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## Exploring the Experiences of Supervisors and Supervisees who engaged in Bilingual Supervision

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## Exploring the Experiences of Supervisors and Supervisees who engaged in Bilingual Supervision

### Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the experiences of clinical supervisors and supervisees who engaged in bilingual supervision. Five supervisors and five supervisees were recruited utilizing purposive and snowball sampling strategies and were interviewed using a semi-structured interview protocol. Findings of this study focused primarily on the challenges and benefits associated with engaging in bilingual supervision. Main findings included the lack of formal training in bilingual counseling and supervision. Implications for training programs highlighted the need for continuous support of bilingual training programs, in particular, the development of both multicultural and linguistic competencies.

### Keywords

Latinos/as, counselor education, training, bilingual supervision

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2017) reveals that an estimated 57.5 million Latinos live in the United States, making them the largest minority group in the country. Based on this data, Latinos represent 17.8 % of the U.S. total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Moreover, data from the Pew Research Center (Krogstad & Lopez, 2015) suggests that one-third (32%) of all Latinos ages 5 and older are not proficient in English. Although English-language proficiency is on the rise, in 2013, 12.5 million Latinos reported speaking English “less than very well” and 3.2 million indicated that “they do not speak English at all” (Krogstad & Lopez 2015).

The increase in the Latino population has significant implications for the counseling field, including an increasing demand for Spanish speaking counseling professionals as well as the development of specific training guidelines addressing bilingual counseling and supervision issues. The shortage of Spanish-English counselors also calls for the development of training programs that focuses on bilingual counseling and supervision (McCaffrey & Moody, 2015). Even though the need to provide culturally and linguistically competent services to Latinos has been widely addressed in the counseling literature (e.g., Arredondo, Gallardo-Cooper, Delgado-Romero, & Zapata, 2014; Castaño, Biever, Gonzalez, & Anderson, 2007); research in areas such as bilingual counseling (Trepal, Ivers, & Lopez, 2014; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009a) and bilingual supervision (Biever et al., 2002; Fuertes, 2004; Gonzalez, Ivers, Noyola, Murillo-Herrera, & Davis, 2015) continues to be limited.

### **Bilingual Supervision**

Despite the scarcity of research examining bilingual supervision, existing literature has examined the importance of recognizing how cultural and language factors interplay on the supervisor-supervisee’s relationship (Fuertes, 2004; Field, Chavez-Korell, & Domenech Rodriguez, 2010; Santiago-Rivera, Altarriba, Poll, Gonzalez-Miller, & Cragun, 2009) and the need

for providing clinical supervision specific to bilingual counseling (Biever et al., 2002; Gonzalez et al., 2015). Fuertes (2004) defined bilingual supervision as a process that involves the supervision of bilingual counselors with a special focus on the interplay of language and culture in the supervisor-supervisee relationship. Fuertes further argued that bilingual supervision should integrate and consider other factors such as acculturation, counselors' skills (multicultural competencies), and the clients' sociopolitical realities.

Verdinelli and Biever (2009a) examined the experiences of Spanish/English bilingual supervisees as part of their graduate training program. For this qualitative phenomenological study, the authors conducted focus groups with 15 doctoral students who volunteered to share their experiences with bilingual supervision. Findings from the focus groups revealed that supervisees felt stressed and burdened by the extra demands, particularly since they felt that they lacked training or supervision in how to conduct bilingual counseling (Verdinelli & Biever, 2009a). Although participants appreciated the supervision provided, most did not find supervision helpful due to supervisors limited Spanish-speaking skills, being too assimilated, or not being able to understand the realities being faced by their clients (Verdinelli & Biever, 2009a).

In a recent article, Gonzalez et al. (2015) provided insight into the experiences of trainee-supervisor dyads. As part of this reflective piece, two trainees and two supervisors shared their perceptions regarding their experiences with bilingual supervision. Trainees' reflected on their bilingual counseling training, how they work with clients, and their supervisory experience; whereas, supervisors reflected on their preparation of bilingual trainees, experiences with bilingual trainees, and issues related to termination (Gonzalez et al., 2015). Recommendations for supervisors involved the areas of language fluency, cultural awareness, and equitable working relationships (Gonzalez et al., 2015). Suggestions for trainees included the development of clinical

vocabulary in Spanish; the need to advocate and problem-solve; and training when working in different settings (Gonzalez et al., 2015). Although this article provided valuable information regarding bilingual counseling and supervision, the article's sample only included two supervisory dyads. Lastly, this article was a reflective/conceptual piece; therefore, no research methodology was employed to collect and analyze data.

Furthermore, a related area of the literature has examined the perceptions and experiences of individuals who engage in bilingual counseling. Most of this research has focused on language use (Castaño et al., 2007; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b) and training needs (Biever et al., 2002; Trepal, Ivers, & Lopez, 2014; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009a). For example, Verdinelli and Biever (2009b), conducted a qualitative phenomenological study, which examined the experiences of 13 Spanish-English bilingual therapists in their personal and professional language use and development. Overall, the authors found that although participants felt pride in being able to give back to the Latino community, there were complexities involved in living in two worlds and providing services in two languages. Verdinelli and Biever (2009b) also discussed the need for more bilingual counselors and specialized training in bilingual counseling.

Trepal, Ivers, and Lopez (2014) conducted a qualitative phenomenological study to gain a better understanding of counselors-in-training experiences providing counseling services in a second language. The sample for this study consisted of six counseling students who have engaged in bilingual counseling. Analysis of the interviews revealed that although trainees appreciated and valued the experience of counseling clients in a second language, they found the experience challenging. Some of the challenges included limited knowledge of counseling terminology in Spanish, language and cultural variations, and limited availability of bilingual supervisors (Trepal, Ivers, & Lopez, 2014). Lastly, the authors found that although trainees enjoyed the connection

they developed with the clients, most participants stated they were placed in that situation unintentionally and at times felt ill prepared to deal with some of the challenges they encountered. Similar to the Gonzalez et al (2015) study, this investigation had a small sample size. Another issue noted by the authors included research bias due to the authors' involvement with bilingual counseling and supervision.

Even though the existing literature has expanded our understanding of bilingual supervision (Gonzalez, et al., 2015; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009a), not enough is known about potential clinical implications, challenges, benefits, and best practices associated with bilingual supervision (Fuertes, 2004; McCaffrey & Moody, 2015). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of clinical supervisors and supervisees who engaged in bilingual supervision. For purposes of this study, bilingual supervision refers to the supervision of counselors providing counseling services either completely in Spanish or in any combination of the English/Spanish language. All participants included in this study reported that their bilingual supervision sessions were conducted in either mixed English/Spanish or completely in Spanish.

## **Method**

### **Inquiry Approach**

A phenomenological inquiry approach was utilized for this study. Ten participants were interviewed in an effort to obtain an in-depth understanding of the experiences relevant to their participation in bilingual supervision. As indicated by Creswell (2013), the use of a phenomenological approach allows the researcher to gain a deep understanding of a phenomenon as experienced by the participants. Therefore, in order to get a more in depth understanding of the process of bilingual supervision, both clinical supervisors and supervisees were included in this study. The guiding research question for this study was “What are the experiences of supervisors

and supervisees who engaged in bilingual supervision?”

### **Participants and Procedures**

Congruent with qualitative research, purposeful sampling was utilized as the primary sampling strategy (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Purposeful sampling refers to a strategy used in which information-rich cases are deliberately selected (Patton, 2015). In this case, participants who had previous experience with bilingual supervision were recruited. After obtaining institutional review board approval, both investigators contacted four initial participants identified as individuals who had participated in bilingual supervision. The remaining six participants were recruited utilizing both purposive and snowball sampling strategies. As described by Creswell (2013), snowball sampling, allows the researcher to use interested participants to identify other possible participants who may fit the criteria for the study. Snowball sampling is also considered a “legitimate strategy as long as the strategy is purposeful and designed to identify good exemplars of the phenomenon under study” (Morrow, 2005, p. 255).

A total of ten participants took part in this study. This number is congruent with Creswell’s (2013) recommendation for phenomenological research. Creswell (2013) noted that a heterogeneous sample consisting of 3-15 participants was needed. Participants identified themselves as faculty supervisors and five identified themselves as previous supervisees who had participated in bilingual supervision during their training. Although participation was open to anyone who had engaged in bilingual supervision regardless of the language(s), all of the supervisors reported supervising counselors working with Spanish-speaking clients. Similarly, all of the supervisees interviewed reported that their bilingual counseling work was with Spanish-speaking clients.

In regards to the supervisors, a total of five individuals, two males and three females,

participated in this study. One of the participants identified himself as White, three as Hispanic, and one as Puerto Rican. All participants had a doctoral degree, with four of them identifying as counselor educators and one participant identifying as a counseling psychologist. Years of counseling experience varied from six to 20 years. All participants were licensed practitioners in their state of residence.

A total of five supervisees, all female, participated in this study. Two participants identified as Hispanic, one as Mexican-American, one as Latina, and one as White (but proficient in Spanish). At the time of the interview, all participants had completed at least a Master's degree in counseling. Years of counseling experience ranged from one to five years. Only two out of the five participants were licensed counselors in their states.

### **Data Sources**

All participants completed a demographic questionnaire and an individual interview as part of their participation in this study. Participants' names were not linked to demographic forms, audio files or interview transcriptions. Instead, participants were assigned a number, which was recorded on their respective demographic form, audio file, and interview transcript.

**Demographic questionnaire.** Participants were asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire in order to obtain general background information such as age, gender, ethnicity, educational level, years of counseling experience, professional identity, and licensure. The demographic questionnaire was completed the day of the interview. Data gathered from the questionnaires was utilized to describe the study's participants.

**Individual interview.** Semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection strategy utilized in this study since this approach allows the researcher to establish a conversational style with the participant without losing focus on the subject areas that were identified prior to the



interview (Patton, 2015). According to Hays and Singh (2012), the use of semi-structured interviews leads to a “richer picture” of the phenomenon being studied because it gives more voice to the participants (p. 240). A semi-structured interview “typically uses an interview protocol that serves as a guide and starting point for the interview experience” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 239). Thus, specific interview questions were identified in order to develop two different but related interview protocols tailored for either supervisors or supervisees.

Both protocols included questions such as “What has been your experience being part of a bilingual supervision group/dyad?” and “What skills do you think are necessary in order to effectively work with Spanish-speaking clients?” The supervisees’ protocol also included questions such as “What have been the most difficult or rewarding experiences of participating in bilingual supervision?” and “How, if at all, did bilingual supervision assist you in developing the competencies necessary to effectively work with Spanish-speaking clients?”

Supervisor’s interview protocol included questions such as “What approach do you take when working with counselors-in-training working with Spanish-speaking clients?” and “What have been some of the most helpful topics that were discussed in bilingual supervision?” At the end of the interview, all participants were invited to provide any further recommendations for counseling training programs and other clinical supervisors. Each interview lasted approximately forty-five minutes to 1.5 hours. All interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed to facilitate data analysis.

## **Data Analysis**

It is important to comment that although both sets of participants (supervisees and clinical supervisors) were recruited for this study, the data for each group of participants was analyzed separately. All audio files were transcribed verbatim in order to enable data analysis. Data was

analyzed with the use of NVivo 10 software, which facilitated keeping an audit trail. An audit trail involves the researcher maintaining a detailed record of research activities (Morrow, 2005). By using NVivo, researchers were able to track how the data was being analyzed and document and access analytic and reflective memos relevant to this particular study.

All interviews for this study were conducted and analyzed by the two authors. Each author analyzed one set of interviews. During data analysis and data interpretation stages, researchers engaged in frequent peer debriefing sessions. Peer debriefing refers to an external evaluation of the researcher's process (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). As part of this process, peer debriefers may "serve as a mirror" and a "devils' advocate" by reflecting researcher's "responses to the research process," and proposing alternative interpretations (Morrow, 2005, p. 254). Thus, by engaging in this process, the researchers had an opportunity to share their data analysis process, findings, and reflections. During these peer-debriefings, raw data was used as evidence to support findings.

The first step in the data analysis process was to review the transcriptions, which included removing any identifiable information from the text. Data was then uploaded, organized, and analyzed utilizing QSR International's NVivo 10 software. Two cycles of data analysis were conducted following Saldaña's (2016) recommendations. The first cycle consisted of open coding. Open coding is utilized as an opportunity for researcher "to reflect deeply on the contents and nuances" of the data (Saldaña, 2016, p. 115). Initial coding facilitated the identification of tentative and provisional codes. After open coding was completed, the identified codes were further analyzed and developed into themes. According to Saldaña (2016), a theme can be defined as "an outcome of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection" (p. 198). For the second cycle of coding, researchers utilized focused coding. Focused coding is the process of further categorizing

the data based on thematic or conceptual likeness (Saldaña, 2016). The categories captured through the use of focused coding will be utilized in this study to describe the participants' experiences related to bilingual supervision.

### **Researchers**

The research team for this study consisted of two members. Team members identify as Latinas, both females, ranging in age from early 30's to late 40's. One team member identifies as a counselor educator and the other one as a school psychologist, both with vast experience in counselor training, supervision, and clinical practice. Both research team members collaborated on the development of a bilingual counseling graduate minor and have engaged in bilingual counseling and/or supervision for over 10 years. One research team member currently works as a community counselor and provides bilingual counseling services to high school students. The other research team member has previous experience providing both bilingual counseling and assessment services to children and adolescents at both school and clinical settings. Both researchers have training in qualitative research and methodology and have previous publications involving qualitative research, specifically related to working with vulnerable populations.

### **Quality and Trustworthiness**

As stated by Shenton (2004), credibility in qualitative research refers to whether the study is capturing or measuring what it is intended. Following recommendations provided by Morrow (2005) researchers completed reflective memos, provided thick descriptions of the experiences shared by the participants, and engaged in frequent peer-debriefing during data collection and data analysis. Furthermore, in order to address transferability, researchers provided information such as length and number of data collection sessions and data collection methods utilized (Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004). Finally, using Creswell's (2013) description of bracketing, researchers

attempted to acknowledge and be aware of any assumptions regarding their bilingual supervision experience. These assumptions and potential biases were recorded as memos and brought up in debriefing sessions during data collection, data analysis, and writing stages.

## **Results**

The themes were conceptualized through the participants' responses involving their experiences with bilingual supervision. In this section, illustrative quotes are provided and discussed in the context of the participants' individual reflections for each theme and subtheme. To protect participants' confidentiality, no names were utilized when introducing the quotes.

Analysis of the supervisors' interviews resulted in four main themes and eleven subthemes. The first theme, *Perceived Challenges of Bilingual Supervision* was divided into four sub-themes: Lack of formal training in bilingual supervision; Lack of resources; Protecting supervisees; and Added responsibilities. The second theme, *Perceived Benefits of Bilingual Supervision* has one subtheme: Opportunities to integrate both the bilingual and the bicultural. The third theme, *Perceived Necessary Skills for Bilingual Counseling* was divided into three subthemes: Cultural, Linguistic, and Clinical. The fourth theme, *Perceived Necessary Skills for Bilingual Supervision* was divided into three sub-themes: Cultural, Linguistic, and Clinical.

Analysis of the supervisee's interviews yielded two main themes and one subtheme. The two main themes were *Motivation to Engage in Bilingual Counseling* and *Engaging in Bilingual Supervision: Rewards and Challenges*. This second main theme was subdivided into two subthemes: Rewarding aspects of bilingual supervision and Challenging aspects of bilingual supervision.

## **Clinical Supervisors**

All of the supervisors reported having participated in bilingual supervision at some point within the last three years. Out of the five supervisors, only three were engaged in bilingual supervision work at the time of the interview. The participants' experiences with bilingual supervision were all associated with their work as faculty members. Although all of them shared information about their experiences as bilingual counselors, the focus of their interviews was directed towards their experiences as clinical supervisors.

**Perceived challenges of bilingual supervision.** Even though all of the clinical supervisors expressed enjoying some aspects of their clinical supervision experience, the challenges that accompany this process were evident throughout their narratives. Lack of formal training in bilingual supervision, limited resources, perceived need to protect supervisees, and added responsibilities related to assessing for students' readiness to engage in bilingual counseling were all identified as challenges related to bilingual supervision.

***Lack of formal training in bilingual supervision.*** Similar to their experience with bilingual counseling training, all five of the supervisors reported having obtained no official training in bilingual supervision. Two of them mentioned taking a supervision course or workshop in which cultural factors and considerations were discussed at a general level, however, they noted that no specific discussion or training in bilingual supervision was integrated. Another participant shared that serving as a teaching assistant for a Counseling Mexican Americans course provided some informal training.

Even though participants recognized that the focus of this study was on bilingual supervision, discussion of their clinical experiences allowed them to share synonymous

experiences with their bilingual counseling training. One participant, however, emphasized that bilingual supervision was more difficult than bilingual counseling, he explained,

Yeah, but in some ways it's harder though. I feel like the training in a counseling level there were more people I could turn to. I felt like when I got to the doctoral supervision model, there were fewer, I did have [colleagues] who both spoke Spanish and they were very helpful. But for the most part, there weren't a lot of people I could call up and say, "What are your experiences doing bilingual supervision?"

Aside from not receiving formal training, other similarities between bilingual counseling training and bilingual supervision training that were highlighted by participants included a sense of isolation and ending up as bilingual supervisors by default, meaning that their Spanish proficiency facilitated being placed in that role.

***Lack of resources.*** Perceived lack of resources was one of the most emphasized challenges encountered in bilingual supervision. All of the participants acknowledged the limited number of Spanish speaking counseling professionals/supervisors and emphasized the importance of having a support network of other bilingual clinical supervisors. Not having an opportunity to consult with other professionals was identified as not only a difficult challenge but also as a contributor to the lack of formal training available for bilingual supervisors.

Participants also described the struggle related to inadequate resources available to assist students in their development as bilingual counselors. Such resources included counseling related texts or reference books. In addition, participants also highlighted the added difficulty associated with assisting supervisees in finding resources for Spanish-speaking clients.

***Protecting supervisees.*** The second most commonly identified challenge was the responsibility that supervisors felt in regards to "protecting" the supervisee. For some participants,

this included helping supervisees avoid getting too heavy of a caseload due to the high demand for bilingual counseling services and the limited availability of other Spanish-speaking counselors and case managers. Additionally, one of the supervisors highlighted that the heavy caseloads were amplified by the vulnerability of the clients that bilingual counselors-in-training are typically assigned. This clinical supervisor explained, “I think specifically because of the location we're in because we're a border city, a lot of the clients are low-income and undocumented, so they're also a high-risk group.” This supervisor highlighted that aside from protecting her supervisees workload, she also found herself having to engage in more risk assessment and crisis intervention. She explained,

There's more sometimes more need for crisis intervention and so when I say overworked, that's another layer that there's more crisis intervention so then the supervisor and I didn't mention this when you asked me earlier, so the supervisor then, like I have a lot more crisis calls for my supervisees who are seeing Spanish-speaking clients or who are at those sites with Spanish speakers.

***Added responsibilities.*** Other challenges discussed included the responsibility of assessing the student's “readiness to do counseling in a second language.” Supervisors discussed the added challenge of embedding a new level of training (counseling in Spanish) for students who had no prior formal or informal training in working with non-English speaking clients. The difficulties associated with working with these supervisees extended from the need to assess their readiness to work with this population, identify helpful resources, and provide the necessary training to successfully engage in clinical work in Spanish. For the bilingual supervisors, this also included adapting supervision models and personal supervision approaches. One of the participants summarized the concerns of the other supervisors, he stated,

I think one of the main challenges I had is gauging a student's readiness to do counseling in a second language. I know there are a handful of students at [name of previous university], who spoke Spanish fluently but were scared to do it in Spanish. I think one of the challenges was the lack of training on it. So their first opportunity to think about, conceptualize, and actually do counseling in a non-English way was in practicum and throughout their whole other training it was all in English.

**Perceived benefits of bilingual supervision.** Although the participants provided vivid illustrations regarding challenges, much of the focus was also placed on the benefits attached to that experience. The primary theme that emerged highlighted the unique bilingual/bicultural approach to supervision, which was aimed at addressing both the language and cultural components.

*Opportunity to integrate both the bilingual and the bicultural.* Most of the supervisors highlighted that participating in bilingual supervision opened the door for more cultural discussions, provided opportunities to address linguistic challenges (such as counselor not knowing how to say something to the client in Spanish), allowed for more open/clear communication regarding what occurred both in session and during supervision, and expanded supervisees' clinical training.

One of the participants elaborated on the benefits of bilingual supervision, highlighting its linguistic and cultural components,

Well, I think just being able to show videos, if you have videos of clients or if you're trying to describe a session. Sometimes you can't describe it in any other language but the language it was spoken in because I think a lot is often lost in the translation of it so that was another piece. And this isn't always the case, but I think the cultural piece too. If it's



bilingual/bicultural supervision, that's another way it's really helpful, just being aware of the unique issues, like it's acculturation difficulties or micro-aggressions or things like that...um that make it more unique to bilingual supervision.

This statement echoed the sentiments of other participants who appreciated the opportunities that bilingual supervision facilitated in relation to addressing both cultural and linguistic issues that may have otherwise been lost in traditional English-only supervision.

**Perceived necessary skills for bilingual counseling.** After discussing their own experiences with their training in both bilingual counseling and supervision, participants were asked about the skills they believed clinical supervisors should focus on in order to better prepare bilingual counselors. Overall, three major themes were identified: Cultural, Language, and Clinical.

**Cultural.** Regarding culture, participants identified the following skills as important: knowledge of the clients' culture; learning non-verbal and verbal cultural differences in communication; learning how to respond appropriately with the culture; and cultural competence demonstrated by awareness of one's own preconceptions about the client's culture. One of the participants shared,

They have to have an understanding of acculturation and ethnic identity and being able to identify their biases. And specifically, in supervision, they have to build a relationship [to the point] where they can be honest with them and be able to say: "I'm afraid to say this, I don't understand this."

**Linguistic.** Regarding language, most supervisors discussed the need for bilingual counselors to gain a better command of the Spanish language. Some of the specific recommendations included learning translations of basic counseling terms, basic knowledge of

professional Spanish, and counselors' increased confidence in their Spanish-speaking abilities. One of the supervisors stated,

I think just as much as possible expose them to the language and talk about things that come up with clients in Spanish, you know. Talk about symptoms in Spanish, talk about strategies in Spanish, do experiential activities in Spanish, things like that where they can practice doing these things in Spanish.

Another supervisor echoed her colleagues' opinions and elaborated on the need for students to be more comfortable with their Spanish in their work with clients, she stated,

Being more comfortable with their Spanish and being comfortable and being able to say I don't understand, can you please explain to me? And that doesn't make them incompetent or any of those things because sometimes people use that word that you don't understand so being comfortable with saying "I don't understand, can you please explain that to me?"

*Clinical.* Participants highlighted a number of clinical skills including learning about appropriate self-disclosure, setting up boundaries and resourcefulness. Some supervisors identified traits that were connected to the ability for the students to recognize their limitations, ask for clarification, and seek out consultation/look for resources when necessary. The importance of confidence, genuineness, self-awareness, flexibility, or what two of the participants referred to it as humility, were all highlighted in the participants' narratives. One participant stated: "Confidence in one's counseling skills and ability to say they don't understand, when I don't know what that word is, humility maybe, um, genuineness, I'm not sure." Similarly, another participant said,

Flexibility. Openness. Just being humble and knowing that you're not, that you don't have all the right answers because I think that just being able to come in for the first time with a

client and being able to acknowledge that just because they're a Latino client, they're not going to be your last Latino client.

Finally, another participant shared,

Being self-aware, being patient with yourself too, not feeling frustrated or like 'I can't do it' so what skills are needed? I guess patience is one. Umm, self-awareness is another one. To know your limitations. To know when you actually are not getting anywhere because of a language barrier for example and to know when to kind of bring someone in, that knows more than you do? So it's again the limitations of it.

**Perceived necessary skills for bilingual supervision.** Similarly, to the perceived necessary skills for bilingual counseling, supervisors identified cultural and linguistic skills as being integral to bilingual supervision. Although most of the participants referred to necessary supervision skills as parallel to those needed for bilingual counseling, there was less emphasis on specific clinical skills and more on the cultural and the linguistic components.

**Cultural.** A few of the supervisors mentioned the need for cultural competence. This involve having knowledge of Latino culture, cultural worldviews, and historical context for Latinos as well as understanding of important concepts such as acculturation and ethnic identity. Cultural competence also included having self-awareness of supervisors' own biases. Finally, for one of the participants, this also meant developing the kind of the supervisory relationship that allowed for open conversations about cultural concepts, worldviews, and ideas. One participant mentioned,

Cultural competence I think is the huge one. I don't know everything about all cultures or everything about Latino culture specifically but I think your basic knowledge of different

cultures, cultural worldview is extremely valuable because I think there's a learning piece that we have to help the students understand different behavior, different thoughts and help them recognize this isn't necessarily resistance, there very well could also be something else going on.

***Linguistic.*** For supervisors, the linguistic component was simply an extension of the cultural competency needed for bilingual counseling and supervision. Some of the participants emphasized the need for supervisors to have a good command of the Spanish language. One participant shared that he believed that bilingual counseling should involve a supervision session purely in Spanish in order to capture the true essence of what transpired in a Spanish counseling session. Another supervisor argued that in order to be an effective bilingual supervisor, the supervisor should have a better command of the Spanish language than the supervisee. This supervisor explained,

I think also as a supervisor you need your Spanish-speaking fluency, [it] may need to be much better than the counseling student you're working with and the Spanish-speaking client and I say that mainly for one reason. Number one, if they record it for you, we know that recordings can only pick up like 15 or 20% of what's actually being said and the rest of it is plugged in by our brain so we don't even notice that we only heard 20% of what's being said, kind of like when we're on the phone with someone who speaks a different language fluently and we aren't going to understand them because our brain isn't used to interpreting it but if you're listening and reviewing tapes, and your understanding of that is, you may get 20% of what she said. So I think that's an important one.

***Clinical.*** Additionally, participants mentioned awareness of countertransference and

transference issues and resourcefulness as necessary clinical skills for effective bilingual supervision. Two of the participants also mentioned the need for supervisors to learn how to modify existing supervision models to better fit the needs of their bilingual supervisees.

### **Supervisees**

All of the supervisees reported having participated in bilingual supervision within the last two years. Three of the five supervisees interviewed were engaged in bilingual counseling. None of the participants were receiving bilingual supervision at the time of the interview. The participants' experiences with bilingual supervision were all associated with their practicum and/or didactic experiences in different Masters level counseling programs. Participants shared their experiences conducting bilingual counseling and receiving bilingual supervision.

**Motivation to engage in bilingual counseling.** Supervisees shared their motivation to get involved in bilingual counseling. Most participants discussed their experiences growing up in Latino communities and becoming aware of the barriers and limited access to mental health services. Some trainees served as the language brokers for their families and either witnessed or experienced discrimination due to their linguistic and cultural background. For them, providing these services was a “call”, a “responsibility”, and “a way to give back to the community and making a difference.”

**Engaging in bilingual supervision: Rewards and challenges.** All supervisees received bilingual supervision during their training. Some of them only received individual supervision whereas others received both individual and group supervision. In addition, two of the participants engaged in a Spanish-consultation group, which provided peer feedback and support. Most participants indicated that engaging in bilingual supervision was very helpful in building their confidence as bilingual counselors and provided an outlet to process difficult experiences with

clients. Although all of the participants highlighted the benefits associated with the opportunities to engage in bilingual supervision, some participants also shared challenges related the supervision they received and how these experiences at times undermined their confidence.

***Rewarding aspects of bilingual supervision.*** Having a supervisor who understood both the language and culture, supervisors' commitment to assist trainees by providing support, encouragement, and resources, and opportunities to develop collaborative relationships, were some of the rewarding aspects related to the supervisory experience.

Most participants shared the importance of having a supervisor that understood the different cultural nuances embedded in language and how they translated into the counseling process. One supervisee shared her perceptions about this issue as follows,

It has been helpful having a bilingual supervisor. Not having a supervisor that speaks the language and understands the culture would have been challenging for me. It would be hard to explain some things because for example, when clients talk about spirituality they also talk about culture. Like we talked about *susto*, *mal de ojo* concepts that are important to discuss in supervision. If the supervisor is not aware of the cultural meaning of these words they may see it as mental health issues when in reality it is not.

Participants also shared that having the opportunities to engage on both individual and group bilingual supervision provided a safe environment to process their experiences, share resources (videos, books, articles) and insights, ask questions regarding what certain words mean without feeling judged, and develop both a sense of community and their bilingual counselor identity. One participant described the benefits of engaging in the Spanish bilingual supervision group,

The supervision group provided us with several opportunities to talk about our experiences as mental health providers in training, what that meant for our professional identity, how insecure we felt sometimes, how embarrassed we felt talking in Spanish, either with each other or with our clients. It provided us resources like terminology lists, books, videos, and articles. We brought up speakers and got to meet other bilingual professionals, which was very helpful.

*Challenging aspects of bilingual supervision.* Even though supervisees enjoyed and appreciated the feedback they received during supervision, their experiences were not always positive. Some of the challenges discussed by the supervisees were related to experiences with supervisors who spoke Spanish but shared a different ethnic background. This included challenges associated with miscommunication, feeling unsafe, differences in style, language and cultural differences, and supervisors' unwillingness to process the trainee's experiences when not feeling competent in certain areas. This excerpt summarizes some of these challenges,

I didn't feel safe in that setting, it was unfortunate because there is a resource [supervisor] and an opportunity for me to get some training, but I think that because the language [and] culture wasn't explored, the language experience wasn't explored, the differences in the language that we use wasn't explored I felt like we often were miscommunicating with one another.

Another supervisee shared her experiences with a supervisor who emphasized more the development of counselor's skills but neglected to address the cultural component of working effectively with clients,

Although this supervisor helped me a lot with reflection and refining my basic skills during supervision she didn't address the cultural piece. She was more interested in techniques...

that's her way. It was hard for me to discuss issues related to my clients during supervision because she was having a hard time connecting with the cultural, social, and political realities of my [undocumented] clients.

As evidenced by the above statements, supervisees reported that the most difficult experiences related to bilingual supervision stemmed primarily from the lack of attention to both cultural and linguistic factors important in both the counselor-client relationship and the supervisor-supervisee relationship.

## **Discussion**

### **Clinical Supervisors**

Clinical supervisors identified several challenges related to bilingual supervision including lack of formal training, access to limited resources and added responsibilities of supervising students engaging in bilingual counseling. Conversely, supervisors identified several benefits including the ability to tap into both the development of linguistic and cultural competence which included the value of having supervisees submit samples of their work without having to translate for the supervisor and having the opportunity to provide supervisees with the additional training that they would otherwise not receive as part of their counseling program. These findings support previous literature highlighting the complexities of providing supervision in a second language (Biever et al., 2002; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009a) and the lack of formalized training and guidelines regarding bilingual counseling and supervision (Fuertes, 2004; Gonzalez et al., 2015; Trepal, Ivers, & Lopez, 2014).

In reference to the necessary skills required to engage in bilingual counseling, supervisors identified cultural competency, language proficiency, and clinical skills (self-disclosure; genuineness; setting boundaries). These skills have also been discussed in previous studies (Field,



Chavez-Korell, & Domenech Rodriguez, 2010; McCaffrey & Moody, 2015; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2009) as integral in the development of both competent bilingual counselors and supervisors. Lastly, clinical supervisors discussed some of the skills that they perceived as having been helpful to learn prior to engaging in bilingual supervision. Similar to previous research (e.g., Fuertes, 2004; Gonzalez et al., 2015; McCaffrey & Moody, 2015), these included learning how to respond appropriately in the given culture; knowledge of resources available for counselors-in-training; knowledge of more Spanish assessments; gaining a better command of the Spanish language; and obtaining a clearer understanding of the counselor/supervisor role.

### **Supervisees**

Overall, most supervisees were pleased with the training and preparation they received from their programs; however, they also discussed areas for improvement. Positive aspects of their programs included taking courses that address terminology, cultural, and linguistic competency; being able to consult with colleagues and share resources; and participating in individual and group supervision. Challenges discussed by supervisees were related to the supervision process, in particular, the lack of clear guidelines about best practices and the difficulties of being supervised by non-Spanish speaking supervisors (Verdinelli & Biever, 2013). Concerns related to appropriate supervision have also been addressed in previous literature focusing on bilingual supervision (Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b; Fuertes, 2004; Gonzalez et al., 2015) and the experiences of bilingual counselors (Castaño et al., 2007; Trepal, Ivers, & Lopez, 2014; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009a). Lastly, comparable to McCaffrey and Moody's (2015) findings, recommendations for training programs included the need to develop a formalized curriculum in bilingual counseling and formalized guidelines regarding bilingual supervision; need to collaborate with community

agencies; and need to share existing resources with colleagues and other individuals who engage in bilingual counseling.

### **Limitations**

Some potential limitations are noted in this study. First, since the primary researchers conducted the analysis there is a possibility that the researchers' previous experiences with bilingual counseling and supervision may have influenced the interpretation of findings. In order to minimize bias, the researchers completed reflective memos, provided rich and thick descriptions of the participants' experiences, and engaged in peer-debriefing sessions. Secondly, both researchers identify as women and as Latinas, therefore data analysis may have been impacted by researchers' shared experiences. The fact that only two researchers analyzed the data is also a limitation to the study. Finally, the majority of the supervisees who participated in this study received some training in bilingual counseling and all reported having access to bilingual supervision. Therefore, their training experiences may be very different from other supervisees who may not have access to such training experiences.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

The increasing number of Spanish-speaking clients presents challenges for the counseling field, particularly as it relates to bilingual counseling training and supervision. Considering the findings of this study, training programs could consider expanding their definition of bilingual counseling to emphasize both the cultural and linguistic dimensions. Some important skills highlighted by the bilingual supervisors included learning how to respond appropriately in the given culture; knowledge of resources to give to a counselor-in-training; knowledge of more Spanish assessments; gaining a better command of the Spanish language; and obtaining a stronger understanding of the counselor/supervisor role.

Although it may not be feasible for all counseling programs to offer specialized training in bilingual counseling, training programs could strive to provide the appropriate support and resources to counselors-in-training who engage in bilingual counseling. Some recommendations provided by the supervisees in this study included recruiting bilingual counselor educators that may help address the unique supervision needs of bilingual counselors-in-training; establishing a language/cultural immersion program or offering elective courses on Latino mental health or Spanish counseling skills; inviting guest speakers who have experience conducting counseling in Spanish; and establishing a working partnership with internship sites to ensure that bilingual counselors-in-training are getting the training and support they need.

Similarly, training programs could offer support to any clinical faculty who engage in bilingual clinical supervision. This support may include financial support to attend specialized trainings, providing opportunities to establish support networks outside of the department, and potential redistribution of their allocation of effort to account for the additional time invested in engaging in bilingual supervision (i.e., looking up resources, translations, risk-assessments, etc.). Establishing connections and/or partnerships with other counseling programs who are currently offering specialized training in this area could be an invaluable resource to bilingual supervisors. Other recommendations shared by the participants included developing partnerships and collaborations with other departments on campus such as linguistics and social work departments; conducting formalized and systematic research studies examining best practices in bilingual counseling and bilingual supervision; and consulting with other professionals who are bilingual counselors and supervisors.

## **Implications for Future Research**

Although findings from this study will add to the current literature on bilingual counseling and supervision, research in this area is sorely needed. Even though previous research has documented the need for linguistic and cultural competence when providing supervision (Fuentes, 2004; Gonzalez, et al., 2015; McCaffrey & Moody, 2015), there is limited research addressing best practices in bilingual supervision or a formalized model to guide supervisors in their work with bilingual counselors-in-training. Thus, research examining the effectiveness of bilingual supervision and development of counselors' cultural and linguistic competencies will be helpful. Lastly, research examining the development of bilingual counseling skills and issues pertaining to the training of bilingual counselors continue to be needed. For example, research examining the use of bilingual counseling skills and clients' outcomes may be helpful in developing more culturally sensitive training programs.

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