed the challenge supervisees had in gaining access to a counseling skills textbook in Spanish:

What they have told me is sometimes they are challenged with understanding what is presented in our textbook, and really having to read over it many, many times. Even some students have taken the time to translate our textbooks into Spanish so they can better understand it. Moreover, supervisors made sure students could access translated materials.

Several participants noted that they gave native Spanish speakers extra time for exams and paperwork that was in English. Participant 7 noticed that some

supervisees struggled with exams and quizzes because English was their second language. She stated,

[Exams and quizzes] are timed and if you are trying to, you know, translate while understanding and trying to pick which answer is correct and so I typically, if I see a student struggling and they've spoken to me about that, then I will be lenient on as far as how much time they can take in an exam or quiz. In addition, supervisors would assist supervisees with translating and ensuring professionalism in documentation. Participant 7 discussed the training needs of supervisees in translating from Spanish to English in counseling documentation:

We have addressed correct translation between Spanish and English and that's again that is more a grammatical thing because, you know it doesn't translate correctly word for word from Spanish to English so just being aware of that when you are writing reports, we want that to come out in a professional manner so [training] is more directed in that area.

The last two training strategies related to language switching. Supervisors discussed the importance of being knowledgeable about language switching with supervisees. Because of the limited Spanish counseling training supervisees receive, some would feel more comfortable counseling in English. Participant 6 shared how she handled language switching in supervision: "And so it's just the same kind of providing the same supervision but asking them in Spanish to help them process with their skills in Spanish." Even when it was clinically appropriate to provide services in Spanish for clients, some supervisees would switch to English. Therefore, the final training strategy dealt with the issue of educating supervisees about language switching in clients. Some supervisors noticed that bilingual supervisees who were uncomfortable or inexperienced with counseling in Spanish might switch to using English with clients instead of speaking Spanish to help the clients process their emotions and experiences. Supervisors would help bilingual supervisees become aware of times they switched languages and the impact this could have on clients.

Training Strategies: Supervisee/Client

The second set of training strategies shared with supervisors related to the supervisee–client relationship. Their supervisees used these strategies directly with Spanish-speaking clients. When providing bilingual counseling services, supervisees can (a) get a dictionary of psychological terms in Spanish, (b) rely on clients to educate them about slang terms, (c) ask why the client used a particular word or phrase, (d) ask the client to switch to Spanish if the client seems more comfortable speaking Spanish, and (e) educate clients on cultural aspects of the United States.

Since supervisees predominately receive their counseling training in English, the supervisors in the study noted the importance of bilingual counselors using a dictionary to learn psychological terms in Spanish. Participant 3 noticed that bilingual colleagues used Spanish dictionaries to help them work with Spanish-speaking clients:

But I have met with the instructor and also a couple of other colleagues that [sic] are bilingual in Spanish and they’ve given me some books on...I think it was a dictionary of psychological terms in Spanish. And so I know most of my students have used that at least for the learning curve.

Supervisees also asked clients the meanings of certain words or phrases they used. Participant 3 discussed directly asking clients the meanings of phrases they used. It was important for her to not only understand “the linguistic meaning but what does it mean personally to the client.”

Moreover, if supervisees heard that the client struggled to use English, they would ask the client to switch to Spanish. Participant 4 shared, “Some times when I am there visiting, a student will come in and I know if the intern has noticed if the English is kind of broken and that the student is kind of struggling with the English then they will go ahead and ask, would you feel more comfortable speaking in Spanish, and then they do, they will switch if the student says yes.”

Supervisees might also need to educate clients on cultural aspects of the United States. Participant 2

discussed this process:

We always keep in mind all the multicultural aspects of a counseling relationship and working with, for example, Spanish-speaking clients. Spanish-speaking clients tend to be more traditional just because obviously for the most part they haven’t been in the country either long enough to learn to speak English or they have decided not to acculturate to that extent.

Strategies for the Actual Supervision Session

In terms of actual supervision sessions, participants shared the following strategies: (a) begin supervision sessions in Spanish, (b) use Spanish in supervision sessions, (c) use Spanish as a teaching technique for professional growth only if the supervisee wants it, and (d) follow supervisees’ leads as far as which language to speak in supervision.

All the participants discussed the importance of using Spanish in supervision. However, the degree to which Spanish is used in supervision varied. Some participants began supervision sessions in Spanish. Others used Spanish in supervision to help clients process certain Spanish-speaking client cases. Some supervisors only used Spanish in supervision when it was initiated by the supervisee. Participant 6 shared this approach: “And however they felt to talk to me if they start talking to me in English for example and I know that they’re struggling I will not switch to Spanish until...they open that invitation.” In addition, Participant 6 discussed the importance of taking supervisees’ leads in terms of which language to use in supervision:

If I already notice some anxiety from the student about speaking Spanish, I try my best not to speak Spanish during supervision, unless they start speaking Spanish...so most of my sessions are in English with the exception of a few students whose native language is Spanish, and they’re very comfortable speaking Spanish. And those are the ones that I’m working with right now, that they speak Spanish in supervision, but I think I kind of follow their lead.

Supervisors also noted using Spanish as a teaching technique for professional growth. However, this was

provided to supervisees who wanted the support. This was echoed by Participant 6:

If like I said that’s their main language and they can capture more out of it then I allow it and I go with it just for the sake of their growth. But, I don’t initiate like I don’t initiate supervision sessions in Spanish at all, even if I know that they’re Spanish speakers. I just let them talk to me first.

Strategies for Future Growth

The final set of strategies related to the future growth of supervisors. Participants suggested that supervisors (a) point out bilingual supervisees’ strengths to site supervisors, (b) recommend networking with other bilingual professionals, (c) offer consultations with bilingual colleagues, and (d) form Spanish consultation groups.

Some supervisors expressed the need to point out supervisees’ strengths as bilingual/bicultural clinicians to their site supervisors, especially for those who are monolingual. Participants also stressed the importance of connecting supervisees with other bilingual supervisors and counselors and encouraging networking with other bilingual professionals. Participant 1 stated,

But I think that would be my biggest recommendation is to network. I mean obviously look for resources on your own, order books and read them, and look for stuff online things like that. But networking is always the best. Further, participants recommended offering consultations with bilingual colleagues. They suggested forming Spanish consultation groups of six to eight professionals who could speak the language. These groups could be used to consult on translation issues, such as finding synonyms for technical words or phrases that are often used in counseling.

Discussion

Little is known about the strategies supervisors of bilingual counselors employ in supervision. The supervisors in this study added to the literature by

reporting on their use of various strategies to supervise bilingual counselors. The strategies were aimed at exploring the roles of culture and language, implementing training strategies for supervisors and supervisees, and focusing on supervisees’ future growth.

The supervisors in this study recognized language and culture as being intertwined. The literature on bilingual counseling supports the concept that language is a component of culture that interconnects with other cultural identities (Arredondo et al., 2014; Fuertes, 2004). The participants also described their supervisees providing bilingual counseling services as being fearful of using Spanish in supervision. The fear and worries supervisees held were twofold: (a) their graduate training was only in English (i.e., course content, assignments, and skills training); and (b) they recognized that bilingual counseling not only involves translating but also encompasses an understanding of the cultural diversity of the Spanish language (e.g., understanding regional Spanish accents and dialects). The counseling literature has noted these worries. Most counseling training programs use the English language, and there is an understanding that translating from one language does not equate to providing culturally competent counseling (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018).

This study sheds light on the parallel process that can occur for some bilingual counselors in their sessions with clients and in their work with their supervisors. Even supervisees with strong Spanish-language abilities worried about utilizing Spanish with clients, and these supervisees were often hesitant to use Spanish in supervision. Therefore, the supervisors in this study found it imperative to broach the subject of language and culture in their supervision sessions. Moreover, they engaged in discussions about the linguistic and cultural components of providing counseling services to bilingual clients. To facilitate this discussion, supervisors used creativity, assessed the comfort levels of supervisees with providing counseling in Spanish, and utilized the counseling and teaching roles of supervision (e.g., processing supervisees’ worries and incorporating role-plays in Spanish).

Specific training strategies for providing supervision to bilingual counselors has not been fully explored in the literature. However, the participants relayed the strategies they used to support their supervisees providing bilingual counseling. These strategies often mirrored best practices for conducting clinical supervision, such as providing supervisees with a “variety of supervisory interventions” (ACES, 2014, p. 5). The interventions used by the supervisors in this study included having supervisees observe counseling sessions, complete role-plays, and conceptualize client cases. Moreover, they intentionally had supervisees practice these interventions and skill-building techniques in Spanish. Supervisors were also deliberate in helping supervisees learn technical terms in Spanish and utilizing counseling materials in Spanish (e.g., using a counseling skills book translated into Spanish and translating counseling documentation).

Although not discussed overtly in the counseling literature, the supervisors in this study noted the importance of giving supervisees additional time for exams and counseling documentation if English was their second language. In a study on the development of Latinx bilingual mental health professionals, Peters et al. (2014) noted that bilingual counseling students may be “reluctant to ask for time extensions” for class assignments (p. 25). The students in their study felt an expectation to perform as a monolingual English-speaking counseling student (Peters et al., 2014). It was unclear if these expectations were directly conveyed to bilingual students or if they were perceived expectations.

The final two strategies supervisors in this study employed in their work with bilingual supervisees involved language switching. Supervisors were knowledgeable about language switching with supervisees, and they took the initiative to educate supervisees about language switching with clients. The counseling literature supports the notion that language or code switching is a potential issue in bilingual counseling (Bialystok et al., 2009; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2009). For instance, supervisees might not recognize that clients can use language switching as a defense

mechanism to emotionally detach (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2009). Furthermore, supervisees who do not feel confident in their Spanish counseling abilities may follow a Spanish-speaking client’s lead of switching to English without exploring the context for the language switch. Even native or heritage Spanish speakers can lack confidence in their counseling skills in Spanish due to undertaking graduate training in English.

The supervisors in this study also discussed the strategies supervisees used directly in their work with Spanish-speaking clients. In these discussions, it was evident that there was a parallel process of what occurred in the supervisory relationship and the counselor–client relationship. Supervisees took the initiative to learn psychological terms in Spanish. In addition, supervisees created working environments with clients that allowed them to learn Spanish words/phrases and slang terms. If the client was an immigrant, supervisees also created space to educate clients on cultural aspects of the United States.

Implications for Counselor Educators and Supervisors

The supervisors in this study discussed various strategies counselor educators and supervisors can implement in their work with bilingual counselors. Several of these strategies related to the lack of bilingual training supervisees received prior to undertaking clinical work. All the participants stated that their graduate school training was conducted in English. They did not begin using Spanish in counseling until they were in the field, and their supervisees shared similar experiences. Counselor education programs must adequately prepare and train bilingual counselors. The counseling profession mandates that counselors be culturally competent, including meeting the linguistic diversity of clients (ACA, 2014; ACES, 2011). Since limited training programs are available for bilingual (English/Spanish) counselors, the profession is not meeting the needs of Latinx clients, who comprise a growing population in our country (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018). It has been recommended that counseling training programs foster an inclusive framework that enhances the existing Spanish-language abilities of

counseling students and supports all students learning a second language (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018). In addition, counselor education programs can incorporate the supervision strategies the supervisors in this study used to support their bilingual supervisees, such as teaching courses focused on the interplay between language and culture, helping supervisees understand language switching, and providing skills training by offering clinical observations and role-plays in Spanish.

Scholars in bilingual counseling also recommend that bilingual counseling students receive language assessments prior to conducting clinical work with clients (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018). Even if a counseling student who is Latinx has some language abilities in Spanish, this student may not have the appropriate skills to provide counseling in their second language. The supervisors in this study also discussed the importance of assessing supervisees’ comfort with Spanish. Formal and informal language assessments can help counselor education programs and supervisors (a) identify if supervisees have the appropriate language abilities, (b) develop an understanding of the developmental needs of their counseling students/supervisees, and (c) create a space for supervisees to process their concerns.

Furthermore, supervisors need support in developing the necessary skills to be culturally competent in providing supervision to bilingual counselors. The supervisors who participated in this study shared strategies for enhancing the cultural growth of supervisors. This included networking and offering consultation support with other bilingual counselors. Through these connections, the supervisors would continue to build their language skills and learn how to address specific issues that impact Latinx and Spanish-speaking clients. It is important that professional counseling organizations be involved in creating spaces for counselor educators and supervisors to connect regarding bilingual counseling and supervision. Providing bilingual and Spanish-language counseling services should no longer be considered a specialty issue but a concern that impacts the profession as a whole.

The supervisors in this study also shared various instances of broaching the topic of culture and language in supervision. They discussed the regional differences found in the Spanish language and the cultural values of Latinx clients. However, some supervisors followed supervisees’ leads. For instance, some supervisors shared that they would take supervisees’ leads on which language to use in supervision and provide professional growth only to supervisees seeking it. Waiting for the supervisee to lead may come from the lack of confidence supervisors have in providing bilingual supervision. Therefore, supervisors need more professional development training opportunities to acquire the skills needed to effectively work with bilingual supervisees.

Lastly, it is important that counselor educators and supervisors be well-versed in the socio-political issues that impact the cultural experiences of Latinx and Spanish-speaking clients. This component of cultural experiences was left out of the discussions with the supervisors who participated in this study. However, the bilingual counseling literature has deemed this an area that must be examined to be multiculturally competent (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018). For instance, undocumented Spanish-speaking clients may face institutional barriers and discrimination that could impact their access to services (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018). Moreover, bilingual supervisees may also face institutional structures that create additional barriers in their clinical work. Bilingual supervisees are often asked in their work settings to take on additional responsibilities that are often not expected of monolingual, English-speaking counselors, such as translating written materials (e.g., consent and intake forms; Verdinelli & Biever, 2013) and taking on client support roles (e.g., filling out medical or legal forms; Teran, 2013). The supervisors in this study were conscientious of these experiences, and they did not have students or supervisees translate assignments and transcripts. They also recommended that supervisors point out the strengths of bilingual supervisees to site supervisors. Counselor educators and supervisors can help supervisees prac-

tice setting professional boundaries with site supervisors.

Limitations and Future Research

The current findings add to the body of literature on bilingual supervision; however, the current study has several limitations. The sample only consists of female supervisors. Furthermore, although supervision experiences ranged from clinical classes (e.g., practicum and internship) to pre-licensure supervision and the supervision of school counselors, all the supervisors in the study primarily worked in counselor education programs. A more diverse sample may yield different results. Of the participants, only one identified as a monolingual supervisor. Gonzalez et al. (2015) suggested that bilingual supervisors do not have to be as proficient in the language as their supervisees but that they should have “sufficient command” to help supervisees improve their counseling vocabularies (p. 197). Although only one of the participants in the study identified as monolingual (English-speaking), this participant’s experiences, aside from those directly utilizing the Spanish language in supervision, resonated with the others in the study. However, further exploration of the experiences of those who identify as monolingual supervising Spanish–English bilingual counselors, particularly regarding experiences with language and culture, may be warranted.

In future studies, researchers can study more diverse samples of supervisors working with bilingual Spanish-speaking supervisees in a variety of clinical settings as opposed to university training clinics. In addition, researchers can consider focusing on clinical practice and supervision related to serving undocumented and refugee populations. Given the current socio-political climate, the frequent misdiagnoses of migrant groups and refugees (Adeponle, Thombs, Groleau, Jarvis, & Kirmayer, 2012), and the necessity for counselors and supervisors to be aware of socio-political matters to build multicultural competence (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018), this area is deserving of attention.

Conclusion

According to Fuertes (2004), “There is an increasing need for counseling training programs that attend to issues of culture and language as part of their curriculum training and supervision” (p. 84). As professional mandates continue to focus on the needs of diverse supervisees, the role of language and culture should continue to be explored in both counselor training and supervision. Findings from this study add to the literature and support the training needs of both bilingual Spanish–English-speaking counselors and their supervisors with the goal of better serving Spanish-speaking clients. We hope this information is useful for practicing supervisors and counselor educators.

References

Adeponle, A. B., Thombs, B. D., Groleau, D., Jarvis, E., & Kirmayer, L. J. (2012). Using the cultural formulation to resolve uncertainty in diagnoses of psychosis among ethnoculturally diverse patients. *Psychiatric Services*, 63(2), 147-153. doi:10.1176/appi.ps.201100280

American Counseling Association. (2014). *ACA code of ethics*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

Arredondo, P., Gallardo-Cooper, M., Delgado-Romero, E. A., & Zapata, A. L. (2014). Culturally responsive counseling with Latinas/os. Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

Association for Counselor Education and Supervision. (2011). *Best practices in clinical supervision*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

Bialystok, E., Craik, F. I. M., Green, D. W., & Gollan, T. H. (2009). Bilingual minds. *A Journal of the Association for Psychological Science*, 10(3), 89-129. doi:10.1177/1529100610387084

Castaño, M. T., Biever, J. L., González, C. G., & Anderson, K. B. (2007). Challenges of providing mental health services in Spanish. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 38(6), 667.

David, E. J. R., Okazaki, S., & Saw, A. (2009). Bicultural self-efficacy among college students: Initial scale development and mental health correlates. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 56(2), 211-226. doi:10.1037/a0015419

Delgado-Romero, E. A., De Los Santos, J., Raman, V. S., Merrifield, J. M., Vazquez, M. S., Monroig, M. M., ... Duran, M. Y. (2018). Caught in the middle: Spanish-speaking bilingual mental health counselors as language brokers. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 40(4), 341-352. doi:10.17744/mehc.40.4.06

Fuertes, J. N. (2004). Supervision in bilingual counseling: Service delivery, training, and research considerations. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 32(2), 84-94. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1912.2004.tb00363.x

Gonzalez, L. M., Ivers, N. N., Noyola, M.C., Murillo-Herrera, A. C., & Davis, K. M. (2015). Supervision in Spanish: Reflections from supervisor-trainee dyads. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 34(2), 184-203. doi: 10.1080/07325223.2015.1058208

Hays, D. G., & Singh A. A. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry in clinical and educational settings*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Kohrt, B. K., & Kennedy, L. G. (2015). Dar un paseo: Methods for addressing gaps in training for Spanish-speaking mental health providers. *International Psychology Bulletin*, 19(4), 39-49.

LaFromboise, T., Coleman, H. L. K., & Gerton, J. (1993). Psychological impact of biculturalism: Evidence and theory. *Psychological Bulletin*, 114(3), 395-412. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.114.3.395

Lara, M., Gamboa, C., Kahramanian, M. I., Morales, L., & Bautista, D. (2005). Acculturation and Latino health in the United States: A review of literature and its sociopolitical context. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 26, 367-397.

Millán, F. (2010). On supervision: Reflections of a Latino psychologist. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*, 4(1), 7-10. doi:10.1037/a0016977

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Peters, M. L., Sawyer, C. B., Guzman, M. R., & Graziani, C. (2014). Supporting the development of Latino bilingual mental health professionals. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 13(1), 15-31. doi:10.1177/1538192713514611

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1989). *Phenomenological research methods*. In R. S. Valle & S. Hailing (Eds.), *Existential-phenomenological perspectives in psychology* (pp. 41-60). New York, NY: Plenum Press.

Ramirez, N. (2002). Supervisors’ personal-professional attributes and approaches to supervision in organizations providing clinical services to Mexican-American persons. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 21(2), 117-131. doi:10.1300/J001v20n02_10

Santiago-Rivera, A. L., Altarriba, J., Poll, N., Gonzalez-Miller, N., & Gragum, C. (2009). Therapists’ views on working with bilingual Spanish-English speaking clients: A qualitative investigation. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 40(5), 436-443. doi:10.1037/a0015933

Schwartz, S. J., Unger, J. B., Zamboanga, B. L., & Szapocznik, J. (2010). Rethinking the concept of acculturation: Implications for theory and research. *American Psychologist*, 65(4), 237-251. doi:10.1037/a0019330

Tello, A. M. (2015). *The psychosocial experiences of Latina first-generation college graduates who received financial and cultural capital support: A constructivist grounded theory* (Order No. 3702397). Available from Dissertations & Theses @ University of Texas, San Antonio. (1682499578)

Teran, V. G. (2013). *Yo hablo Espanol: The professional experiences of bilingual Latino clinicians and burnout* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3605007)

STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORT

- Trepal, H., Ivers, N., & Lopez, A. (2014). Students' experiences with bilingual counseling. *The Journal for Counselor Preparation and Supervision*, 6(2), 21-34. doi:10.7729/52.1096
- United States Census Bureau. (2016). Language spoken at home by ability to speak English for the population 5 years and over: 2012-2016. Retrieved from https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_16_5YR_B16001&prodType=table
- Verdinelli, S., & Biever, J. L. (2009). Experiences of Spanish/English bilingual supervisees. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 46(2), 158-170.
- Verdinelli, S., & Biever, J. L. (2013). Therapists' experiences of cross-ethnic therapy with Spanish-speaking Latina/o clients. *Journal of Latina/o Psychology*, 1(4), 227-242. doi:10.1037/lat0000004