

THE EXPERIENCES OF BILINGUAL MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS WHO ENGAGE
IN LANGUAGE SWITCHING IN COUNSELING

A Dissertation

by

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This dissertation meets the standards for scope and quality of
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and is hereby approved.

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ABSTRACT

There is limited research available regarding counselors who use language switching in counseling, making it difficult to understand the role language switching plays in counseling. While research exists on language switching, code switching, and bilingualism, the literature in professional counseling and mental health journals is sparse. The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of bilingual mental health providers who engage in language switching in counseling with Latino clients.

The current study utilized a phenomenological-heuristic approach to answer two research questions: (a) What are the lived experiences of bilingual mental health providers who participate in English/Spanish language switching in counseling with a Latino client? (b) What are the perceptions of bilingual mental health providers who engage in language switching with their Latino clients about therapeutic alliance? Eight themes emerged in relation to the experiences of bilingual mental health providers who engaged in language switching: mutual or shared support, enhanced communication and expression, inexperienced or unprepared in the language, I was the only bilingual speaker, personal fulfillment, attunement, authenticity, and intentionality.

As the Latino population continues to grow, culturally sensitive approaches should be made available to accommodate an already underserved population. This includes preparing mental health providers to provide such services for Latinos that both aid in enhancing the therapeutic process and therapeutic alliance. Implications for further research as well as for future counselors and counselor educators are provided.

DEDICATION

To my dear parents, Rene and Ida Morales, I dedicate this dissertation primarily to the both of you. Mom and Dad, your endless love and sacrifices are what has led me to this moment today. Since the day I was born, you both told me you always believed I would be going places. You both fought so hard for me to have the best opportunities in life and you never gave way when others challenged that. And although we struggled financially, you made sure I would never need anything. For that, I thank you both. Mom, thank you letting me go when the time came to do so. I know a decade ago, seeing me off to college was one of the hardest things you had to experience, even if I was only a few hours away. Dad, thank you for working hard all your life and for sacrificing your dreams so that I could live out mine. I love you both, eternally.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The Latino population has been the primary driver of demographic growth in the United States, accounting for half of the nation's population growth since 2000 (Flores, 2017). Flores (2017) reported an estimated 58 million Latinos resided in the United States as of 2016, and the population is expected to double over the next 30 years. Although growth has slowed, according to the Pew Research Center (2018), Latino individuals are still one of the most underserved populations in the clinical mental health field due to a variety of barriers. Latino individuals have faced the same impeding factors around accessing mental health services over the last 20 years including language, culture, discrimination, immigration, and limited accessibility to adequate and affordable services (Garcia et al., 2011; Mendoza et al., 2015; Rastogi et al., 2012; Santiago-Rivera, 1995; Villalba, 2007). Of those impeding factors, language plays a large role in whether Latinos seek or utilize counseling services. In fact, Santiago-Rivera (1995) implied the underutilization of mental health services can widely be attributed to the language barrier and lack of understanding from mental health professionals. When Latino individuals do seek out counseling, they discover that Spanish or bilingual counseling services are difficult to find (Barrio et al., 2008; Garcia et al., 2011; Rastogi et al., 2012).

Ramos-Sanchez (2007) stated that the use of language switching in counseling is an "effective and culturally appropriate practice that can be utilized to enhance the therapeutic relationship" between client and counselor, as well as improve the overall outcomes of the counseling process (p. 147). Trede (2017) found, in his qualitative study, that bilingual Latino clients preferred to discuss certain topics in English and others in Spanish. He also found that these clients identified languages with certain functions, such as English with critical thinking and Spanish with expressing powerful emotions. Trede's findings were consistent with Javier's

(2007) contention that the recollection of memories, experiences, and emotions are recalled more strongly and better in an individual's native language than in their nonnative language.

Additionally, Trede's findings seem to counter those of an earlier study (Ferré et al., 2013), whose authors found that "words have the same emotional intensity in the first and second language" (pg. 760) among proficient Spanish/Catalan and Spanish/English bilinguals.

Overall, the use of language and its effects on the counseling process is still an under-researched area. At the time of this writing, there is scant literature concerning how bilingual counselors experience and perceive bilingual counseling with their Latino clients. In addition, there is a dearth of literature about whether a specified form of language-use, such as language-switching, is helpful for bilingual clients. Furthermore, it is unknown if, when, or how language use shapes the therapeutic alliance in the counseling process. Some researchers and mental health practitioners have discovered that the use of language switching in counseling has assisted in the therapeutic process, as well as enticed Latinos to utilize counseling services (Barrio et al., 2006; Ramos-Sanchez, 2007; Rastogi et al., 2012). For example, Javier (2007) stated that each language may contain a specific set of memories, beliefs, or values that are attached and made meaningful to the individual. Thus, switching between languages could be especially helpful for bilingual counselors in deepening counseling sessions with their Latino clients who are bilingual. It is possible that Latino individuals who are bilingual may be able to better recall memories and feelings with the respective language in which the experience occurred if the counselor utilizes language switching.

Statement of Problem

One of the common barriers that Latino individuals encounter is the inadequate Spanish or bilingual counseling services made available to them when they choose to seek help for

mental health issues (Garcia et al., 2011; Rastogi et al., 2012; Santiago-Rivera, 1995; Villaba, 2007). Because there is so little research about language switching on the part of those who provide mental health services to bilingual Latinos, or indeed render Spanish-only language services to those clients, it is not possible to determine whether such services would provide better outcomes or a better experience. The Code of Ethics (2014) of the American Counseling Association requires counselors to provide culturally appropriate services that are grounded in science and/or sound theory, as well as to avoid harmful practices. The continued growth of the Latino population in the United States (Flores, 2017), combined with the ethical imperative to provide culturally appropriate services, makes better understanding of the use of language switching in counseling critical for a variety of reasons. Understanding bilingual mental health providers' experiences in providing English/Spanish language switching may provide insight about how to provide culturally competent care, how to help Latino and other bilingual counselors who language switch be more effective in how they do so, and add to the literature about how language switching may impact therapeutic alliance.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of bilingual mental health providers who participate in language switching in counseling with their Latino clients. Research regarding counselors who use language switching in counseling and the experiences of clients who engage in language switching is limited. As previously inferred, the limited amount of research on language switching in counseling makes it difficult for counselors who work with bilingual clients to understand the role language plays in counseling. Counselors do not have sufficient information to determine whether purposefully implementing language switching in counseling is beneficial for clients or the therapeutic alliance. While research exists on language

switching, code switching, and bilingualism, the literature in professional counseling and mental health journals is limited. This study attempted to address the gap in the literature on language switching in counseling, specifically regarding English/Spanish bilingual mental health providers' experiences in their counseling sessions.

Research Question

The overarching research question directing this inquiry is: What are the lived experiences of bilingual mental health providers who participate in English/Spanish language switching in counseling with a Latino client? A secondary research question is: What are the perceptions of bilingual mental health providers who engage in language switching with their Latino clients about therapeutic alliance?

Design Rationale

According to Wilding and Whiteford (2005), a phenomenological method of inquiry offers a way to study phenomena that are naturally difficult to observe or measure. For this study, a phenomenological heuristic inquiry was used to understand the lived experiences of bilingual mental health providers who use language switching with Latino clients in counseling. Phenomenological research aims to observe, describe, and seek meaning of experiences without analyzing or explaining them (Moustakas, 1994). Furthermore, heuristic research is a process of internal search that not only seeks to discover meaning from experiences of others but also is transformative for the researcher (Moustakas, 1990). From Moustakas's point of view, the researcher begins with identifying a question that has personal meaning and is deeply felt by the researcher. Because of my own experiences with language switching while providing counseling services to Latino clients, I have a deep interest in the experiences of other mental health providers who language switch with clients, as well as their perspectives concerning impact on

the therapeutic alliance. For this particular inquiry, a phenomenological heuristic study was most appropriate to implement because of the need to understand mental health providers' experiences as well as my own professional and personal experiences with the phenomenon. Rather than measure or analyze, this qualitative method of research intended to understand and create meaning from experiences.

Significance of Study

As stated by Romero-Ramirez (2016), it is essential to establish therapeutic models and approaches that will meet the needs of the growing Latino population. Counseling services should be culturally sensitive to the Latino population by not just keeping in mind their beliefs about mental health and the importance of their culture and values, but also by allowing them to communicate in the language they prefer. Exploring the experiences of mental health providers who practice language switching may not only provide the field with information regarding how providers experience language in session, but it may provide insight about rapport, therapeutic alliance, and other factors important to the counseling process. The information from this study may also provide direction about areas for continued research. Such information will add to the current literature regarding clinical and multicultural practices in counseling, which in return, can raise awareness and multicultural competency among mental health professionals.

Population and Sample

Licensed professional counselors and students in the practicum/internship portion of their counseling master's program who were 18 years of age and older, bilingual in English and Spanish, and who were or had previously been engaged in language switching with Latino clients in counseling were asked to participate in the present study. Participants were recruited from a private practice, a local counseling association's email list, a counseling and training

clinic (CTC) located on a South Texas university campus, a Facebook social group of professional counselors, and a university counseling program's email list. The owner of the private practice, the program director of the CTC, the moderator for the online social media group, the president of the local counseling association, and the chair of the university's counseling program were asked for written permission (Appendix 1) to recruit at their site. Upon obtaining approval from the Institutional Review Board (Appendix 2), I contacted the respective individuals at each site and provided fliers (Appendix 3) that were then posted in the office, as well as distributed to counselors and CITs who are bilingual in English and Spanish. Bilingual counselors and CITs were also provided with a script explaining the research study (Appendix 4) at the same time the flier was provided. Additionally, the flier was sent to the local counseling association and the university counseling program's departmental email list, as well as posted on the Facebook social media page for professional counselors. The flier contained my contact information. Individuals who were interested in hearing more about the study contacted me.

All participants who called me were screened with the following criteria for participation requirements: (a) be at least 18 years old, (b) be a licensed professional counselor or student in the practicum/internship portion of their counseling master's program, and (c) be bilingual in English and Spanish and have engaged in language switching with Latino clients in counseling. I sought a minimum of four and a maximum of 12 individuals to participate in an audio-recorded semi-structured interview. A \$25 gift card to Starbucks, Amazon, or H.E.B, a Texas-chain grocery store, was offered as an incentive for individuals to participate in and complete the study.

Data Collection

Data was collected from licensed counselors and counselors-in-training who had previously or were currently engaged in bilingual counseling services with Latino clients. Individuals who met the criteria were then invited to participate in an audio recorded, semi-structured interview. I conducted semi-structured interviews utilizing an interview guide (Appendix 5) and continued gathering data until saturation of data was obtained. Semi-structured interviews were conducted by telephone or video conferencing calls, which lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes. Additionally, I kept a personal journal to reflect on personal experiences with language switching and tracked observations during the interview process.

Each individual who agreed to participate in the study was asked to provide a pseudonym that would be used during the interview and on the transcript thereof in order to protect confidentiality. All material collected, including consent forms and transcripts, were stored on my personal password protected laptop, as well as uploaded to an encrypted USB for back up purposes. The encrypted USB was kept in a locked filing cabinet at my place of residence.

Methods and Analysis

The initial phase of heuristic research is engagement with the subject. As described earlier, the phenomenon of language switching captured my attention because of my own experiences, both professional and personal. Once I completed each interview, I transcribed them as soon as possible. As I continued to interview and transcribe, I spent time with each individual interview transcript in order to identify units of meaning for each particular individual. I did so with each transcript and developed a depiction for that individual. I then examined the individual depictions as a whole, immersed myself in the data, interspersed with intervals of rest, until a composite description of the experience of the group as a whole was developed.

Once the composite description was completed, I returned to individual depictions and found those that most closely or effectively exemplified the composite depiction. At this point, I created two exemplary portraits (Moustakas, 1990) from the individual depictions in order to illustrate and provide detail about the experience of the phenomenon. The last phase of data analysis was integration of my own personal knowledge and experience with the themes that emerged from data and from that integration created a synthesis.

The process of analyzing the data occurred in phases, with periods of immersion and intense focus followed by incubation and stepping away from the data, which resulted in fresh perspectives that allowed illumination and explication.

Trustworthiness

Moustakas (1990) described several ways of demonstrating trustworthiness. He noted that the judgment of accuracy of the research is ultimately made by the researcher, who has not only undergone the inquiry of the study with herself, but with each and every participant. This is, however, not the only way to establish and demonstrate the trustworthiness of the research. Several methods were used in this study, including a return to both individual data and the data as a whole, repeatedly, with intentional time away from the data. Another is member checking, during which individual participants are provided with initial themes. Additionally, the use of peer debriefers who have experience of the phenomenon adds to verification of the results. Finally, the use of a reflective journal for self-dialogue is part of heuristic research that allows the researcher to bracket and examine their own experiences. A description of how each of these were used in the current research is found in Chapter III.

Definition of Terms

Counseling and Training Clinic (CTC)

The Counseling and Training Clinic (CTC) is a facility housed within a counseling program at a South Texas mid-sized university. It is staffed by master's and doctoral-level counselors-in-training and directed by a faculty member in the department. Counseling services are provided to the community at no cost.

Dominant Language

The language that is the strongest for an individual. This language may be the primary and preferred way of communicating (Ramos-Sanchez, 2007).

Hispanic

A term that has been widely used and cited in literature reviews and discussions to encompass a group of people of Spanish descent. According to Santiago-Riviera et al. (1995), the term was created in 1978 by the Office of Management and Budget for labeling people by their use of the Spanish language.

Latino

The population selected for this study and the term selected to identify Hispanic or Spanish-speaking individuals of North American, South American, and European descent.

Language Switching

The process in which bilingual individuals alternate or switch between using their dominant and nondominant languages. (Ramos-Sanchez, 2007). Throughout this study, language switching is interchangeably used with *codeswitching*, *codemixing*, *code shifting*, or *language alternation* to express the alternation or switching between the use of a dominant and nondominant language.

Nondominant Language

The language that is secondary to an individual. The nondominant language is not the preferred way of communication (Ramos-Sanchez, 2007).

Researcher Bias

I have implemented language switching professionally in my counseling sessions with bilingual Latino clients. During the counseling sessions, I have intentionally switched to utilizing Spanish to help clients identify and express their emotions, as well as to help them explain or state their thoughts when I found them struggling to do so. After switching between the primary and secondary language, I began to observe clients processing and expressing themselves more effectively. With one particular client, I recall her being able to identify several more emotions in her native language than she was able to do in her secondary language. I was utilizing a dialectical behavior therapy approach and working on emotion regulation, which includes naming one's emotions. During this time, I witnessed a sense of difficulty from the client in listing different feelings in English. When I prompted her to see if she could identify feelings in Spanish, she was able to do so more quickly and easily. After that moment, I began to intentionally switch between English and Spanish during our counseling sessions and counseling began to feel more productive for me as a counselor.

I have also utilized language switching in my personal life. For me, language switching was a way to communicate with others who solely spoke Spanish. I used to consider my Spanish-speaking skills at a beginner's level and thus, speaking it correctly and fully was challenging for me. I would become extremely self-conscious when provoked to speak in Spanish, and rather than being present in the conversation, I was preoccupied with being able to *speak it correctly*. When I could not find the word I was looking for in Spanish, or when I would get stuck, I would switch back into English for that one phrase or word before switching back to

Spanish. Additionally, in some cases in my personal life, I have also often switched to Spanish (my secondary language) to explain a feeling, sensation, and/or thought. There were, and still are, Spanish feelings, words, and phrases that cannot be explained in English. It becomes a matter of, *I cannot find the right word*. As a result of my personal experiences, my bias is that language switching has been helpful to me as a counselor working with bilingual Latino clients and as a person who identifies as a bilingual Latina.

Lens of Researcher

One basic assumption was that using language switching in counseling sessions with bilingual individuals would improve the therapeutic alliance and increase self-expression and recollection of memories. The use of language switching in communication provides individuals with the opportunity to speak in both their dominant and nondominant languages rather than settling on just one. A second basic assumption was that individuals who have agreed to participate in the study will do so fully and will provide honest information in their experiences during their interview.

Limitations and Delimitations

Individuals who elected to participate in this study may not be representative of bilingual mental health providers as a whole. Although the study took place in South Texas, an area that is highly populated by individuals of Mexican descent, participation was not limited to Latino providers. Seven participants identified as Hispanic, and one participant identified as white. Results may have been different if participants were from another part of the United States or if participants were limited to self-identified Latinos. In addition, this study examined experiences of mental health providers who are bilingual in English and Spanish. Studies conducted with providers who are bilingual in other language combinations may provide different experiences

compared to the findings in this study. Also, the level of bilingualism amongst participants may have impacted results. This study included participants with varying levels of experience in language switching with most having grown up with both English and Spanish in the home, while others were raised in homes where only English or Spanish were spoken. These varying experiences, in addition to the contexts of which they utilized language switching (e.g., with friends/families, at work), may have also impacted the results.

Organization of Remaining Chapters

This study aimed to understand the lived experiences of mental health providers who engaged in language switching with their Latino clients during counseling. Chapter I serves as an outline and framework for the study. Chapter II provides a literature review addressing language switching in depth, such as the experiences of bilingual counselors in counseling and its use with the Latino population. Chapter III consists of methodological approach and methods, description of the population, data collection, and analysis. Chapter IV provides a detailed description of the results of the study. Chapter V offers a summary of the study, implications for counselors, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There are a variety of terms that researchers have used to define the use of two different languages within a single conversation, such as codeswitching, codemixing, codeshifting, language alternation, and most recently, language switching (Benson, 2001; Bruin et al., 2018; Gardner-Chloros, 2009; Gollan & Ferriera, 2009; Heredia & Altarriba, 2001; Olivia, 2019; Pérez Rojas et al., 2014; Ramos-Sanchez, 2007; Rolland et al., 2017; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2009; Trede, 2017). Over the last decade, the way language switching has been viewed and studied by researchers has developed from multiple perspectives (Bruin et al., 2018; Dewaele, 2016; Dewaele & Nakano, 2013; Pérez Rojas et al., 2014; Rolland et al., 2017; Trede, 2017). Despite the increasing interest in language switching, there are still areas in which continued research is needed, specifically within the counseling field where research is limited compared to that in linguistic, neuroscience, and bilingual journals.

At the time of this writing, research on language switching in counseling and psychotherapy includes client perspectives about their bilingual counselors who language switch, bilingual counselors' experiences with language switching, client-therapist relationship and working alliance, cultural identity and personality, and supervision strategies for bilingual counselors (Pérez Rojas et al, 2014; Peters et al., 2014; Ramos-Sanchez, 2007; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2009; Sprowls, 2002; Trede, 2017; Trepal et al., 2014; Trepal et al., 2019; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009). Research in all of these areas remains limited, particularly on the extent that language switching has in the immediate counseling sessions, therapeutic alliance, and counselor development. For example, in regard to counselor development, little is known about the experiences of bilingual counselors who provided bilingual counseling services; furthermore, even less is known about specific supervision strategies used by supervisors who work with

bilingual counselors (Trepal et al., 2014; Trepal et al., 2019). Trepal et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative study with eight Spanish-speaking bilingual supervisors regarding their supervision strategies. Trepal et al. shed light on how supervisors recognized language and culture as being intertwined and furthermore, highlighted the lack of bilingual training provided to bilingual supervisees prior to learning and implementing clinical work. In another qualitative study, Peters et al., found appropriate supervision and training to support the development of Latino bilingual mental health providers to be important. The participants in this study were students in social work and a majority indicated they did not receive supervision in Spanish. For example, one participant in particular noted how they were the only bilingual person in their agency who spoke Spanish and therefore, lacked proper supervision for the rendering of bilingual services.

Outside of the mental health field, research on language switching includes identity and personality, benefits and costs of language switching, and the effects of language switching on memory and emotion (Bruin et al., 2018; Dewaele & Nakano, 2013; Ferré et al., 2010; Gollan & Ferreira, 2009). The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the experiences of bilingual mental health providers who engage in language switching in counseling with their Latino clients. While there are some studies that have looked at language switching or bilingual experiences amongst mental health providers (Costa, 2010; Olivia, 2019; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2009; Trede, 2017; Trepal et al., 2014), the current study aims to further explicate the experiences of counselors who language switch as well as the impact language switching has on the therapeutic alliance. This chapter begins with an explanation of language switching and the different areas in which it has been studied and researched. An overview of the history of language switching is provided, as well as how it ties in within the counseling field.

History of Language Switching

Benson (2001) wrote a conceptual article around the early research of language switching and discussed several early pieces written by researchers. According to Benson, research on the use of codeswitching has mentioned little of its history, and the tracing of its origins has been deemed complicated. *Languages in Contact* (1953) was one original piece written by Uriel Weinreich that looked at language switching in communities and society. According to Weinreich, individuals who engage in the use of two languages have a reasonable degree of control between the two language systems, which extends to include issues related to social reasons such as using different languages at different times, in different places, and with different people. For example, migrating to a new country would invoke adults to use a new language when dealing with authoritative figures or it would invoke children to adapt to the new language while in school (Weinreich, 1953).

In the 1950s, language switching had not been formally named nor was the use of it understood by linguistic researchers (Benson, 2001). According to Benson, researchers from the 1990s referenced research about codeswitching from the 1950s and 1960s; however, research from that period treated codeswitching as part of a larger discussion and not the primary focus of the research. One of the first mentions of language switching in the counseling field was in 1995 by Azara L. Santiago-Rivera in the *Journal of Counseling and Development*. Santiago-Rivera (1995) discussed the importance of implementing language and culturally sensitive interventions in counseling. She also discussed the efforts needed to be made to develop a culturally sensitive treatment modality. Another researcher, Rafael Javier (1989, 2007) studied the use of language switching in counseling through individual case studies as well as explored how individuals think, feel, and speak in two languages. In one of his earliest case studies, Javier (1989)

contended that a client he was seeing in therapy was avoiding the topic of his mother and father by deliberately speaking in English. The client refused his Spanish identity to which he associated many painful memories around early trauma (Javier, 1989). Additionally, in a separate case study, Javier noted a client's speech seemed detached when they spoke in English versus their native tongue, Spanish. Javier realized the client recalled important childhood memories and experienced strong emotions and affect when speaking in Spanish.

Sixty-five years later, language switching has continued to be observed among bilingual individuals who engage in it when needed, depending on social and environmental cues encountered in their daily lives (Bruin et al., 2018). Bilingual individuals will sometimes use language switching when the environment or context in which they are operating call for it. In addition, they use language switching conversationally when talking with other bilingual individuals (Bruin et al., 2018). In the latter case, language switching occurs freely and naturally.

Purposes of Language Switching

Bilingual individuals have been found to switch between languages in order to communicate something of meaning beyond their words (Costa, 2010; Gardner-Chloros, 2009). In a book written by Gardner-Chloros (2009) called *Codeswitching*, Gardner-Chloros discussed the history and nature of switching between languages. She stated both language and the environment in which the languages take place, play a role in the linguistic patterns that emerge. Consequently, bilingual individuals will sometimes consciously manipulate the selection of words they use in different languages because of the associations and different meanings these words may hold (Gardner-Chloros, 2009). In fact, each language holds a set of memories, beliefs, or values that are connected and meaningful to an individual (Cofresi & Gorman, 2004; Javier, 1989; Javier, 2007).

Much of the research around language switching has been in linguistic, bilingualism, neuroscience, and psychotherapy journals. Additionally, researchers have heavily focused on the manners in which language is organized in the brain and the mechanisms of switching back and forth (Bruin et al., 2018; Gardner-Chloros, 2009; Gollan & Ferreira, 2009). Several researchers have either conceptualized or studied when and why bilingual individuals decide to language switch or use one language over the other when communicating (Gardner-Chloros, 2009; Gollan & Ferreira; Heredia & Altarriba, 2001). One conceptual article by Heredia and Altarriba indicated the most frequent reasons why bilingual individuals language switch is lack of language proficiency. However, this is not always the case as someone may not utilize a word as frequently, therefore causing them to switch to English because it is both faster and easier to retrieve the word (Heredia & Altarriba, 2001). Additionally, some evidence suggests that bilingual individuals engage in language switching strategically when they have enough time to select from the proper lexicon or language inventory (Bruin et al., 2018; Gollan & Ferreira, 2009; Heredia & Altarriba; 2001).

Gollan and Ferreira (2009) suggest that for bilingual individuals, being able to engage in language switching when one pleases is less costly than having to stay in one language when communicating. In a cost-benefit analysis of voluntary switching, “most Spanish-English bilingual individuals, specifically balanced bilingual individuals, voluntarily language switched even though it was costly” (Gollan & Ferreira, 2009, p. 659). The study highlighted that while voluntary language switching was costly, in that bilingual individuals needed time to reconfigure their language in naming tasks from one language to another, “nearly all chose to switch in the either-language condition” (Gollan & Ferreira, 2009, p. 647). This suggests that “bilingual speakers are willing to pay the small cost in time of response, which is believed to stem from

their awareness that it is ultimately more useful to have both languages available,” (Gollan & Ferreira, 2009, p. 649). It also suggests that bilingual individuals would rather take longer to respond or communicate what they need if it means communicating what they mean accurately (Gollan & Ferreira, 2009). In other words, bilingual individuals will not switch between languages if it leads to miscommunication (Gollan & Ferreira, 2009).

Bruin et al. (2018) examined in more detail when and why bilingual individuals voluntarily switch between languages. In a quantitative study conducted by Bruin et al., participants engaged in a voluntary language switching task, which consisted of them being asked to name pictures in Spanish and/or Basque. During parts of the voluntary language switching task, participants were asked to name the pictures in mixed languages and in one language (i.e., Spanish or Basque). The tasks were identified as either blocked, use of one language specified, or mixed, in which participants chose which language to use for each picture as it was presented to them. The task was always presented to participants with a blocked condition, followed by a mixed condition, and then ending in a blocked condition. Following the trials, Bruin et al. observed a switching cost in the voluntary switching tasks, indicating that the cost of switching between languages may have been reflective of the “waiting time” for bilingual individuals to “search for the word in the single language condition and then only switch when they could not find the word quickly enough,” (p. 40). Furthermore, in the voluntary tasks, there was a mixing benefit for participants, suggesting that staying in one language may be more effortful. According to Bruin et al., this may indicate why language switching happens freely or voluntarily in daily life for some bilingual individuals.

Enhanced Emotional Expression

The attribution of language to memories, beliefs, and values (Cofresi & Gorman, 2004; Javier, 1989; Javier, 2007) may be important for mental health providers to be aware of when working with bilingual individuals who have experienced trauma. Sprowls (2002) conducted a qualitative dissertation that sought to understand bilingual therapists' perspectives of their language-related experiences during therapy. Sprowls found therapists assisted their clients when processing through powerful emotions by switching between the dominant and non-dominant languages in order to create emotional distance for the client. Furthermore, Sprowls found therapists also switched to the native language to help their clients express deeper emotions. Similar results were found by Verdinelli and Biever (2009) in their qualitative study concerning personal and professional language development and use among Spanish-English bilingual therapists. They interviewed 13 bilingual therapists who utilized Spanish in their personal and professional lives and who were either native Spanish speakers of their home countries or heritage Spanish speakers of the United States. Verdinelli and Biever learned through the therapists' observations, clients would language switch for several reasons: a) to avoid issues they did not want to speak about, b) enhance emotional connection, and c) increase emotional expression.

Santiago-Rivera's (2009) qualitative study of therapists' views on working with bilingual clients reinforced the findings around emotional distance and expression found in both Sprowls's (2002) and Verdinelli and Biever's (2009) studies. Santiago-Rivera interviewed nine therapists about their experiences working with Spanish-English bilingual individuals and found that therapists observed language switching among their clients when they were prompted by emotional circumstances. Additionally, therapists observed clients speaking in their native

language when discussing an emotional experience, as well as switching to the nondominant language to create distance from emotional events. According to Santiago-Rivera et al., therapists facilitated disclosure and emotional expression through language switching when clients were trying to hold back their emotions. For example, when expressing emotions, such as anger or bereavement, clients would switch from speaking English to Spanish (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2009). However, when it came to feelings such as frightened or threatened, clients switched from Spanish to English. Santiago-Rivera et al. reported that one therapist among their study found it was easier for their client to talk about threatening situations in English due to it being less intense to recount. Additionally, the use of *dichos* culturally based sayings or idioms, were observed within the study as helpful in increasing mutual understanding between the client and therapist (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2009).

Costa (2010) found a similar result in her qualitative study designed to understand the experiences of bilingual therapists who rendered counseling services to clients who did not share the same native language as them. Costa interviewed six bilingual therapists and found five themes, with one theme being accessing emotions in a non-native language. According to Costa, therapists reported some of their clients preferred to speak in their secondary language to distance themselves from the emotional impact of a trauma they experienced in their native language. According to Costa, the second language served as a protective barrier.

This also supports Trede's (2017) findings that for some bilingual Latino individuals, there is a preference to discuss certain topics in English and others in Spanish. Furthermore, Trede's findings revealed that there are identified languages with certain functions, such as English with analyzing and Spanish with emotional expression. Many of the participants in the study voiced a strong preference for expressing intense emotions in Spanish, with some even

stating there was choice about it. Additionally, while many preferred Spanish for expressing emotions, some participants shared they switched languages so they would not break down or get overly emotional (Trede, 2017). These findings align with those from Costa (2010), where counselors reported their clients preferred to speak in English to distance from traumatic experiences during which their native language was used.

Furthermore, Rolland et al. (2017) explored client experiences with language switching in therapy with 109 bi- and multilingual participants. Similar to findings in previous studies (Costa, 2010; Javier, 2007; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2009; Sprowls, 2002; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009) around language and emotional distance, Rolland et al. (2017) also learned how clients used language switching to distance and protect themselves from painful emotions. Memories, especially those around childhood, were elicited through the language in which the experience occurred (Rolland et al., 2017).

Additionally, Olivia (2019) utilized a case vignette to describe a client's journey in therapy with the use of two languages. She spoke of how switching languages occurred as way to separate from painful emotions and traumatic experiences, of which she noticed her client doing in order to avoid thoughts or memories of past childhood abuse. Olivia's client reported the individual who abused her spoke only in Spanish, which was the client's native language and the language mainly spoken within her family. Olivia noticed how painful it was for the client to speak in Spanish since it was the language that held memories and experiences of both care and harm for the client. In one session, Olivia responded to her client in Spanish in an attempt to soothe and validate her; however, it was not taken well, and it triggered traumatic memories for the client. In time, the counseling process consisted of exploring the nuances around the client's language and memories, as well as the context of the client's current life. Olivia concluded the

ability to communicate in two languages offers bilingual clinicians the advantage of accessing emotional experiences that would otherwise be difficult to do so in a second language.

In summary, researchers have indicated that language plays a role in both distancing and expressing deeper emotions (Costa, 2010; Javier, 2007; Rolland et al., 2017; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2009; Sprowls, 2002; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009). Thus, it is possible that actively engaging in language switching can be especially helpful for mental health providers who work directly with individuals who have suffered trauma from an early point in life. Santiago-Rivera et al. (2009) noted that understanding the role of language in therapy can prepare mental health providers to provide more culturally responsive treatment.

Language and Identity

Sprowls (2002) found therapists felt different in their identity when providing therapy in either English or Spanish. Additionally, Santiago-Rivera et al. (2009) found clients presented themselves differently when they used Spanish than when they used English. In both these studies, the researchers found how language was connected to identity in terms of how bilingual individuals felt different when using different languages. The combination or use of languages serves as a way for bilingual individuals to express their cultural identity (Gardner-Chloros, 2009). Because of how language is connected to the way bilingual individuals inherently feel about their identity, both Gardner-Chloros and Santiago-Rivera et al. advise that therapists should be aware of the potential impacts language has on behaviors and self-expression.

Another connection between language and identity can be found in Verdinelli and Biever's (2009) study where a majority of the therapists expressed a sense of pride for being bilingual. Additionally, therapists also felt pride for "helping and serving a community in need and being a connection between two languages and two cultures" (p. 237). The ability to provide

bilingual services to an underserved community led therapists to embrace their Spanish-speaking abilities and prompted some further to advocate for their Spanish-speaking clients' needs.

Other ways bilingual individuals have connected language with identity can be found in Costa's (2010) study. One of the themes of Costa's study was language, cultural identity, and emotional expression in therapy. Costa noted that bi- or multilingual individuals may find a shift in their identity occur. For example, one participant discussed how a Farsi-speaking client insisted on speaking in English, even though she was invited to speak in Farsi. The client shared when living in her native country, she was tortured by an individual who spoke Farsi and thus, wanted to create a new identity for herself that would distance her from that individual.

One study aimed to understand why multilingual individuals reported being different in each of their languages. Dewaele and Nakano (2013), conducted a mixed methods study with 106 multilingual participants. Dewaele and Nakano examined shifts in feelings, as indicated on five scales (feeling logical, serious, emotional, fake, and different), when participants used their native language versus another language. The results showed participants feeling gradually less logical, less serious, less emotions, and increasingly fake when using other languages other than their native language. Additionally, most participants reported feeling more authentic, logical, emotional, and serious in the language they acquired early in life compared to the language they acquired later on. Furthermore, the more proficient an individual was in their first and second languages, the less noticeable language switching was, and participants would do so without being consciously aware of it (Dewaele & Nakano, 2013).

Dewaele (2016) later went on to conduct a mixed methods study to explore whether feelings of difference among multilinguals were linked to a later age of onset and lower levels of proficiency in the foreign language. Dewaele found there was a mismatch between participants'

perceptions of themselves and that of people around them. Additionally, findings indicated these perceptions could alter over time, could differ between switches to specific languages, and could involve either conscious or unconscious behavior. In essence, participants did not always know why they felt different when switching languages; however, some explanations from participants indicated that switching allowed them to engage different thought structures, ways of feeling, and personas, depending on the context of their situations.

Trede (2017) also found a connection between language and cultural identity in his qualitative study that looked at clients' experiences with language switching in therapy. According to Trede, clients experienced feeling different depending on the language they spoke and that for clients, bilingualism was part of who they are. Several participants described different versions of themselves when they spoke English or Spanish, such as feeling more professional and analytical in English, or more caring and sentimental in Spanish. Additionally, for some clients, English and Spanish were described as complimentary parts that resided inside of them. Lastly, Trede found several participants expressed pride in their language abilities and identified how it was a special ability for them to possess. These findings seemed similar to the findings of like Verdinelli and Biever (2009), who found their participants felt pride for being able to speak two languages.

Therapeutic Alliance

Santiago-Rivera et al. (2009), found that therapists strategically utilized language switching to engage and redirect clients, particularly to manage client resistance and engage clients in the process. Additionally, clients were observed to engage in language switching as a means to increase the therapeutic alliance between them and their therapists as well as enhance the therapeutic process. These findings support those of Verdinelli and Biever (2009) who

reported most of the therapists in their study reported being more easily connected with their Spanish-speaking clients. The therapists in the study also mentioned that sharing the same ethnic background as their clients enhanced feelings of connection and positively affected the therapeutic alliance.

Alternatively, Ramos-Sanchez (2007) utilized a quasi-counseling analog design with 65 Mexican American college students and eight female master's level counseling students concerning language switching, counselor ethnicity, and emotional self-disclosure among bilingual Mexican Americans. Ramos-Sanchez recorded a single live counseling session with each Mexican American college student to assess the effects of culturally sensitive interventions. The counselor participants who were selected for the language switching conditions were provided training about ways to switch to Spanish in sessions. Additionally, as part of the study, there were four judges who were trained to evaluate emotional expression of participants utilizing the Emotional Self-Disclosure Scale (ESDS). Ramos-Sanchez found a significant effect for counselor language and counselor ethnicity; however, the effect size for both was small, .09 and .15, respectively. Ramos-Sanchez concluded "counselors who used language switching elicited more emotions from participants than those in the English-only group and European American counselors elicited more emotions than the Mexican American counselors" (p.162). Ramos-Sanchez also noted that while the Mexican American counselor was expected to generate more emotions than the European American counselor, it was the European American counselor that had just as much appeal, if not more, than the Mexican American counselor. Ramos-Sanchez concluded "language switching as an effective and culturally appropriate practice that can be used by counselors to enhance therapeutic alliance and deepen the counseling process" (p. 164).

In Costa's (2010) study, one counselor commented on how being bilingual seemed to help them communicate with non-English speakers, which the counselor attributed to their own empathy to their client's language situation. Other counselors noted that expressing themselves with a focus on being understood helped in the communication process. According to Costa, the use of two or more languages in session brought about a shared sense of understanding with clients, such as the losses involved in not speaking one's native language. Counselors in the study were able to tolerate their own anxiety of not understanding right away and when they needed to ask clients for clarification.

Pérez Rojas et al. (2014) utilized an audio-analog design to study language switching and the impact it has on cultural identity, therapist credibility, multicultural competency, therapeutic alliance, and social desirability. A total of 63 bilingual Latino university students were invited to listen to one of two recordings of a simulated therapy session with a bilingual Latina therapist and client. In one recording, the "therapist invited the client to switch languages when the client had trouble expressing feelings," while in the other recording, "the therapist did not invite the client to switch" (p. 55). Participants were then instructed to rate the credibility and multicultural competence of the therapist, as well as the bond they would anticipate with the therapist if they were in the role of the client. Pérez Rojas et al. found that the therapist who invited clients to switch was perceived as no more credible or multiculturally competent than the therapist who did not switch. Furthermore, the researchers found the participants did not anticipate they would have a stronger therapeutic alliance with the therapist who invited their client to switch.

Bridging the Language Gap Barrier in Treatment

Over 25 years ago, Santiago-Rivera (1995) noted that little attention has been given to the linguistic factors in creating a culturally appropriate treatment plan and the utilization of

strategies. This has not changed. While language is important in the communication of feelings, thoughts, and beliefs in session, it tends to focus on delivery of content rather than on the content itself. Focusing on carrying the entire session in the client's native language, which the counselor is unfamiliar with, often leads to the counselor focusing more on whether their speech is grammatically correct (Ramos-Sanchez, 2007; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009). Therefore, language switching is not only beneficial for the client's processing, but it helps bridge the gap that the language barrier creates. In Santiago-Rivera's (2009) study, therapists reported their clients chose to language switch when they could not remember a word or were prompted by an emotional circumstance. In fact, therapists within the study reported on occasions clients would switch because they lacked familiarity with specific words. The same is true for therapists, as found in Verdinelli and Biever's study. Therapists had to be aware of how they were using language to communicate and sometimes had to go through an internal process to translate their thoughts to Spanish before speaking.

On the other end, therapists would typically switch languages because they were mindful of their clients' limited ability to speak in English, which prevented them from accurately communicating or expressing themselves (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2009; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009). As stated by Santiago-Rivera et al., the "therapists' sensitivity to the limited language proficiency of their clients aided in the retrieval of particular concepts through language switching" (p. 440). Furthermore, language switching served as way for clients to carry on with their conversations as it allowed them to select the language they needed or were more versed in at that moment (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2009).

Verdinelli and Biever (2009) found that for the bilingual therapists in their study, there was a struggle in learning, applying, and using the two languages in their lives due to language

barriers. Additionally, in terms of experiences within the therapy process, several participants mentioned their need to translate their own thoughts during sessions from English into Spanish. At times, this “affected their attentiveness to clients” and the overall “pace of the session” (p. 239). Additionally, a number of therapists struggled to translate or explain clinical words to their clients. For some therapists, the challenges they encountered from the language barrier made it difficult for them to focus on the session as they were preoccupied with saying words correctly (Verdinelli & Biever, 2009).

Considerations for the Use of Language Switching

While research about language switching in counseling is limited, it does provide some direction for bilingual counselors working with bilingual clients. From what has been gathered from past research, counseling services should be culturally sensitive to the Latino population by not only keeping in mind their values and beliefs, but by incorporating the use of both languages when needed (Cofresi & Gorman, 2004; Costa, 2010; Ramos-Sanchez, 2007; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2009). As previously stated by Gardner-Chloros (2009), bilingual individuals are selective in the types of words they use in different languages because of the associations and different meanings these words may hold.

In an article that discussed the implications for testing and assessment, Cofresi and Gorman (2004) emphasized clinician awareness towards how bilingual individuals communicate their thoughts and feelings and whether they do so better in one particular language. The assessment of bilingual individuals “may indicate different decisions about what language to use and how to interpret results” (p. 99). Additionally, according to Rolland et al. (2017), “a client’s language can also be influenced by the choices offered to them” (p. 83), including the language(s) supported by the therapist. Making these kinds of observations in session can help

facilitate the expression of a client's world in ways that is most appropriate and significant to them. For example, an individual may better relate and express their emotions in Spanish than they can in English, or vice versa. Additionally, the manner in which mental health providers deliver services, such as choice of language(s), may influence results of assessments (Cofresi & Gorman, 2004). Observing possible language choices would encourage mental health providers to utilize multiple languages in session in order to allow for clients' full self-expression (Rolland et al., 2017).

Some authors have also held that language switching in clinical training and practice may assist students or trainees in having a better understanding of the role language plays in therapy and with bilingual individuals (Peters et al., 2014; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2009; Trepal, 2014; Trepal et al., 2019). Santiago-Rivera et al. (2009) noted that trainees should be aware that memories and language are stored together, which means that memories and emotions may be more readily available in the language in which they were experienced. This aligns with a conceptual article written by Caldwell-Harris (2014) who proposed that language used "in emotional contexts" (pg. 2) has a stronger connection to emotion and that context in which a language is used matters. These authors noted that recognizing the connection between language and memories may facilitate more culturally responsive treatment. They also noted that it might reduce disparities in mental health care for individuals for whom English is not their primary language. Santiago-Rivera et al. recommended further research about the role of language in therapy would aid in the consideration of utilizing alternative strategies to help bilingual clients.

Verdinelli and Biever (2009) also acknowledged the need for mental health providers to have training and support to deliver culturally appropriate services. At the time of Verdinelli and Biever's study, there were no specified standards or competencies for mental health services

provided in Spanish. Several years later, Trepal et al. (2014) found a continued lack of proper bilingual training and supervision for counseling students enrolled in a master's level counseling programs. Trepal acknowledged and endorsed the continued need for counseling training programs and proper supervision to enhance Spanish-speaking abilities for counseling students.

Conclusion

While there is some literature about bilingual counseling, there is insufficient scholarly study to provide what counselors need to practice in a way that is evidence-based or grounded in solid understanding of what happens. The current study adds to the literature and may provide a base for future research about the use of language switching in counseling, including the potential to use language switching itself as an intervention. This may also provide counselor educators and supervisors with information that can help them develop and implement educational and supervision training geared towards teaching “how” and “when” to utilize language switching. Given that one of the largest underserved populations in the United States is Latino, research on language switching could greatly increase the services made available to them. Additionally, this provides opportunities for professionals in the counseling field to implement such training programs and counseling courses in Spanish for bilingual students (Ramos-Sanchez, 2007; Trepal, 2014; Trepal et al., 2019; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009). Ramos-Sanchez (2007) believes this would aid in increasing language switching in counseling, which may lead to a positive outcome for Latinos' mental health.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, an explanation of the phenomenological heuristic research design utilized in this study is provided. The purpose of this study was to learn about the personal experiences of language switching among bilingual mental health providers. The data and analysis methods revealed core themes of participants' experience with language switching in counseling.

Design Rationale

A phenomenological method of inquiry offers a way to study phenomena that are otherwise naturally difficult to observe or measure (Wilding & Whiteford, 2005). A phenomenological heuristic design was utilized for the present study to better understand the lived experiences of bilingual mental health providers who use language switching with Latino clients in counseling. As stated by Moustakas (1990), the purpose of phenomenological research is to observe, describe, and seek meaning in individual experiences without analyzing or explaining them. According to Moustakas, heuristic, meaning to discover or find, refers to a process of internal search that leads to the discovery and meaning of an experience or phenomenon. In a heuristic phenomenological study, the researcher begins with identifying a question that has personal meaning and depth. Additionally, as the researcher engages in further investigation, the researcher remains present throughout the process while understanding not only the phenomenon with further depth, but their own personal growth in self-knowledge and self-awareness (Moustakas, 1990). This approach to the study was most appropriate due to my own experiences with engaging in language switching while providing counseling services to Latino clients. I have a deep interest in the experiences of other mental health providers who also engage in language switching with their clients as well as their perspectives concerning the impact on therapeutic alliance.

Design Methodology

In the present study, I sought to investigate, understand, and describe how bilingual mental health providers, including myself, experienced and perceived language switching with Latino clients. I was captured by the phenomenon of language switching due to my own experiences with it in professional and personal settings. I immersed myself into the experiences, first through interview and written transcription, of the participants as well as my own through reflective journaling. I then identified units of meaning across each participant and developed individual depictions for that individual. Next, I identified themes for the data as a whole followed by intervals of rest and immersion until a composite depiction of the experiences as a whole for the group was developed. Finally, I then returned to individual depictions to select those that closely exemplified the composite depiction to create exemplary portraits before integrating my own personal knowledge and experience for the creative synthesis.

Heuristic Research

Regarding the present study, the use of a heuristic inquiry allowed me to examine my own personal experiences of language switching with Latino clients. Heuristic inquiry is a type of phenomenological research that begins with a question which the researcher seeks to illuminate (Moustakas, 1990). As explained by Moustakas, heuristic research is both dialogue with one's internal self and with others that is aimed at discovering the underlying meanings of important human experiences. He further states this approach requires discipline and commitment to remain with an inquiry until it is answered. Throughout the process, the researcher is expected to have a high level of commitment that involves consistent self-reflection as new information about the original inquiry comes to light. As the researcher seeks to find the answers to their inquiry, they may challenge or question their own experiences.

Role of the Researcher

In heuristic research, one begins the process of exploring and questioning a phenomenon that is experienced internally and personally. Unlike other qualitative methods, it intimately involves the researcher in the process of understanding a phenomenon as they study it among others. In doing so, the researcher is presented with new information that as Moustakas (1990) puts, “casts a light that enables one to come to know more fully what something is and means,” (p. 9). This process not only leads to further understanding of the phenomenon as a whole, but it illuminates the self of the researcher (Moustakas, 1990). In this study, I had to be disciplined and committed to the experiences and meanings of others as well as my own experiences while being mindful of my biases.

I remember the first time I was told I would be providing counseling services to a Spanish-speaking client during my practicum. My co-counselor was fairly confident in both her Spanish and counseling skills. I, on the other hand, was terrified and full of uncertainty as I was just starting to provide counseling services and along with that, was not an avid Spanish-speaker. My supervisor knew I understood the language somewhat decently and believed with some support, I could succeed. For a while, I was a deer in the headlights. I struggled with feelings of inadequacy and fear. Not only was I concerned about whether I was “counseling right,” but whether I would be able to help someone of my heritage. I felt ashamed not knowing the language in the first place. I recalled feeling like an imposter and thinking I was not a true Latina because I hardly knew how to speak Spanish. I also remembered feeling resentful towards my parents for not having taught me the language properly while growing up. The best Spanish I knew was *Tex-Mex* and slang phrases that you would find down in the Rio Grande Valley. What

I quickly discovered, as I sat in that single Spanish session weekly, was not only did I have trouble speaking the language, but I really did not understand it as much as I thought I did.

In time, I became more at ease with Spanish that I found myself speaking it more in my counseling sessions. This is where language switching came to my aid as I was able to revert to English in order to continue maintaining connection with my clients. Although engaging in language switching was a first for me in counseling, it was not something I was unfamiliar with. Growing up in the Rio Grande Valley, language switching was common for me to do with my family and friends. While I never considered myself bilingual, there were times when I would switch between the two languages to express a saying or dicho. I would also do it as an attempt to talk to my grandparents who were native Spanish speakers. Once it became a part of my professional life, I began to see it in a different light personally and professionally. As I continued to develop my professional identity as a counselor, working with Spanish speakers became more prominent and language switching became a norm and added tool for me. As I began to utilize it more and more, my level of confidence surged.

In 2015, I worked with a bilingual Latina who was native to Mexico and whose primary language was Spanish. She had lived in the states for several years and her English was well spoken; she vocalized she was okay speaking both Spanish and English when I asked about her language preferences. Upon learning that her native language was Spanish and that she was okay with both languages in session, I utilized Spanish significantly in our counseling sessions. At this point of my professional development, I felt more confident in my Spanish and was able to hold counseling sessions almost fully in Spanish. I significantly recalled being more intentional with the language choices and would switch with purpose at times. This stood out to me from the norm of switching because typically, I would switch from Spanish to English when I faced a

language barrier. I remember talking with my supervisor about a session where I was working with this client, and how I was growing intrigued with my delivery of services in both English and Spanish. I found myself becoming attuned to my client and would switch between the two languages when I found her getting stuck in expressing herself.

Most of the inspiration for writing this dissertation came from that experience in 2015. Following that experience, my identity as a bilingual counselor further developed. I began seeking further education in bilingual counseling, which included studying abroad in Costa Rica. My supervision for full licensure also addressed language switching in my counseling sessions. Additionally, I went on to work with unaccompanied immigrant children as a bilingual counselor and I proudly embraced that title. Therefore, with my continued experiences with language switching, I entered the doctoral program for Counselor Education knowing this was what I wanted to study and explore. I felt it calling to me and I needed to understand not only my own experiences with language switching, but client experiences as well. However, I struggled obtaining participants initially and I had to come to terms that my study would take a turn in population. I came to my chair inquiring if I could look at counselor experiences instead and talked about how this approach would make just as much sense to explore in terms of heuristic inquiry.

Recruitment

I first received permission from my respective sites to recruit participants before submitting my application for research to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at a South Texas university. Once approval was received from the IRB, fliers were provided to the sites to obtain prospective participants. Mental health providers, such as licensed professional counselors and students in the practicum/internship portion of their counseling master's program, who engaged

in language switching with Latino clients were solicited to participate in the present study. Participants were from the Central and South Texas area who were solicited via fliers from five sites: a private practice, a local counseling association's email list, a counseling and training clinic located on a South Texas university campus, a South Texas university counseling program's email list, and an online members group for mental health providers on Facebook. Respective individuals in charge at each site were provided fliers to distribute to appropriate individuals as appropriate. This included physical copies of the flier provided to appropriate individuals in person or via email. It also included posting the flier on a social media group for mental health providers. Interested candidates contacted me via telephone or email. I then provided additional information regarding the study to potential candidates and screened them for participation in the study. There were three screening criteria for participation in the study. First, participants had to be at least 18 years old. Second, participants had to be a licensed professional counselor or student in the practicum/internship portion of their counseling master's program. Third, participants had to be bilingual in English and Spanish and have engaged in language switching with Latino clients in counseling. Prospective participants contacted me via telephone and email based on information in the fliers. Candidates that met criteria for the study were then invited to participate in the research study. I emailed and obtained completed informed consents, as well as answered additional questions participants had before individual interviews took place. Interviews were conducted over the phone and each participant provided a pseudonym to protect their identities. There was a total of eight participants in the study; seven participants were Hispanic females, and one participant was a Caucasian male. Additionally, two were counselors-in-training, five were licensed professional counselors, and one was a licensed professional counselor associate. Participants in this study ranged in age from 26 to 47.

Data Collection Methods

Participants who met the criteria were invited to be a part of the study. Each participant reviewed and completed the informed consent form and understood their participation in the study was voluntary. A single interview was conducted via telephone that lasted anywhere between one half hour and an hour. During the data collection, I kept a reflective journal and updated it along the way with my thoughts and reflections from the interviews. Once saturation of data was achieved, each individual interview was transcribed utilizing a professional transcription service online. Once I reviewed the transcriptions for accuracy, I began the data analysis process.

Participants were asked to participate in an interview and complete a demographic information sheet after reviewing and completing the informed consent. Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. The interviews were audio taped with consent of participants. I utilized a semi-structured interview guide to ensure that the topics were consistent across interviews. Following the interview, I immersed myself in the data by listening to the participants' audio recordings and reviewed individual transcripts for accuracy of the professional transcription service. As I listened and got to know my participants and their experiences, I reflected on my original impressions and feelings experienced during the interview. I then reviewed each individual interview and highlighted units of meaning relevant to each participant's experience with language switching in counseling with their Latino clients. I regularly retreated from and re-entered engagement with the data for several weeks to allow time for the incubation process (Moustakas, 1990). Taking time to step away from the data was an essential part of my research process as it allowed me to absorb information and reflect on meaning and ideas. After returning to the data three different times, I reviewed my original notes

and made additional ones. I then emailed participants a list of the emergent themes in their interviews for verification purposes. At this time, participants had the opportunity to correct, add, or subtract from the emergent themes. None of the eight participants made changes and vocalized an agreement to their list of themes.

I then continued with another period of rest to allow for further time of the incubation process. After four weeks, I returned once again to individual transcripts to further identify and clarify significant units of meaning. This immersion process coupled with periods of time of rest allowed for further incubation and illumination (Moustakas, 1990). At this time, I was significantly conscientious to ensure I was seeing data with new eyes in order to deeply understand what my participants communicated and what they meant as accurately as possible. After being satisfied with my themes as new information began to emerge, I created individual depictions in order to accurately capture each participant's experience with language switching in counseling.

Due to the potential bias I would have in this heuristic study, it was important that I debriefed with two peer reviewers who were familiar with language switching in their personal and professional lives. Having peer debriefers assisted me in clarifying and converging significant units of meaning. My peer debriefers also served as a set of fresh eyes to see additional themes of significance I may have overlooked. After consulting with the peer debriefers, I engaged in further self-reflection and another period of incubation to allow time to process and further illuminate the phenomenon.

Data Analysis

There are six phases of heuristic research: the initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990). The first phase of initial

engagement is discovering an intense interest, followed by the second phase, immersion, which consists of the researcher engaging oneself in the question being asked (Moustakas, 1990). The third phase, according to Moustakas, is incubation, which consists of the process in which the researcher steps back from the question being asked and is no longer fully absorbed in the topic. Next, Moustakas states the fourth phase of heuristic research is illumination, which is when new elements of the question being asked comes to light. This is then followed by the fifth phase, explication, which consists of the researcher fully examining what has been illuminated in the data and begins to understand meaning of the question or phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990). Lastly, Moustakas states the sixth phase is the creative synthesis where the researcher is thoroughly familiar with all the data and is then challenged to put core themes into a creative synthesis.

The first step in data analysis involved gathering data from each participant via interviews, followed by creating and reviewing transcripts. As transcripts were reviewed, I created notes on possible emerging themes. Next, I immersed myself in the data to gain insight and a deeper understanding of the participants' experience with language switching. The third step involved periods of rest, in which I set aside and returned to the data repeatedly. Doing so allowed me to have a new outlook on the data to identify themes. Following, the next steps consisted of me creating individual depictions of language switching and then returning to the original data to ensure depictions contained themes or examples essential to each of the eight participants' experience of language switching. Next I utilized individual portraits as well as each individual's emerging themes to enter in the immersion process with further intervals of rest until I gained a deeper understanding of each participant's experience with language switching. I then consolidated and renamed themes further that were reflective of the group's experience as a

whole. During the next step, I chose two participants who exemplified the group as a whole and constructed their individual portraits that included all of the core meanings of wellness as identified by the group. The final step then included my creative synthesis based on my experiences as the researcher, shedding light on my experiences personally and professionally. As previously mentioned, the process of analyzing the data from a heuristic approach occurs in phases, with period of immersion and intense focus, followed by incubation and stepping away from the data, which results in a fresh perspective that allows illumination and explication.

Trustworthiness

Member Checking

Verification of findings within a heuristic study can be enhanced by returning to the participants and sharing with them the units of meaning found during the analysis portion of their individual data (Moustakas, 1990). An initial list of units of meaning were provided to each participant for verification. Participants were asked to review the list and confirm the units of meaning or make changes as they saw fit.

Peer Debriefers

In addition to member checking, Moustakas (1990) stated verification of research could be conducted by other readers who recognize the experiences being investigated. While my peer debriefers did not read through transcriptions, they did have both personal and professional experience with the phenomena being investigated and were, therefore, able to provide insight into the emergent meanings during the debriefings. During the consultations with the peer debriefers, I discussed the meanings I derived from the data analysis and sought feedback on the emerging themes. The peer debriefers gave insight into their own experiences with the emergent themes and provided assistance in converging and renaming themes.

Reflective Journal

Moustakas (1990) referred to the reflective journal as a form of self-dialog that is part of heuristic research. Throughout the study, I maintained a journal to log my thoughts, feelings, and reactions. I created entries in my journal following interviews, as well as throughout my analysis to record my experiences and reflect upon them. Additionally, maintaining a reflective journal regarding my own journey with language switching helped create a balance of my own experience as well as aided in bracketing my own experiences and biases.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to examine the experiences of bilingual counselors who engaged in language switching with their Spanish-speaking clients in session. This chapter begins with the presentation of each participant's depiction of language switching followed by the composite depiction for the group. Next, two exemplary portraits are presented. Lastly, my creative synthesis written in the form of a narrative is developed and revealed to represent my experience with the phenomenon.

Individual Depictions of Language Switching

Veronica

Veronica is an Hispanic female who was in her 20s at the time of the study and a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) with five years of counseling experience. Veronica grew up speaking both English and Spanish in her home. Veronica described frequently switching between English and Spanish when she is among Spanish-speaking coworkers or with her parents. However, despite being raised bilingual and utilizing both languages frequently, she had a hard time utilizing Spanish in her counseling sessions. She reported in her counseling sessions with bilingual clients, she would have to think twice about the word she was trying to identify in either English or Spanish. Over time, her skillset in Spanish improved along with her self-confidence.

Understanding and connecting with clients was important to Veronica in her experiences with language switching. By doing so, she felt she could "relate to the client a little bit more." For example, when speaking Spanish with her clients, Veronica felt that what she was saying had more weight to it in terms of connection and emotion. She described being able to understand their level of emotion as well as what was going on for them when clients spoke in Spanish.

Veronica revealed that sometimes, when clients described their depression in Spanish, she could empathize more with them. Additionally, she stated when her clients would express themselves in Spanish, she could relate to them and understand their level of emotion as well as what was going on for them in their life. As she put it, she could “feel their sadness and the difficulty that they were going through” when it was described in Spanish.

Meeting clients where they were with regards to their language choice was also another impactful experience for Veronica. If she observed her clients were especially having trouble expressing something in English, she would respond in Spanish so it would be easier for them to explain themselves. In doing so, Veronica felt it helped the therapeutic relationship as her clients could then be themselves and not be obligated to speak in one particular language. She also mirrored her clients by taking cues from their choice of language. If her client was language switching, she would then respond with the language they had selected at that time to express themselves, which, for Veronica, is another way to meet clients where they are at a given moment.

Mrs. Red

Mrs. Red, at the time of this study, was an LPC in her 40s with six years of counseling experience. She is an Hispanic female who grew up with both Spanish and English at home. While she was reared with both English and Spanish, Mrs. Red prefers to speak English. She switches between using English and Spanish in her day-to-day life when she is translating for family members or speaking with co-workers. Difficulty with translation of some words in her counseling session was a barrier. She found that some words in English, such as *trigger*, did not have a direct translation in Spanish. The difficulty, however, resulted in support from clients, in

that they would assist her in finding and pronouncing the words in Spanish. Mrs. Red reported had her clients not known some English, she would have been stuck.

In Mrs. Red's descriptions of sessions where there was language switching, she indicated there were periods of brief pauses, either on her part or the client's, as either she or they thought about their next choice of words before moving forward. One of the most important details of Mrs. Red's experience with language switching in her counseling sessions was following her clients' language cues. For Mrs. Red, it all depended on the client and what direction they took with their language. The language choice she selected depended on what her client preferred to speak or what they were comfortable speaking throughout their time together. She would then mirror back their language choice. According to Mrs. Red, her language choice was "geared towards the client," in that "if they are comfortable with English," she will "speak to them in English," and vice versa.

Additionally, Mrs. Red talked about switching between Spanish and English in session being "useful" for her because at times, her Spanish was "not as great as it is supposed to be" or at "the level" that she wanted it to be. Mrs. Red spoke extensively about the difficulty in translating phrases or words from one language to the other. When trying to translate, she would sometimes forget the word she was trying to use or would "stumble" on her words and what she was trying to convey. Clients would assist her in finding words in Spanish or helping with proper pronunciation. She also discussed moments when her clients would actively try to learn and practice their own English, and Mrs. Red could assist them. Mrs. Red reported this was a productive aspect in her counseling experience because she and her clients were able to work through the language barrier by language switching.

GS

At the time of the study, GS was a counselor-in-training in his 20s at a South Texas university with about nine months of counseling experience. He is a Caucasian male who grew up speaking English in his home, which is his preferred language; however, he switched between Spanish and English when he was teaching English as a second language in Columbia. GS shared that, prior to practicing counseling, his experience in speaking Spanish largely came from his time teaching, which influenced his ability to understand certain accents from Spanish speakers. GS had a difficult time understanding accents from Mexico as it is very different than the Spanish he initially learned. He also noted that this impacted how nervous he was in his ability to help his Spanish-speaking clients.

Speaking in Spanish was “a lot more difficult” for GS because he “didn’t have quite the ability to reflect feelings” due to his “vocabulary lacking in specific feeling words and certain behavioral interventions.” As he put it, he “often didn’t have the right words that [he] would have used in English,” and therefore had to navigate through that. GS expressed he “wasn’t quite confident” in his Spanish vocabulary. Although GS was nervous about providing proper Spanish counseling services, he reported feeling validated that he was now able to apply what he learned in his previous Spanish sessions to “real life situations.”

GS vocalized it was rare that he would language switch in his counseling sessions. He emphasized his sessions were mostly all in Spanish and he would only language switch when he had difficulty translating a word or phrase from English to Spanish because at times, “there wasn’t a direct translation for the word” he was trying to utilize. In one example, GS talked about not having the word for “grounding” in Spanish, but it was a word that his clients would understand in English. If the English word still did not click with his clients, GS would then explain the meaning of the word to them. During times when he would use English to clarify or

translate a word, GS felt it was a “disservice” to his clients or “a cop out.” However, he went on to explain that at those times when he had to switch, he was met with respect and understanding from his clients. GS recognized the ability to switch between the two languages at certain times allowed for client expression in ways they saw fit, as well as facilitated clarification and ease of communication.

Liliana

At the time of this study, Liliana was an LPC in her 20s with four years of counseling experience. She is an Hispanic female who grew up speaking both English and Spanish in her home. Although she prefers to speak English, Liliana frequently switches between English and Spanish in her day-to-day life with friends and family. She also switches in her classrooms or during supervision with her supervisees. While Liliana has language switched in her counseling sessions, she has also experienced it in supervision, where she has noticed how her native Spanish-speaking supervisee struggled in conceptualizing in English. She, therefore, purposely utilized Spanish to invite her supervisee to think and express herself more effectively. Similarly, Liliana noticed if her clients were native speakers of Spanish, they would communicate better when she would switch to Spanish.

Liliana found language switching in counseling to be exciting and authentic. Not only was language switching a part of her personal life, but it was also something she was able to engage in with her clients. It was a service that she never had for herself in her own counseling experiences. An exciting part of switching for Liliana was when some of her clients would utilize *dichos* to express short sayings that could not be conveyed in English. She would match her client’s language at this point, which was authentic for her, as it was part of her day-to-day life experiences. However, although Liliana was excited to language switch with her clients, she

voiced she did not have a lot of training in bilingual counseling. She explained, “I always felt like I lacked self-efficacy in my ability to speak or counsel in Spanish.” Like others in the study, Liliana provided bilingual counseling anyway because she was “one of the only bilingual students at [her] counseling center” and throughout her educational experiences.

Liliana would sometimes become frustrated when counseling because she was “a little bit slower in Spanish than in English” and could not always think of a word she needed in the moment. This was a big theme for Liliana. She also felt anxious in making sure she had the right word. She described feeling pressured because she wanted to match her client’s language choice. Liliana reported that at times, she had to “take the long way of explaining a word,” which meant utilizing more words or analogies to get the meaning across. She also shared how switching languages took away some of the formality in session and “evened the playing field.” She was cautious about giving the perception that she was above her clients and instead, wanted them to be themselves and comfortable. When Liliana invited both languages into session, she experienced an increase in connection with her clients and noticed how they were “much more themselves.”

SF

SF is an Hispanic female who, at the time of this study, was in her 30s and an LPC with six years of counseling experience. She was in the process of receiving a certification for bilingual counseling. Despite SF growing up speaking both English and Spanish in her home, she prefers to speak English; however, she in language-switching with colleagues, family, and friends. A key point for SF in her experience with language switching in counseling was how she had been “the only Spanish-speaking counselor” in her campus’s counseling center. SF reported that, when working with Spanish-speaking college students, many wanted to practice their

English, so she would language switch with them in session to help them practice. While SF expressed feeling comfortable switching between English and Spanish due to being raised in a bilingual home, going back and forth brought “a different layer of technicality” with wanting to use correct words. SF noted that this was challenging and that she worried about whether she was speaking correctly and being understood by her clients. At times, she needed support and clarification from her clients, “especially when they would use slang from their home countries.”

SF enjoyed speaking Spanish with her bilingual and monolingual clients; it satisfied her reason for going into the profession in the first place. Growing up, she witnessed family members and friends with mental health challenges who were not able to get the care they needed because they had difficulty finding a counselor who was bilingual or of Hispanic descent. As SF stated, “it really reminds me of why I entered into the profession and why I do enjoy my clients who are bilingual.” However, her Spanish skills not being what she considered up to par was a challenge for her, which she indicated led to feelings of insecurity.

SF found that engaging in language switching was rewarding and in its own way: an honor to her parents, grandparents, and ancestors. In switching languages, SF honored her roots and her culture, and has connected with other Spanish speakers in both professional and personal settings. Additionally, it was rewarding for SF “to be in that space with a client when they are comfortable, and they are speaking in their native language.” She speculated it was also rewarding for her clients to be able to come into counseling and feel comfortable enough to speak in Spanish knowing someone would be there to listen and understand.

Fernanda

Fernanda is an Hispanic female who, at the time of this study, was in her 20s and enrolled as a counselor-in-training in a master’s-level counseling program. She had a little over a year of

counseling experience. Fernanda was born and raised in Mexico and grew up speaking primarily Spanish in her day-to-day life. She learned English as a second language. She prefers to communicate in Spanish with family and friends and in English outside of those contexts. Fernanda voiced that when she sought out education specifically in bilingual counseling, she and others in her class were encouraged by the professors to switch. Even though she prefers to speak in one language at a time, Fernanda found switching to be helpful for her clients during their counseling sessions.

Fernanda's experience in switching between English and Spanish largely depended on her clients, and it took time for her to adapt and become accustomed to the practice. She was "open to that perspective" (of language switching in counseling), as evidenced by seeking education in bilingual counseling. Having grown up in Mexico, she was accustomed to speaking solely in Spanish. She recalled that when she moved to the U.S. and began learning English, she found that speaking English only throughout the day was tiring and unnatural for her. It was easier for Fernanda to go about her day after she had set her brain "in one mode." Similarly, she found switching to be "unnatural" at first. When she began working on being able to switch in counseling, she found it helpful to hear others (e.g., friends, classmates, and clients) switch first and then began to switch languages herself. It took practice for language switching to become a norm for her. Eventually, she was able to welcome it in session and now views it as an "extra tool." She began modeling it in sessions with her clients in order to convey that it is okay for them to switch if they need to say something in English or Spanish.

For Fernanda, the process of becoming accustomed to switching in sessions was tiring. She described the process as having "layers" that required her to regularly reset her brain to go into a different language. Over time, Fernanda became able to switch languages without having

to think so much about it and without getting so tired, even ultimately finding it fascinating and enjoyable. Additionally, Fernanda reported finding a sense of comfort and connection between her and her clients as it allowed for both of them to “reach a little deeper” in their conversations.

Frida

At the time of this study, Frida was an LPC in her 20s who had about six years of counseling experience. Frida was raised with both English and Spanish in her home. She is an Hispanic female who prefers to speak in English; however, she utilizes language switching in her day-to-day life when speaking to her friends or colleagues. She also language switches to express herself when she cannot find the word in English or when she is trying to maintain some privacy of her conversation. Even though Frida grew up speaking Spanish, she does not consider herself a fluent speaker. Frida took the extra route of learning Spanish formally in college by minoring in it. She has also done supervision in Spanish as well as helped oversee a bilingual counseling certificate, which she believes has enhanced her counseling skills.

Frida was often placed in settings to speak to Spanish speakers because she “was the only person who could speak Spanish” among her coworker or peers. Frida found this to be an ethical dilemma. It was an uncomfortable experience that continued to follow her even after graduating. Even to the time of the study, Frida still found herself being the only bilingual speaker in her work setting, which she believes caps her opportunities to be promoted. As stated by Frida, “there’s certain opportunities right now at my workplace for which I’m not necessarily considered, unless it requires somebody who is bilingual, which really upsets me because I’m . . . well qualified either way.” Additionally, being the only bilingual counselor in her setting meant there was lack of support and guidance from others. Frida talked about how there was neither a “specific protocol” to follow nor forms in Spanish that are necessary for rendering initial

counseling services, which she had to create for herself. This prompted Frida to navigate between learning and finding Spanish resources for her counseling sessions. She would network with other counselors who also struggled with providing bilingual counseling and finding support.

While Frida had uncomfortable experiences being the only bilingual speaker in her settings, she found herself feeling more comfortable with the population “because it is part of [her] culture.” For Frida, language switching allowed for rapport to be built faster with her clients as well as assisted in translation and emotional expression. Frida added that code-switching also created a “stronger connection” with her clients, along with increased mutual support and understanding. Rather than having to explain herself or a word to her clients, Frida noted she could language switch and instantly clients would understand and be open to it. While her experiences did not always come easy to her and she struggled with imposter syndrome, Frida noticed a lot of growth personally and professionally.

Olivia

Olivia is an Hispanic female, who at the time of this study, was in her 20s and an LPC Associate with five years of counseling experience. Olivia grew up with Spanish in the home, but prefers to speak English. She described regularly switching between English and Spanish in her day-to-day life with her family, friends, and clients, even if they are monolingual. Being herself was an important aspect of Olivia’s experiences with language switching both in and out of counseling sessions, regardless of whether clients spoke Spanish or not. Olivia allowed herself to switch languages when needed to express herself as a way for her clients to see she was trying to connect with them.

Connecting with clients was easier for Olivia when she engaged in language switching, as it indicated to them that she was proud of her roots and it helped in building rapport. By switching, she displayed to her clients that it was okay for them to switch as well when needed. Depending on what language they chose, Olivia would meet her clients where they were with their language choice and encouraged them to continue if that was comfortable for them. Another key factor of Olivia's experiences was how both she and her clients had a general understanding for one another's language preferences, of which they would navigate through together. Olivia explained to clients when she found herself "stuck" in the moment and related back to how she speaks two languages. She also explained to her clients that she has difficulty processing or identifying what she wants to say at times. On the other hand, when clients struggled, she reassured them that it was okay to switch if they needed to. For example, Olivia said, "there's moments where they also get stuck, and they [would] say um, dichos that their mother said that they've heard or, . . . bad words in Spanish." Doing so would allow her to connect more easily.

Lastly, another key component in Olivia's experiences in language switching was how she found herself getting stuck in the "in-between." When she found herself stuck between the two languages, it was hard for her to come up with the words she was trying to say and often, nothing would come up for her in either language. Olivia found this to be frustrating because she knew what she wanted to say, but as she put it, "mis alambres se me han cruzado," meaning "my cables crossed," as she no longer had connection to one language or the other. Olivia attributed these experiences as a big part of her development throughout her life, especially now in her development as a counselor. For Olivia, this brought about an extra challenge for her to navigate

through as she tried to find balance between both the separation and inclusion of her development and identity as a bilingual counselor.

Composite Depiction of Language Switching

Individual interview transcripts and lists of emergent themes for each participant were utilized to construct a composite depiction. I combined similar emergent themes and attached a new name to depict the combination of similar themes. I then stepped back from the data for two weeks to allow time for ideas to emerge during the incubation period. After I combined the similar emergent themes, 14 remained. I then consulted with two peer debriefers about the emerging themes found among the data across participants and further consolidated and renamed themes as appropriate. Of the 14 remaining themes, six were combined with other themes or discarded. In the end, there were a total of eight themes that both the peer debriefers and I considered representative of the group's experience with language switching as a whole.

Theme 1: Mutual or Shared Support

All eight participants in the study described support within their counseling sessions as mutual or shared between themselves and their clients. Participants would meet their clients where they were in terms of communication styles and would mirror or match their clients' language choices. Participants also indicated they were met with support and understanding from their clients when the counselors struggled to communicate effectively in Spanish. For example, when the participants were stumped with translating or finding the correct word to use in the moment, clients would extend patience, communicate understanding, or aid with translation.

One participant stated:

I particularly remember a family where I was first kind of struggling with my Spanish skills. I hadn't used them for a long time and the son was completely [pause] he spoke

both English and Spanish. And the mom spoke completely, um, she just spoke Spanish. And so, I was very comfortable in code switching with the son and telling, you know, going with different words. But when it came to the mom, I had to speak solely Spanish. So, I think she started to see that I was struggling and she, I remember her saying . . . ‘if you tell me in English, I’ll completely, I’ll understand you. But you know, I won’t be able to, I’ll have to respond in Spanish,’ . . . we kind of had to work through that.

Similarly, one participant discussed how they utilized language based on their understanding of their client’s native language and what they were comfortable speaking:

When codeswitching back and forth, I tried to stick with the language that they are most comfortable with. Um, if they’re comfortable expressing themselves in Spanish um, for a word or an emotion or a dicho, or whatever is being said, um, I usually nod and allow them to continue because sometimes um, saying the dicho or the emotion words, it may mean differently for them than what it means to me. So, allowing them that extra time to kind of express themselves a little bit further of how they want to identify that, that um, part, that codeswitching [sic]. Um, and if they don’t say anything after I say, ‘oh, sí,’ and I respond in Spanish if it’s in Spanish. Um, if it’s the other way where it’s Spanish to English [pause], if it’s Spanish to English, like I said, it’s one of those things where I try to remember what’s . . . the language that they’re most comfortable with um . . . I always revert back to Spanish um, because that’s their native language, and I feel like they’re more comfortable understanding concepts that I’m trying to get across um, in Spanish. Um, so it’s a very mutual back and forth um, understanding and relaxed um, interaction.

When it came to clients providing aid, one participant talked about their client helping them find the word the participant was trying to communicate in Spanish, saying:

Sometimes . . . they wait for me, they're patient and sometimes . . . they'll kind of jump in and try and help me with the word that I'm looking for. Um, [pause] sometimes um, we kind of both laugh . . . like we both understand it's hard to find the words sometimes. Similarly, other participants discussed how their clients extended help in providing them with translations when they find themselves struggling to find the right word. One participant captured this well when she said:

So, my tongue will get tied in the Spanish language and it's easier for me to say it in English and we'll just work through that and come up with a better word for me to use and being able to pronounce it.

Theme 2: Enhanced Communication and Expression

All of the participants described communication and self-expression as being easier and/or enhanced through language switching. Participants observed within their sessions, their client's ability to express or communicate either a saying, thought, word, or feeling was made easier through switching between languages. Additionally, expression, particularly emotional expression, was richer and more pronounced when it was communicated in the client's native language. Additionally, for the participants themselves, their ability to communicate, reflect feelings, and empathize with their clients was also enhanced through the use of language switching.

One participant stated:

Sometimes um, I guess what I've noticed is that like the um, like expressions or like slang or um, dichos, um it kind of um, sometimes you can only say it in one language, sometimes just in English and sometimes just in Spanish. And so, I think it just helps to

create like a more expansive or um, like a wider net of ways to be able to communicate and make sure that we're both on the same page.

Additionally, one participant discussed how certain aspects of the counseling process, such as providing psychoeducation to clients, was easier for them to communicate in English than in Spanish, so they would switch at that point:

Sometimes it was easy. Like, I feel like, depending on what we're talking about um, it's easier. But if it's more me doing psychoeducation or talking about specific um, technique or like terminology um, I felt more confident like doing that in English. So, kind of like my experience just switching at that point um, [pause] sometimes that is easier for me.

When it came to emotional expression, one participant discussed how language switching allowed them the flexibility to express themselves with their bilingual clients who would understand them and could connect through the language:

Um, [pause] well I guess I mean, some things that I did like from it was, you know, the fact that I was able to um, like express myself in a way that I wanted to. I mean, you can't always do that with, you know, monolingual clients because they, I mean, they don't understand or there's, I mean, you can say a word and it doesn't resonate or connect with them at all. So, it's really, that, I mean, that's hard, to sometimes, where I want to say something, or um, I want to convey an emotion or a feeling and that, the word in English kind of just leaves my head. So, the code switching is helpful, because if I have someone who speaks Spanish in session, then it doesn't matter if that word reached my head and I know it in Spanish then I have it right there for me. Um, so I like that. I like the fact that I can be flexible on the, in things that I say and what I do.

Similarly, another participant noted how they observed their clients' ability to remember and discuss powerful life experiences in counseling when they switched and communicated in their native language:

And I think that switching a lot happens, especially when um, students, clients um, are talking about something very emotional or, or remembering something from their past that was very powerful for them. Um, I've noticed that a lot, that they will um, speak mainly in Spanish when they're recounting those types of things. When it's more conversation, 'How are you doing? How, how have things been?' It's, it's English. When it's um, really talking about things that have happened that, that were, um have, have impacted them in their past, they a lot of times we'll switch back to Spanish.

Theme 3: Inexperienced or Unprepared in the Language

All eight of the participants described various ways in which they were inexperienced or unprepared in the language, whether it was with Spanish, English, or the use of both in their counseling sessions with Latino clients. Participants described how they struggled with translations and had difficulty in knowing clinical terms in Spanish that are most often found within the counseling field. For some participants, they stated they would "have to take the longer route" by utilizing more words to explain a single word in Spanish or English. Furthermore, several participants expressed feelings of being "stuck" or "caught in the in-between" of the two languages which tends to cause frustration.

One participant described the difficulty in utilizing Spanish in session even though she was raised in a bilingual household. She stated:

. . . so for me, I . . . [pause] I was born and raised in a bilingual um, household um by bilingual, um, parents, um and grandparents. Um, and so I'm kind of used to going back

and forth. But in in a counseling setting, um, it, it's a different layer of [pause] technicality. I guess not technicality but it's a different layer of um, [pause] precision, I guess when you're wanting to use the, the correct words, um, therapeutically. Um, and so it's a, it's a lot, um, it can be challenging, I think, um kind of going back and forth.

Another participant described how language switching was difficult to follow at first due to her native language being Spanish:

Like at first it was just all of it. It was just very tiring because um, I don't know, I guess I was very um, slow at it, like, 'OK. Hold on. Let me reset my brain. Let's go into English.' And they switched back to Spanish and I'm like, 'Oh no. Okay, hold on, hold on.' Um, but now I feel like I got used to hearing people, talking with both. It was like the first layer of like a completion like, OK, I can understand without having to, I don't know, um, make adjustments, I guess.

One participant spoke on the difficulty of finding the right words and thus had to explain what a single word meant by explaining with an additional set of words:

I often didn't have the right words that I would have used in English, so I had to kind of circumnavigate the idea a little bit . . . So instead of saying a specific word, I would [pause] kind of have to explain what the word meant . . . with a lot more words. So, in order to get that a [sic] simple idea, I always had to make it seem a little bit more complicated.

Additionally, another participant spoke on getting stuck and forgetting how to say certain words in either language:

. . . I feel like sometimes I forget how to say certain words in English or in Spanish. Um, so it kind of throws me off, like with being fluent in my language or speaking. Um, I'm

like, oh, like trying to think about how to say that in Spanish or, 'OK, now how do I say that in English,' or sometimes I get stuck.

Another participant also mentioned the feeling or act of getting stuck:

I think you'll, they would be able to see me um, struggle a little bit to even come up with what I'm trying to say, because sometimes I do get stuck in between both languages and nothing comes out. And I, and I always say, 'It's at the tip of my tongue. Hold on.'

Theme 4: I Was the Only Bilingual Speaker

Four of the eight participants discussed how they were the only bilingual speakers in their internship or practicum. Some participants went on to discuss how they continued to be the only bilingual speaker after their training in the master's program and into their current position at work.

One participant stated:

But there was a lot of times when I was kind of just placed in that setting just because I was the only person who could speak Spanish, um which was really difficult for me because um, I'm a huge advocate for bilingual counseling ethics. Um, I feel like not just people who are monolingual should have the same, you know ethics, but the same bilingual right? So, just because I know the language doesn't mean I understand the cultural norms and things like that. But I think there's just a lot to unpack um, but a lot of specifically monolingual or white supervisors would say, 'Oh, well, you're the only one here, so you need to counsel the English- bilingual population.' Even when I was uncomfortable. Even now to this day, I mean, I'm more comfortable now, um but it's a lot of the times it's kind of forced on me because I'm the only one.

Another participant also talked about how they were the only bilingual speaker in their Master's counseling program:

So, with Spanish and English um, I did have different experiences, like in my practicum in when I was doing my Master's program um, and I was the only Spanish-speaker in my practicum class at that point. So, they would allow me a lot to do intakes or um, individual sessions um, if there was someone that spoke Spanish.

In addition, another participant talked about how despite not having training in bilingual counseling, they continued to provide the service to bilingual clients because they were the only bilingual student at their center:

I didn't have a lot of training in bilingual counseling, and so I always felt um, somewhat um, I guess I felt like I lacked self-efficacy in my like ability to speak or counsel in Spanish. But, you know, I did it anyways because I was one of the only bilingual students um, there. And then throughout you know my educational experiences. So, I've always done it, but I've always um, I guess questioned my skill set.

Theme 5: Personal Fulfillment

Six of the eight participants described a sense of purpose and/or fulfillment with their ability to utilize Spanish in session as a means to support their bilingual clients. For some participants, there was a feeling of being proud in being able to provide their clients with adequate services that not very many could.

One participant stated:

And this person is receiving services because I am speaking Spanish with them. And if I wasn't here, then who would be doing it? So, it is kind of empowering just to know that,

hey, I can communicate with this person on a really deeper level that maybe they wouldn't have done on another person so, or a translator, you know?

Another participant stated:

Um, I really enjoy . . . my clients that I get to speak Spanish with. . . It's heartwarming for me because it's a lot of the reason why I got into, um, this particular profession, um, was because I had lots of family members and friends who struggled with mental health challenges and, and really weren't able to get the care that they needed because they didn't identify with, um, the therapist or they weren't comfortable with the therapist because they wanted someone who was, um, bilingual and or of Hispanic descent. So um, it, it really reminds me of why I, I entered into the profession and I do enjoy, um, my clients who are, are bilingual, um and or are Spanish-speaking.

Additionally, another participant discussed being proud of being bilingual because it allowed for more self-expression which in turn enhanced their connection with their clients:

. . . a lot of the times I also feel very um, proud of being able to use both languages um, because I can express myself in many more ways than just someone that um, knows one language. And I feel that if I'm able to um, pick from both languages, then I have much more of a, um, ability to connect with more people in more situations um, because I can understand different perspectives. If that makes any sense.

Theme 6: Attunement

Six of the eight participants described how being able to switch languages in session, usually to Spanish, enhanced their connection with their clients. Participants stated the connections they acquired with their clients were deeper and more meaningful when they would speak from the clients' native language. Participants reported they were better able to understand

and relate to emotions being expressed or the wise sayings that would be communicated by clients. Additionally, for some participants, being able to speak from a certain language allowed for richer expression and communication with their clients.

One participant stated:

. . . Sometimes there's like transference in the sessions where I'll feel like, you know, I really feel connected to that client. And it could be a good or a bad thing. Like, I definitely don't want to place my beliefs, or you know, emotions on my client, but I, I can also see the benefit of feeling what they're feeling um, because it does make me a more empathetic counselor. So, when I, when I see them like getting emotional or, you know, whether it's angry or happy, I feel connected, more connected to them because I know what that expression means . . . And so, for them to convey it in Spanish or to code switch it makes, it shows me how important it is to them um, or how, what impact it's made in their lives. And so, you know, that's kind of been a big thing for me, is just feeling more like, oh, wow, I know exactly what they mean. And I mean, yes, that happens with my, with my monolingual clients as well. But it's, it happened more so with my bilingual clients because it's like they understand that language piece and why it's tied to our culture and things like that where words, certain words, can't translate. And so, I think it just makes me feel more, you know, connected to them . . .

Another participant reported:

. . . I have like a teenager right now. So, she mostly speaks to me in English. But if it's something her parents tell her or um, like advice or something, she'll tell me how they say it in Spanish. [pause] She won't just translate what they've said to me. . . . I feel like I could relate to the client a little bit more, like understand because my parents are Spanish-

speaking, and I do mostly speak English on a day to day. Um, but I do flip, you know, back and forth. Um, so I, I related to the client more. I feel like understanding the way that her parents would tell her or um, just relating to that more.

Furthermore, one participant commented on how being able to speak Spanish in session brought an energy to the room that increased a level of mutual understanding and connection:

I think I find a lot of joy in being able to speak Spanish in counseling. And so, I noticed I have, you know, feelings of excitement and feelings of connection um, when that's happening, because I almost feel like um, like it brings in, it brings in energy to the room, at least in my experiences, because I feel that they understand that I understand them. And so, I feel connected, very much connected when we do that. Um, I um, have also had, you know, experiences going back and forth from English to Spanish, um you know, with supervisees. And um, and I feel the same way.

Theme 7: Authenticity

Four of the eight participants expressed the importance of the authenticity they experienced between themselves and their clients. They described freedom and a sense of acceptance in and between themselves and their clients to speak freely as one desired and needed. Switching without judgment or criticism was part of this sense of authenticity. The importance of the participants showing up to session as they are, often unprepared or inexperienced with bilingual counseling and expressing that to their clients and embracing it, embodies that sense of authenticity.

One participant talked about encouraging a client to communicate the way she needs to and not to be concerned. She said:

. . . at the very beginning when she was code-switching um, she would always apologize and say, 'Sorry, this is something that my mom would say, and I don't know if you'll understand it.' And I'll say, 'No, don't worry about it. Just go ahead. Tell me. If I don't understand, I'll, I'll ask you.' And um, she now always code switches within um, our sessions, which is something that she has mentioned to me that um, she didn't do very much when she was growing up.

Another participant revealed that, prior to having a session with a bilingual client, she would disclose her levels of proficiency in Spanish, even though she received conflicting feedback about whether to do that. She reflected on feedback she received from supervisors, saying:

I've had supervisors tell me, 'That's really good that you're being um, clear with them and open and honest in telling them they know your language is not the best but you're going to do the best you can.' But then I've had supervisors who say, 'You know, don't tell them that at all, because then you're just . . . setting yourself up for failure or you're just kind of putting yourself in a negative light right away.' But um, it just depends. With some clients, I still do it. And I say something like, 'You know, my Spanish isn't the best, and there may be times where I get confused or I, you know, may make up a word or the word.' But I kind of encourage them to feel um, comfortable in correcting me because I learn from it.

Another participant replied:

I think they [anyone watching] would have noticed, like the level of comfortableness. And I don't think, I don't know that's a word of a, um I think they would have noticed the authenticity of both me as a counselor and my clients. Um, I think it, by being able to

switch between languages, I think it conveys to the client that they can like be themselves in however they want to be.

Theme 8: Intentionality

Four out of the eight participants expressed intentionality behind their engagement in language switching. Language switching was described as an added tool that could be used intentionally to strengthen the counseling process. These participants might switch to elicit further expression of emotions from their clients or as a way to enhance their own skillset in the language. In addition, language switching was done intentionally at clients' request so the client could learn and practice their non-native language.

One participant stated:

. . . My experiences, they may be different in that, it wasn't something I grew up with. Um, that's something that I started acquiring for, by just immersing myself here. And after that, it was not just following what people do, but also being intentional about um, not just letting it happen, but wanting it to happen. Um, and after I started trying and seeing mainly, or not, mostly positive reactions with clients and even friends. Um, and it was it just reinforced that perception.

Another participant stated:

I did have one client. Yes. Um, they wanted to use English because they were practicing their English. And so, they requested that I speak English to them. Um, we did get to a point where I was using um, some English words that he didn't understand. So . . . he would communicate in Spanish, like, 'what does that mean?' And so, I would have to change the words around, but still find something in English for him because he insisted that I spoke English.

Another replied:

. . . so I'll, sometimes like, I'll explain it in English, or I'll explain it in Spanish, and then, kind of translate that. So, sometimes I'll, I'll say the same thing basically in both languages. For me, it kind of sticks in my head um, which is helpful for me, like when I'm talking to someone else that is only Spanish-speaking or someone else who's only English speaking like I know how to say it or how to explain it. So, it kind of, in a sense like take advantage of the, the counseling session to, to practice that. Like um, let me try to explain the same thing or, and I won't do it like right after, you know, right after I said it in English. But like, we'll have more conversation and talk about different things and then I'll try to bring it up again.

Exemplary Portraits

Following the group depictions, I returned to the individual depictions in order to create exemplary portraits to uncover the nature of language switching among bilingual counselors (Moustakas, 1990). I selected the following two profiles as they were most representative of the group's experience as a whole of language switching with Latino clients in session, including core themes revealed in the individual interviews.

SF

I have an opportunity to work with a lot of um, students from all over the world. I am, um, the only Spanish-speaking counselor on campus, um, an asset at that center. And so, um, any student who might prefer a Spanish-speaking counselor, um, I see them. . . . So, the majority of the time in, in session um, we go back and forth, um, a lot. Um, a lot of times, especially the students from other countries, um, like to practice their English. And so, I'll go in session thinking like, 'okay, this is going to be an all-Spanish session.' And

they're like, 'no, no, like we, we want to practice our English too, so can we do both?'

And so, it's a lot of time, um, um English but then when they don't know how to say or, or communicate something, um in English, we'll switch back, um, to Spanish.

Um, and so for me . . . [pause] I was born and raised in a bilingual um, household, um by bilingual, um, parents, um and grandparents . . . so I'm kind of used to going back and forth. But in in a counseling setting, um, it, it's a different layer of [pause] technicality. I guess not technicality but it's a different layer of um, [pause] precision, I guess when you're wanting to use the, the correct words, um, therapeutically. Um, and so it's a, it's a lot, um, can be challenging, I think, um kind of going back and forth. Um, and there are times where I have to ask, um, students to, or my client, to kind of, clarify um something. What does that mean? What is [sic] that word mean? Especially when they use slang or something that I'm not understanding from um, their home country. Um, so, yeah, it's challenging.

Um, I really enjoy . . . my clients that I get to speak Spanish with. Um . . . it's heartwarming for me because it's a lot of the reason why I got into, um, this particular profession . . . I had lots of family members and friends who struggled with mental health challenges and, and really weren't able to get the care that they needed because they, they didn't identify with, um, the therapist or they weren't comfortable with the therapist because they wanted someone who was, um, bilingual and or of Hispanic descent. So um, it, it really reminds me of why I, I entered into the profession and I do enjoy, um, my clients who are, are bilingual, um and or are Spanish speaking.

Like there's a, when a client is talking about something, and then, then, there's a facial expression like, 'uh . . .' they don't know how to say something in English. Um, and so

they'll, they'll pause and like, 'como se dice . . .' and then they'll, they'll talk about whatever it is. And so, then we just kind of switch back to Spanish, um which is their, their original um, language that they feel more comfortable communicating. And I think that switching a lot happens, especially when um, students, clients um, are talking about something very emotional or, or remembering something from their past that was very powerful for them. Um, I've noticed that a lot, that they will um, speak mainly in Spanish when they're recounting those types of things. When it's more conversation, 'How are you doing? How, how have things been?' It's, it's English. When it's um, really talking about things that have happened that, that were, um have, have impacted them in their past, they a lot of times we'll switch back to Spanish. So, for, for me, it's just kind of, I just follow their lead as um, the counselors and therapists, and, and whatever language they are speaking to me, I, I speak back to them.

For me, it's challenging when I start to feel self-conscious about my Spanish-speaking skills. Um, I hope to um, eventually get the Spanish-speaking certification in counseling. Um, but right now, this is based on, on the language I, I was taught growing up and I took some classes of, in, in college for college credit. And then I practiced counseling with Spanish-speaking clients. So, um, sometimes I will get self-conscious, like wanting to make sure, um, I'm saying something, um, correctly or saying something, um when I'm when I'm reflecting or summarizing, making sure that I'm um saying it um, in proper Spanish. Um, and so that for me, it's like a little challenging because of, if you, at, at times feel a little self-conscious. Um, it's rewarding for me to be able to be in that, in that space with a client when they're comfortable and, and they're speaking in their, their native language. Um, that to me is . . . rewarding because they're able to talk about these

things and, and come to counseling and, and feel comfortable enough to um, speak in Spanish, knowing that um, someone is going to be there to, to listen and understand. And so, for me, that's very rewarding.

I think it's helpful for the client um, because they're able to communicate in a way that is comfortable for them. Um, they don't have to worry about the counselor not understanding them, whether they're speaking in English or Spanish. So, I think um clinically that is, is helpful for the client, um therapeutic for the client. Um, it's helpful for me as a clinician, um because it really does help build that therapeutic alliance um very quickly. Um, and so it . . . um, I'm trying to think of the word, but when I, I've, I've asked um a client, 'Que te prefieres?' Like, 'What, what would you prefer to, to speak?' It . . . really does um, build that therapeutic alliance very quickly and allows them to feel, feel more comfortable, um and so we can, we can kind of get to work a lot quicker.

I think it's helpful in terms of building that connection and um, that rapport, the therapeutic alliance . . . I think that that connection, that language connection, that culture connection is, is very powerful um, in the clinical setting and um, in the counselor education setting as well.

I get a lot of like, 'Oh, good!' Or um, 'That's awesome, Okay!' And, and so they...just immediately I think feel more comfortable, more relaxed. Um, and, and I, I often share with them like, 'There are times where I feel self-conscious speaking Spanish, um as I'm sure there are times that you feel self-conscious when speaking English. Um, and so this, this counseling relationship is . . . about um, you being able to speak in a language you um prefer, so like we don't have to experience that self-consciousness.'

I have a lot of the students that I've worked with who are native um, Spanish speakers, um really appreciate the ability to switch back and forth. Um, for the students who maybe their native English speakers, but grew up speaking um both Spanish and . . . English especially um, the, the Hispanic students that I work with who are Mexican-American or um, Puerto Rican, um they, they um [pause] have just that they feel more comfortable. Um, they feel more comfortable with a counselor who um, can speak both languages. Um I think for me when I was a counselor in training, I would have loved to have had a counselor of my own um, who spoke Spanish and English, who I could, I could kind of identify with a little bit more. Um, but I, I was never able to find one. Um and so I'm, I'm hoping that um I can provide a little bit more of, of that comfort for, for my client, too, who also have that pressure in a counselor.

. . . For me, it's about um, honoring my family and my roots and where I come from um, and connecting, um with other people who are also, um, Español hablantes, Español hablantes, Spanish speakers, or um, um native English speakers who grew up speaking both English and Spanish. So, for me it's [pause] um, just about um, connecting with with my culture and being able to do that in a professional way, in a personal setting.

I think being able to switch, um whether it's emotion in Spanish or...whatever language it is, I think it's valuable in terms of being able to connect with your client and developing, like I said earlier, that therapeutic alliance and rapport. Just, it makes things so much easier in a clinical setting when they feel like, 'Okay, like they, they understand me. Like they understand what I'm saying whether it's going to be in English or Spanish.'

Frida

Um, even though I grew up um, speaking like Spanish and things like that, I wasn't fluent, to um, I wouldn't call myself fluent at all . . . And so, I had a lot of trouble speaking it fluently because I would get confused with like conjugations and things like that. So, I ended up like making up words . . . Um, but there was a lot of times when I was kind of just placed in that setting just because I was the only person who could speak Spanish, um which was really difficult for me because um, I'm a huge advocate for bilingual counseling ethics . . . So, just because I know the language doesn't mean I understand the cultural norms and things like that. But I think there's just a lot to unpack um, but a lot of, specifically monolingual or white supervisors would say, 'Oh, well, you're the only one here, so you need to counsel the English- bilingual population.' Even when I was uncomfortable. Even now to this day, I mean, I'm, I'm more comfortable now, um but it's a lot of the times it's kind of forced on me because I'm the only one. Like right now...a big population of my clients are not bilingual. But every time we get a new bilingual intake or someone who solely speaks Spanish um, I'm the one who takes it because there's nobody else. And so, I've, I've kind of, I love it um, to some extent because it does help me. Um, I feel a lot more comfortable with that population because it is part of my culture. The, the sessions go a lot differently than with non-bilingual clients. Because of that codeswitching, there is a kind of a more of a like, it's really hard to explain to people who don't know or who are not bilingual, but it's kind of like this, like feeling like they're family in a way. Um, and so the, the conversation is more like a *platica*. Not really like you're, I mean, you're counseling, but at the same time it just goes a lot more smoothly because then the rapport gets, I feel like it's built so much faster.

And so, my counseling has um, really benefited as a result because it kind of gets me in it. Um, it gets me using those skills um, and it makes me think really critically about my clients and things like that. But my, you know, my experience hasn't always been good. But, you know, I've kind of learned to, to go through it as best as I can . . . there was a lot of different Latinas who I actually came into contact with, who were up north and they were actually dealing with a lot of the struggles that I was about not, you know, not um, not great supervision for bilingual counselors. They were the only ones in their clinic who often spoke Spanish. They didn't really know um, specific like the proper terms to use um, how to translate theory, how to, you know, how to use a lot of different methods. And so, we were kind of alone in navigating that . . . Um, so it it's been a struggle, but it's, it's been a good struggle because it makes me feel like I'm not alone in that.

I remember during my whole practicum experience, there was just one. I was the only counselor. And so, there is not really specific protocol on, you know, on informed consent, things like that. Like, they didn't have forms um, so I had to create those. So, it was a lot of doing extra work um, which was crazy. But yeah, I mean, yeah, it was a lot of my experience of just kind of getting thrown in there, just being like, you know, here's a client that they speak Spanish and that's they, I mean, for all they knew, I could have been doing a terrible job. You know, I could have been really harming the client, but nobody ever knew because there wasn't a supervisor who also spoke Spanish as well.

They probably would have seen like a lot of like emotional expression um, or they would have seen like, I don't know, maybe um, maybe a lot of passion in either one of our voices because I felt like um, especially for a client to codeswitch, it's mostly because we,

we can't translate it to English or it's like well that . . . word specifically doesn't do that emotion justice, or how we felt, or even how to explain that situation.

Um, it just kind of makes me feel sometimes less than, so then or not being enough or not, not knowing English to the best of my ability . . . But um, if being in session with clients and having to codeswitch it, it feels good. It feels like, you know, they understand me, I understand them. And it just, I feel like a lot stronger connection to them um, because I don't have to explain myself. I could just use it through a word and they instantly understand. Like, 'Oh, that word means that.' So sometimes, a lot of the times, it's really empowering for me um, to know that, oh, this word for this single, you know, in Spanish it's helpful to that individual and then vice versa, too, in English sometimes because there's, there's words that I don't know in Spanish.

So, every time, you know I, I do I speak my language, or I speak Spanish, or I feel like I'm kind of grounded or not. It makes me feel good because I'm like, okay, you know, this is part of me and my identity. This is, this is something that I haven't lost. And it's with me forever and, and I hope to pass that on to my kids. And, and so, even in counseling in Spanish, it makes me feel good because it makes me feel connected to my culture. And so, it's, you know, even though I struggle with it sometimes that I don't feel like my language is the best. Um, it still makes me feel connected to know that, hey, I'm, I'm still trying. And this person is receiving services because I, I am speaking Spanish with them. And if I wasn't here, then who would be doing it? So, it is kind of empowering just to know that, hey, I can, I can communicate with this person on a really deeper level that maybe they wouldn't have done on another person so, or a translator, you know?

Like I've explained before, I think it's, I guess it's more of like what what's being said or, you know, trying to convey something to someone in a way so that there could be a lot of like frustration um, as far as you know, not getting something across, or not knowing how to say it. So, I've, I've experienced that sometimes. Um, and I know I've had to apologize to clients a lot of times because it's not my frustration with them, it's more my frustration with myself. Um, and so there's . . . that sometimes. But then most of the time it's like really um, positive expression or emotional. I feel I don't know; I feel like whenever I do code switch or something happens, it's, it's to convey something like really lighthearted or like maybe we're, we're engaging in small talk until we're talking back and forth about things that are happening. So, it's a, it's a really good positive experience um, for me. Um, I guess it was a lot of mirroring, like um, you know, if they felt something then I then I felt it, too. So, if it was anger or if it was like, you know, sadness. I think that's and that goes back to like more than just language, because I think, you know, language is an important in this part, in this particular setting. But I think it's also the cultural piece because it's like, it's who we are . . . you know, like feeling that I'm a lot of the times it's like I have to step away and say, you know, this isn't um . . . transference. Sometimes there's trans . . . there's like transference in the sessions where I'll feel like, you know, I really feel connected to that client. And it, it could be a good or a bad thing. Like, I definitely don't want to place my beliefs, or you know emotions on my client, but I, I can also see the benefit of feeling what they're feeling um, because it does make me a more empathetic counselor. So, when I, when I see them in like getting emotional or, you know, whether it's angry or happy, I feel connected, more connected to them because I know what that expression means. Or I, I felt it at some point. And so, for them to convey

it in Spanish or to code switch it makes, it shows me how important it is to them um, or how, what impact it's made in their lives. And so, you know, that's kind of been a big thing for me, is just feeling more like, oh, wow, I know exactly what they mean. And I mean, yes, that happens with my, with my monolingual clients as well. But it's, it happened more so with my bilingual clients because it's like they understand that language piece of and why it's tied to our culture and things like that where words, certain words, can't translate. And so, I think it just makes me feel more, you know, connected to them or it makes me feel that emotion and anger, that sadness much more than it was with, you know, maybe another client.

Um, [pause] well I guess I mean, some things that I did like from it was, you know, the fact that I was able to um, like express myself in a way that I wanted to. I mean, you can't always do that with, you know, monolingual clients because they I mean, they don't understand or there's, I mean, you can say a word and it doesn't resonate or connect with them at all. So, it's really, that, I mean, that's hard, too. Sometimes, where I want to say something, or um, I want to convey an emotion or a feeling and that, the word in English kind of just leaves my head. So, the, the codeswitching is helpful, because if I have someone who speaks Spanish in session, then it doesn't matter if that word reached my head and I know it in Spanish then I have it right there for me. Um, so I like that. I like the fact that I can be flexible on the, in things that I say and what I do. Um and again, it just goes back to like my identity. I feel, I feel a lot more closer to my language because of that. I, you know, I wasn't always a counselor who had felt very grounded in, in her identity and background. I just, I, I've had pretty I don't know, I guess, rough experiences with who I am as a Latina. So, it sometimes as far as my racial identity development, I

would kind of go back and forth with who I am and using Spanish. For a long time I didn't, there was, you know, maybe a year or two where I kind of rebelled and I didn't want to speak Spanish to clients because I just didn't feel like I was Latina enough. I didn't feel like I was worthy of . . . counseling in Spanish. I thought they were going to see right through me and so it didn't feel right.

I guess just growing with the client or learning things from the client, too. I like I said, I'm not um, I didn't consider myself like a fluent speaker so there was a lot of things that I was learning in session, too. Um, so if I didn't have the word, they would help me with the word or they would give me a word that better fit. So, I would you know, sometimes I would write it down or I would take a mental note in my head and I would write it down later. And I would say, okay this is another way. I mean, because even in the Spanish language, one word for me can mean so many different things for others you know, in, in Salvadorian or Guatemalan, and it, it could mean something else. And so, for me, it was really helpful in kind of understanding the client more and maybe what that word meant to them. So, it's, it's giving me a lot of benefit as far as growing with the client, growing with the language.

I guess I just didn't like the lack of help regarding what it was going to look like. Um, like not having adequate supervision, not, not being able to have someone to talk to about that, not being able to like, you know, consult afterwards and be like, you know, the client said this, and this is what that meant . . . I tried to do my own research. I looked up a lot of articles . . . I didn't have anybody to turn to. Um, and now I can say that I have a lot of people that I can go and say, 'hey, you know, I have you know, there's clients saying this, or, or this is what happened in session.'

Like I said, it just kind of makes us feel more connected or I've seen in Spanish. . . . And so, a lot of the times them seeing someone or having a counselor who's younger than them, who's speaking Spanish and that, that's impacted our relationship because they kind of see me as like a daughter kind of figure. So, having to navigate that has been interesting. But I wouldn't say it's like a negative or a positive thing. It's just that kind of a thing um, where they just kind of feel like motherly, I guess.

Just again, like coming up with language on how to convey that to the client. That, that has always kind of been a struggle for me. But once I, I get the language down, there's no problem in like, in them understanding. You know, this is kind of the steps we need to take. But it's more of my initial struggle of how my, how do I convey this to the client in a way that they'll understand but not really anything with merit.

I used to do this kind of disclosure thing of like at least letting them know that . . . I've had [sic] you know feedback about it both ways. You know I've had supervisors tell me, 'That's really good that you're being um, clear with them and open and honest in telling them they know your language is not the best, but you're going to do the best you can.' But then I've had supervisors who say, you know, don't tell them that at all, because then you're just um, what did they say, like you're just um, setting yourself up for failure or you're just kind of putting yourself in a negative light right away. But um, it just depends. With some clients, I still do it. And I say something like, 'you know, my Spanish isn't the best, and there may be times where I get confused or I, you know, may make up a word or the word', but I, I kind of encourage them to feel um, comfortable in correcting me because I learned from it.

I would just say that my, I guess my experience has been a little bit different in that, I don't, that I still, I think it's just more of a confidence thing, that I don't feel fully capable in my abilities. Again, but I think it's because of how I struggle with, with my identity as a Latina. Um, so that's why my particular, my particular experience has been so different in that I don't go into session thinking that I'm like fully capable of giving these or offering these services, even though I am. Um, so sometimes there is this kind of like imposter syndrome, which I'm sure it happens to all of us, but more so for me when it comes to giving sessions solely in Spanish.

Creative Synthesis

The following is a narrative I composed to describe both my perception and experience of language switching in counseling with Latino clients. This last step of the heuristic data analysis process is what Moustakas (1990) referred to as creative synthesis. Creative synthesis is where the researcher freely engages in thought and develops a summary of their personal and/or professional experiences through the use of narratives, stories, poems, art, and analogies.

I was born and raised in the Southern tip of Texas, the Rio Grande Valley, which is predominately Hispanic. Spanish or Tex-Mex is commonly heard anywhere you go in the valley and the culture is rich and unique to the area. Growing up I did not learn Spanish, or I should say, Spanish was not taught to me, even though my parents are bilingual in English and Spanish. While they spoke in Spanish to each other and in front of me, they never spoke it directly to me. Unless of course, I was getting reprimanded or was in some kind of trouble. The most Spanish I would hear at one time was when I would visit my grandparents, who were primarily Spanish-speaking. My grandparents' English was broken, so I know they did their best to communicate with me, but it was mostly Spanish I heard from them. My parents made the decision early on to

not raise me and my siblings in a bilingual home. The reason behind their decision was based on their personal experiences growing up bilingual. Speaking Spanish was looked down upon, and even punished, especially in the school systems. My parents recalled stories of how they would get slapped on their hands with a ruler when they were caught speaking Spanish in school. They shared other stories of the discrimination they and their families experienced as well. Therefore, they feared that their children would be subjected to the same discrimination and pain.

Ultimately, I learned the language anyway, even though I was not directly taught it growing up. I picked up words and phrases from my parent's conversations and eventually, had a decent understanding of the language to the point where I could follow basic conversations. My ability to *speak* Spanish was not very good as I never spoke it to my parents or anywhere else for that matter. Key moments in my experiences with Spanish and language switching came in junior high and high school. I clearly remember witnessing my peers language switching. At that time, I did not know it was language switching, but they would speak what I would consider Spanglish or Tex-Mex. I learned more phrases from my peers and then took more interest in my Spanish electives when I began to realize it was going to be a necessity. In high school, I took the required Spanish requirements for my graduation plan and then took an additional Spanish class to build my skillset. I remember struggling, though, to learn the language, and especially had difficulty in conjugation and correct tenses. I was in a sense embarrassed that I struggled so much to grasp the language and that in reality I did not know much at all. This weighed heavily for me, especially starting at 16 when I began working my first job in retail. I was met with countless customers who were bilingual and sometimes only Spanish speaking. I slowly learned the Spanish vocabulary for retail and painfully struggled to do so. I will never forget when a Spanish customer asked me where the bathing suits were, which in Spanish is called "trajes de

baño.” However, I only recognized the word “baño” and thus gave them directions that led them outside our store and near the food court because that was where the bathrooms were located. I laugh looking back at it now but was painfully embarrassed at that time when I realized what they were asking. Another key moment I remembered while working in retail was when my Caucasian boss frantically ran up to me and asked, “You know Spanish, right?” He then proceeded to direct me to take a phone call from a Spanish speaker. I told him I was not very good and that I could not do it, and he stated I could not be worse than him. I was terrified and very uncomfortable. I did take the phone call and I was able to get through it and serve the customer’s needs. But for many of my teenage years and leading into my college years, my Spanish was very broken and I language switched frequently. Language switching was how I survived; it bridged the gap between the two languages for me.

Many different feelings and experiences arose when I first started realizing and experiencing the setbacks from not being able to fluently speak Spanish. I recall feeling bitter in regard to my subpar Spanish-speaking skills and would get easily triggered when someone would assume that I knew how to speak Spanish just because I was Hispanic. At one point, I became so upset around that judgment that I did not want to learn more or speak the language. I should not have to be expected to speak Spanish just because I was Hispanic; I made that known to whoever would make such assumptions. But once I entered college, my perceptions around speaking Spanish changed. I noticed my want for learning Spanish was more about connection to my roots and heritage. In college, I took two semesters of Spanish to keep building my skill level and also to secure easy passing grades as I knew the basics to get me by. I still struggled with speaking it properly and conjugating, and increasingly relied on language switching.

From the moment I started learning Spanish in 7th grade up until the end of my Master's program, I experienced a lot of shame around my inability to really understand and speak Spanish. I felt ashamed that I struggled so much to grasp it and had to rely on language switching to get my points across in conversations. I felt less Hispanic for struggling to speak Spanish fluently. As I mentioned earlier, I hated the assumption that because I was Hispanic, I knew Spanish or should know Spanish. I soon became resentful towards my parents for not raising me with the language. I realized how much of an asset it was in jobs, and more than anything, wanted to be able to speak it fluently because it was all around me. I also wanted to keep part of my roots and pass them onto my children. I thought, if I did not learn Spanish or pushed away from it out of resentment, then the language would stop possibly with my parents. I would then not pass it down to my children and grandchildren.

After my first year in college, my quest to learn Spanish had slowed down. I knew enough to have small conversations with my family and was able to better understand others, but it was rare when such instances would occur. I carried on with my education and found myself entering a master's program for counseling. About a year and half into the program, I began my practicum and started out at a counseling and training clinic on campus. This is where I met my Hispanic supervisor, who would later become my mentor. She has always been a big advocate for the Hispanic community, and she would do community outreach to get Spanish-speaking individuals to come in for free counseling services. She raised awareness in me and other Spanish-speaking students about the need for bilingual counselors and the stigma that is carried around mental health among the Hispanic community. She encouraged Spanish-speaking counselors-in-training to provide bilingual counseling services when the opportunity arose. I was one of those students.

When I was first assigned to a Spanish counseling session, I tried getting out of it. I told my supervisor that I was not fluent in Spanish at all and that I did not think I was capable of holding a session. She reassured me that she believed I could and said I would not be alone. She also assured me she would be watching from the monitors. I still felt uneasy. I was just starting out in my practicum experience and was already nervous about counseling in general as it was still very new to me. Add on top of that counseling in Spanish, and I was a deer in headlights. This feeling of being a new CIT and being put into bilingual counseling sessions was something I could relate to with my participants. Hearing them share how they felt first starting out was validating even though I had a very different level of support than many of them did not have. The other CITs I was paired with for the Spanish sessions were more fluent than me, which was a plus. I heavily relied on them. I would not talk much in the counseling sessions, and when I did, I language switched. I also had a hard time following conversations. There were words being used that I had never heard; on top of that, I hardly knew clinical terms in Spanish. Shame overcame me once again. I wanted to give up and I dreaded anytime I had a Spanish session coming up. In time, I started speaking up more in my Spanish sessions, and I continued to language switch as needed, which was frequently. My clients did not seem bothered by my language switching. They kept talking in Spanish and would even say things in English to help me understand. In addition, my supervisor would talk to me in Spanish more, whether it was in passing or during our supervision. I felt supported and believed in; however, I remained very uncomfortable in doing something that I ultimately believed I had no idea how to do. I cannot recall significant moments then on after, but I remember my supervisor always pushing and supporting me in utilizing Spanish.

A turning point in my language acquisition was studying abroad in Costa Rica for a certificate I was pursuing for counseling Spanish-speaking individuals. The immersion was priceless. My Spanish-speaking skills and confidence grew tenfold. I learned so many clinical terms and ways of self-expression in a matter of two weeks. I came back different from that trip. I interacted with the community and workers in the place we were staying, and every single one of those people were patient and kind towards me as I practiced my Spanish. They understood English rather well due to the tourism. If I needed help with a translation, I would say it in English, and they would translate it in Spanish for me. The experience I gathered from there forever shaped my perspective of the language, my use of the language, and both my professional and personal identity. When I returned home, I was eventually asked to run dialectical behavior therapy personal skills group for our Spanish community. I was the only one with the time and experience who could offer the groups. While I was nervous to do so, I was enthralled with the idea and the opportunity. I wanted to do this and be able to provide such an opportunity to my community. I would have to learn even more clinical terms and would essentially be on my own, and weirdly enough, I was okay with that. I was even asked to go on live television for a Spanish network to advertise the groups! That semester I ran a small group and had a great experience. I language switched when I needed to, and I was met with understanding, patience, and help from the group members. I then went on to see an individual client in Spanish where I also language switched with intention to elicit more emotion and expression. Following that, I did another study abroad in Costa Rica. My identity as being bilingual flourished! Instead of being so engulfed with the thought that my Spanish was not fluent enough to hold a full conversation, I embraced and accepted language switching as my form of communication and part of my identity, of which I was proud.

After my second trip studying abroad, I returned home and applied for a bilingual counselor position with unaccompanied children, a position where I stayed for a year and a half. I knew going into this position that I would need to have fluency in Spanish. I felt confident and believed I would be able to learn along the way. I was accepted into the position, and while I was scared and nervous all over again, I was excited. I grew close to my co-workers and had daily conversations with them in Spanish. We all language switched with each other casually; it felt comforting and natural. I even incorporated more language switching outside of work in casual conversations with a close friend, who is a native Spanish speaker. Language switching continued to be prominent in my life even though I could hold more conversations solely in Spanish. When working with unaccompanied children who solely spoke Spanish, I found myself still switching when I would get “stuck,” which was due to lack of proficiency in the language. Although I knew a lot more of the language, I still got stumped. It was like even though I knew what I wanted to say, my brain would freeze. I would lose the whole thought and word, making it difficult to communicate in either English or Spanish.

Also, I language switched with the children at work as a way for them to practice their English, as this was something they wanted, and in return they would help me with my Spanish and teach me words from their country. It became a way of mutual and shared support. It was also a way of connecting deeper and being authentic. Additionally, at the start of every initial intake, I would explain to each child that my Spanish was not very good and that I would need their help and patience every now and then. I would always reassure them that for the most part, I could understand them and if I did not, I would let them know. Furthermore, I would tell them that if they ever heard me pronounce something incorrectly or wanted to help me say something, to just jump right on in and do so. Many of them were excited to help and they were so kind in

their corrections. They were also very patient and never got frustrated if I had to switch or ask them for help. In fact, they were excited to explain words that were specific to their culture and even took on a teacher role when I asked them for help.

In all my interactions with these children, some as young as four and as old as 17, there was always a sense of authenticity and mutual understanding on both my and their ends. While I was more familiar with Spanish, I was still learning words that were relevant to their lives and experiences. And just as I was still learning a language, so were they. They were learning English. So, at times we went back and forth intentionally. Other times, I had no idea how to explain something and so I used English with them, even though they had no idea. One male teen looked at me intently as I spoke to him the way I needed to in order to help my brain finish the processing or thought. He nodded and he waited for me to finish saying what I needed to say in English. Initially I had started out in Spanish, but I “lost my brain” along the way. I had to switch back into English to finish my train of thought, even though I knew he did not understand. In doing so, I was able to still maintain my thought process and then could recollect myself and go back into Spanish. As this was going on, I explained to him that I was at a loss for words and needed to say it out loud in English and try to translate it. I told him what I was trying to say utilizing other words and analogies, and then he nodded and proceeded to summarize for me what I was trying to say.

In another instance, after disclosing to a child about my level of proficiency in Spanish, they sat quietly before gently smiling and sharing how they too struggle with speaking another language, which was English. That was a powerful and heartwarming moment for me to hear a child not only practice vulnerability but empathize and validate my struggle as well. It was a mutual connection, a shared struggle, and shared understanding. From then on out, there was a

sense of patience and acceptance. I helped the child with their English, and they did not judge me when I struggled with Spanish. In fact, all the children I worked with were all gentle and respectful towards me. While this may be due to the power dynamic in that I am an adult, they still did not laugh at my Spanish, unless I was being lighthearted or playful around my inability to pronounce something. They would laugh or smile and then continue to listen to me and even correct me. While I was very transparent and authentic about my need for language switching, I always checked in with the children to make sure they understood me. My whole experience with that job brought about another layer of confidence for me in that I could just be me and be enough, flawed in Spanish and still successful.

Looking back, I realized how hard I was on myself. I know I wanted to learn the language and I know I struggled with it. I wanted to be fluent in it and I wanted to not have to rely on language switching. I carried shame around having to resort back into my English, but there were some amazing moments that came from the language switching in my professional and personal life. It enhanced connection on a whole other level; it was deeper and richer. It was as if to say, "I'm here as me, you're here as you. We are here and we are connected in some way to this mutual language and cultural piece." Additionally, language switching was a representation of my professional and personal development. It speaks volumes of my experience and the person that I am. My language switching is tied to my personality, my persona. Even if I knew Spanish fluently, I would still language switch because it is an expression of myself and it is meaningful. I have different words and feelings that I relate to in each language, and if someone can understand both languages, then great! They can understand me. But for my sake, for my expression, for my character, I choose the words that I want. My words are now selected with purpose, to not only connect with others, but to express myself. For

me, it does not matter if the conjugation is wrong, the meaning and intent is there, and sometimes that is the best word for me to use to communicate. I am no longer ashamed. In fact, I am proud and humbled. Hearing my participants also share how they pushed passed some of their shame or imposter syndrome to find feelings of purpose and pride was uplifting because, I too, found myself on a similar journey. I am proud to know the language, to communicate utilizing it, and to switch when I need to. It just feels natural and again, a way of me being “me.” I get to provide a need for the Spanish-speaking community and have purpose with this language skill. I can utilize it intentionally to help clients access their emotions or expressive thoughts, and I can also use it for the same reasons for myself. I am also able to connect with clients and others in more meaningful ways, which thus creates interactions and alliances that feel easy going.

While I do not work in a heavily Spanish oriented job anymore, my language switching has continued on. I do not quite notice when I do it, it just occurs when it needs to occur, whether it is with family, friends, or clients. For example, I know even with monolingual clients who are not familiar with Spanish, I will still say a word or dicho in Spanish when it relates to the content of the session or a conversation we are having. I usually lead in with, “Oh, this reminds me of this word or phrase I know in Spanish.” It is again, just natural now and feels right. It has also been accepted by others and that is a bonus for me. Even if it were not accepted, that still would not impact what I know and have experienced deep within me. For a long time, I struggled with believing whether I was Latina enough and had associated that with my ability to speak Spanish. Well, that is no longer the case. Yes, I am Latina and that is not determined by the fluency of my Spanish.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The following chapter includes a reflective summary of my experience as the researcher throughout this study. Following the reflective summary is a discussion based on the core themes revealed in chapter four as they relate to the literature of language switching in chapter two. Lastly, implications for counselors and counselor educators are presented, along with recommendation for future research.

Data from eight participants were analyzed to answer the following research question: What are the lived experiences of bilingual mental health providers who participate in English/Spanish language switching in counseling with a Latino client? A secondary research question was also asked: What are the perceptions of bilingual mental health providers who engage in language switching with their Latino clients about therapeutic alliance? Individual depictions were developed to capture participant experiences with language switching in counseling with Latino clients. Following, a composite depiction representing the emergent themes experienced by the individuals and group as a whole was constructed.

The researcher identified eight core themes, which illuminated the individual experiences with language switching in counseling with Latino clients: (a) mutual or shared support, (b) enhanced communication and expression, (c) inexperienced or unprepared in the language, (d) I was the only bilingual speaker, (e) personal fulfillment, (f) attunement, (g) authenticity, and (h) intentionality.

Two participants were selected to represent many of the themes experienced by the eight participants. After completing the two exemplars, I then completed the creative synthesis by sharing my perception and experiences around language switching through narrative.

Reflective Summary

Due to my personal experiences with language switching both in and outside of counseling, I utilized a phenomenological-heuristic approach to complete this study. I was both the researcher and an active participant in my study, which allowed me to better contemplate and understand my own experiences with language switching while also understanding others' experiences. In order to keep myself checked along the way, I journaled about my experiences with language switching beginning in the Spring of 2019. I used notes from my reflective journal to construct the following narrative based on my personal and professional experiences, as well as those of my participants.

I initially wanted to understand client experiences and perceptions with language switching in counseling. For a while, I would engage in language switching often when I provided mental health services to bilingual Latino clients. While I regularly checked in on my clients to make sure they were comfortable and able to understand me, I never got a full understanding of their experiences. I, therefore, wanted to know more about the experiences clients had when their counselors would engage in language switching with them. It was difficult to find and recruit Latino individuals who were currently receiving or had received bilingual counseling services; thus, I had to make a difficult decision to switch the focus of my population to counselor experiences with language switching in session. This aligned with conducting a phenomenological-heuristic approach due to my own experiences with language switching in the counseling setting.

As I went through my own experiences with language switching, I questioned if other counselors had similar experiences as mine or if they were vastly different. I truthfully did not know what to expect to find as I carried out my study and interviewed my participants. A part of

me was actually scared of what I would discover. I was concerned that maybe not very many counselors language switched, and if they did, it would not be because they had trouble speaking Spanish like I did. At the same time, I thought about some of the conversations I had with my mentor and other colleagues around the difficulty in learning clinical words in Spanish. Even those who were more proficient than me were still learning new words and phrases. So, while shame resurfaced again, so did my open-mindedness. I became excited to see what would unravel in the interviews with my participants.

As I interviewed my participants and heard about their experiences with language switching, I increasingly became excited. There were experiences that I could relate to and then there were experiences of which I had no personal understanding. As I progressed with the phases of the heuristic data collection and analyses, I struggled with understanding the essence of the participants' experiences with language switching. I also struggled with making sure that I did my best to capture their experiences during the analysis process. I reviewed the individual interview transcripts repeatedly and consulted with my chair throughout the process.

Additionally, I set my data aside several times for several weeks to allow time for clarity and incubation. Around that time, I acquired a new job where language switching was not as prominent for me as it was in my previous job working with unaccompanied minors. At this new line of work, I provided counseling to several minors, with one in particular who was bilingual. I often held family sessions with her and her parents, where her mother was solely Spanish-speaking, and her dad was bilingual. I language switched often both in individual and family sessions with the minor. I also language switched with other minors, in passing, who grew up in the Rio Grande Valley. Moving to a new city and new job was challenging, so I allowed myself

time for further periods of incubation in order to focus on the data with clear eyes and a clear mind.

During the illumination phase, I took periods of rest and returned to my data several times. I also followed up with my chair to share my thoughts and struggles. She gave me insight into the process that helped further guide me with understanding the participants' experiences. I also discussed my finding with two peer debriefers who helped consolidate my themes and discussed their thoughts and experiences based on what I was finding amongst my participants. At a few points in the data analysis process, I questioned whether I found the correct meaning behind my participants' experiences and felt I needed to start over again. I set aside time to further reflect and speak to my chair about my thoughts and the conversations I had with my peer debriefers. I also met with my co-chair and discussed my findings; she, too, assisted me in renaming some of the emergent themes I found. I worked on my dissertation for approximately 24 months. My motivation to keep moving forward were the conversations I had with my chair about the importance of the research, as the topic of language switching in counseling is under-researched. My co-chair also reinforced this importance by discussing the need for advocacy and research for the Latino population as well as the potential implications for counselor educators and future research. Additionally, as I began constructing the themes for the group of participants, I was reignited with further motivation and interest.

The data analysis process was the most time consuming and difficult part of the study for me, as the data was so rich. I wanted to be sure to do justice to representing the experiences of participants well. The creative synthesis phase was also a bit difficult as it required that I reflect on my own experiences with language switching over the previous several years. It was important to me to present both my participants' and my own experiences in the right way. It was

overwhelming at times, but in the end, rewarding to see how all the detailed pieces came together, like a puzzle, to create a whole image of this phenomena or topic for this group of counselors.

Discussion of Core Themes Related to the Literature

Mutual or Shared Support

The first theme, mutual or shared support, has to do with support by counselors as well as their clients. All participants discussed support as an important element of their experience with clients as they used language switching. Participants vocalized there was a shared understanding between them and their clients around the difficulty of being bilingual. This shared struggle created a space for both the participants in this study and their clients to meet each other where they were in terms of language proficiency without judgment or criticism. This finding supports those of Costa's (2010), who found the use of two or more languages brought about shared understanding, along with the counselors' ability to ask clients for clarification of what was being communicated when they did not fully understand. This theme also provided information regarding the secondary research question about perceptions of therapeutic alliance by shedding light on the counselor and client dynamics during the therapeutic process. Mutual or shared support seemed to have strengthened the counselor-client alliance through the use of language switching, which allowed both counselors and their clients to lean on one another when they had difficulty communicating in one language.

This finding also seems to resonate with the findings from Gollan and Ferreira (2009), which indicated that bilingual individuals recognize that there are times when a small cost in time to respond is worth the cost if it is useful to have both languages available. Despite the amount of time it took to respond, the participants in this study vocalized both them and their

clients supported one another in their efforts. Rather than forcing one language over the other, the participants encouraged their clients to speak in the language they needed to, to which they also did the same, if it meant better communication and flow of the session.

Enhanced Communication and Expression

The second theme revealed by the data was enhanced communication and expression. All of the participants described how language switching enhanced their ability to communicate with their clients as well as how it enhanced their clients' ability to communicate with them. Participants described richer self-expression for both themselves and their clients when they were able to switch languages accordingly. This finding supports those of several studies that observed the impact of language switching on communication and self-expression in conversations or processing (Costa, 2010; Ferré et al., 2010; Gardner-Chloros, 2009; Olivia, 2019; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2009; Sprowls, 2002; Trede, 2017). This finding also supports those of Costa (2010), who found the communication process in counseling was enhanced due to the way counselors were able to express themselves to their clients in order to be understood. The attribution of emotional expression as it relates to memories, beliefs, and values raises thoughts around how language is connected to personal experiences and character. In some instances, participants reported utilizing language switching to help clients access powerful emotions or distance from powerful emotions around trauma. Additionally, this finding aligned with Sprowls' (2002) findings where therapists switched to their clients' native language to help them express deeper emotions as well distance from powerful ones. Like Sprowls, Costa (2010) acknowledged that for some individuals, language can lessen the emotional intensity around a trauma, making it easier for an individual to process.

Inexperienced or Unprepared in the Language

This theme has to do with participants' experiences of not being as skilled or experienced in Spanish or language switching as they needed to be and was, in several ways, described by all participants. All participants noted a lack of clinical preparation and supervision to help them provide bilingual counseling services. Clinical preparation and supervision, or the lack thereof, was not directly studied in this research. However, participants' inclusion of this information in descriptions of their experiences support previous research that reports the need for both curriculum and a framework for providing supervision and training in bilingual counseling (Trepal, 2014; Trepal et al., 2019; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009).

Another element of this theme is that most participants identified varying levels of frustration, anxiety, and even shame around their lack of experience or preparation in bilingual counseling. These findings seem to support those that were found in Trepal's (2014) study where CITs expressed anxiety with having to provide bilingual counseling. However, the findings around perceived shame, due to the level of unpreparedness to provide bilingual counseling services, go beyond what was found in research around bilingual counselors' inability to engage in bilingual counseling.

Overall, participants were concerned with their ability to speak Spanish correctly and shared how they would get "stuck" in either language. These findings seem consistent with those of Verdinelli and Biever (2009) where bilingual counselors engaged in language switching during therapy simply because they could not recall a word or because they lacked familiarity with specific words. Furthermore, the preoccupation counselors may have on trying to carry a session solely in one language, which the counselor is most likely unfamiliar with, can lead to focusing more on grammatical correctness (Ramos-Sanchez, 2007; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009).

Should counselors be fixated on grammar and preciseness in language, to what extent may this impact the therapeutic process and relationship? Lastly, given the findings of the present study around participants' inexperience and unpreparedness in the language, it should be noted that clients may also have similar experiences when it comes to them speaking outside of their native language. If clients also feel unprepared and inexperienced in the language, whether it be English or Spanish, then similar to the participants in this study, they, too, may struggle with difficulty around translation, difficult feelings, accuracy in communication, and getting stuck between the two languages.

I Was the Only Bilingual Speaker

I was the only bilingual speaker was the next theme that emerged from the data. Some of the participants in this study experienced being the only bilingual speaker in their setting, whether it was at work or in their practicum/internship. Since they were the only Spanish-speakers in their setting, they were considered an asset, which for one individual kept them suppressed in their place of employment. Furthermore, several participants had little to no supervision and guidance when rendering bilingual counseling services. This somewhat aligned to what Peters et al. (2014) found among one of his participants, who stated they were the only bilingual mental health provider in their practicum agency. While in Peter et al.'s study there is little mention of being the only bilingual speaker, it was not a main theme found as in this study.

Additionally, one participant in this study expressed their concern with being the only bilingual speaker in her setting and the ethical considerations that arose due to having little guidance or supervision. Many participants in the current study had to figure things out for themselves, such as learning proper clinical terms and creating Spanish documentation forms.

This appears related to findings in Trepal et al.'s (2014) study, in which participants lacked resources, including common clinical forms, and thus, had to find or create their own.

Personal Fulfillment

The fifth theme revealed by the participants during the study was personal fulfillment. Several participants reported feeling fulfilled and accomplished in their ability to provide bilingual counseling services to Spanish speakers. Some participants expressed how it was an honor to serve “their people” and community who already struggle with finding adequate Spanish services. Additionally, many participants understood if it were not for them knowing some Spanish, then they may not have been able to aid clients who were seeking and needing bilingual services.

In addition to feeling fulfilled in their ability to provide bilingual services, some participants also mentioned feeling proud of their cultural identity and Spanish speaking ability. Participants indicated their experiences in rendering bilingual services pronounced their own cultural identity and honored their roots and ancestors. Some felt more connected and fulfilled with their culture and background, which in turn brought about a deeper sense of purpose for them in their life and development as a professional counselor. Additionally, some participants shared a sense of empowerment with being one of the few who could offer bilingual services because they knew the need was there and no one else could do it. These findings align with those found in Verdinelli and Biever's (2009) in which a majority of the participants in their study expressed a sense of pride in being able to speak two languages, help and serve a community that is in need of such services, and in being a link between two languages and cultures.

Attunement

The next theme that emerged from the data was attunement. Participants reported the shared language between them and their clients resulted in a deeper sense of connection. Some participants reported when their clients would switch to Spanish to reflect feelings or share a *dicho*, they were able to connect and empathize with their client more fully. This reporting supports the findings from Santiago-Rivera (2009) that the use of idiomatic expressions or interjections of a Spanish word, such as *dichos* within therapy, promoted increased understanding between the client and therapist.

The connection to the language, whether it was through switching, caused some participants to feel as if they were engaging in a *platica*, or as if they were speaking to family. Several participants reported how they connected with the content of what their clients were saying when their clients would switch to Spanish to express themselves. This reminded several of the participants of their own culture, values, families, memories, and life experiences. This coincides with previous findings that each language may contain a specific set of memories, beliefs, or values that are attached and made meaningful to the individual (Cofresi & Gorman, 2004; Javier 2007; Olivia 2019; Trede, 2017). For both participants and their clients, there was a sense of connection to their own, as well as each other's, experiences through the Spanish language.

Authenticity

Authenticity appears to be a unique finding in the current study. The theme refers to participants' experiences and the perceptions of their client's experiences of genuine self-expression and freedom to be themselves when using language switching in session. Some participants felt freedom to both communicate and express themselves in whichever language

they needed to do so. Participants shared how they felt comfortable in being themselves, which included being vulnerable to speaking the Spanish language while they mirrored for their client it was okay to have to switch languages if needed. In fact, participants would reassure their clients when they would language switch and encourage them to do so. They created a safe place for clients to express themselves in either language, often validating the shared struggle for being bilingual and reminding them it was okay for them to communicate as they saw fit.

Intentionality

Finally, the eighth theme of this study was intentionality. Half of the participants discussed how they intentionally engaged in language switching with their clients to either reinforce what they said in one language, elicit further expression of emotions, or to enhance their Spanish skillset. Some participants were asked by their clients to intentionally switch between languages so they could practice and learn English. Overall, participants utilized language switching as an extra tool to strengthen the counseling process for their clients. Participants would, with purpose, switch languages to help their clients access and express emotions. One participant discussed how her client vocalized that she would rather speak in English as some of the Spanish language was triggering for her. The participant went on to discuss how she switched to English to create distance from a trauma for her client. This coincides with previous research findings (Costa, 2010; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2009) where therapists purposely utilized language to distance from or move clients closer to emotional experiences and memories.

Limitations of the Study

This study included eight participants who identified as either licensed professional counselors or counselors still in training. Although themes emerged across the two roles, the

level of experience as well as amount of time in providing counseling varies. Studies utilizing groups that are clearly defined (e.g., licensed counselors or counselors-in-training) might provide different results. Additionally, participants were recruited from South Texas, an area where speaking Spanglish and Tex-Mex is common. English/Spanish language switching in other geographic locals may be experienced differently, even in areas where there are large numbers of Spanish speakers. The current study had only one male participant who also identified as non-Hispanic. A study with balanced representation of genders and/or includes more non-Hispanic individuals may also produce different results. As with any study, there are inherent limitations in study design. Those are noted elsewhere in this study.

Implications for Counselors and Counselor Educators

The findings of this study support the need for further exploration of both the experiences and impacts of language switching in counseling for mental health providers and clients. As noted earlier, there is a dearth of literature around language switching in counseling. The Latino population has been and continues to be one of the most underserved populations in the clinical mental health field due to a variety of barriers (Barrio et al., 2008; Garcia et al., 2011; Rastogi et al., 2012; Santiago-Rivera, 1995). In the current study, all participants discussed being inexperienced and unprepared to provide bilingual counseling services. Several discussed lacking appropriate support, training, and supervision to do so, and some noted being the only bilingual students or professional workers in their centers who could provide Spanish services to Latinos seeking mental health services. Had it not been for them, these Latino individuals may not have received counseling. More so, they may have settled for counseling in English, which then leads to questions about the impact this could have on the efficacy of the counseling process for many Latino clients. Additionally, some participants indicated they had been enrolled in an

additional program for a bilingual counseling certificate or had to learn on their own with little guidance or curricula from their programs, professors, or supervisors. The issue here is that not only is there little information on research around language switching in counseling, but there is little to no university curricula available for bilingual students to foster their Spanish counseling skills (Trepal, 2014; Trepal et al., 2019; Verdinelli & Biever; 2009). Furthermore, there is a lack of bilingual professors and supervisors within at least some institutions, including universities designated as Hispanic-serving and counseling centers in predominately Hispanic geographic locations.

The number of participants in this study who communicated a lack of experience and preparedness to work with Latino clients is eye-opening. Even just as concerning is that for some participants, they were the only bilingual individual in their counseling centers, with little to no supervision or guidance. Counselor educators and supervisors should take note of the lack of support and preparation for bilingual counselors and take steps to foster growth for both monolingual and bilingual students in curricula and supervision. This may include, on some campuses, ensuring there is at least one faculty member who is Spanish speaking who can aid in assisting and supervising bilingual students in their rendering of bilingual mental health services, especially in predominantly Hispanic areas and universities. More broadly, counselor educators and supervisors can advocate for having more faculty members and supervisors who speak Spanish in the field as well as for recognizing the importance of the availability of services that best match speaking preferences of Latino clients. The result of this study may also provide information about some of the benefits of language switching in counseling, as well as the indirect impacts it may have on therapeutic alliance, counseling process, and self-expression in

Latino clients. After all, according to the ACA Code of Ethics (2014), counseling services should be culturally appropriate and sound in order to avoid harmful practices.

Recommendations for Future Research

At the time of this writing, the status of research concerning language switching in counseling remains limited. Continued study designed to gain more understanding of the experience of language switching, both for counselors and clients, is needed. Given the importance of alliance to counseling outcomes, additional research about connections between language switching and therapeutic alliance is critical. Such research may provide guidance both for practicing counselors as well as counselor educators and supervisors about effective practice when working with bilingual clients. Further, understanding the experiences, preferences, and impact on clients who engage in language switching with their mental health providers is essential if counselors are to understand the interaction of language switching and emotional expression, therapeutic alliance, and other components of the counseling process. Such research may allow counselors, whether monolingual or bilingual, to be more purposeful with the selection of language inside the counseling sessions based on both what clients request and what may or may not benefit them.

Another recommendation for future research is the consideration of different language combinations and dialects outside of English and Spanish, such as Mandarin and English or Louisiana Creole and English. This may provide different or similar results than what was found in the current study and further improve understanding around the importance of language in the counseling process. While Latinos are one of the largest underserved populations in the United States, there are other populations, also growing and underserved, whose native or dominant language is not English. Additionally, future research should consider different geographic

locations across the United States and how language switching may be experienced where different dialects are spoken. By understanding the impacts of language switching across different language combinations, dialects, and geographic locations, counselor educators and supervisors can be better informed about how to better prepare and support their students and supervisees in their professional development. Additionally, future research should consider how an individual's level of bilingualism and native language may impact experiences and perspectives in language switching and on the counseling process. In this study, all but two of the participants were familiar with language switching as they were engaging in it with their family and friends. In particular, one participant who was born and raised with Spanish expressed their difficulty in hearing English and Spanish combined naturally, which was something she had to adapt to. Whether an individual grew up in a bilingual or monolingual setting or more recently acquired their second language may impact their experiences with language-switching in counseling.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the lived experiences of mental health providers who engage in language switching in counseling. I utilized a heuristic phenomenological approach to explore mental health providers experiences, including my own, to gain a meaningful understanding of the phenomenon. Using this type of approach shed light on the struggles and resiliency of being bilingual, no matter the level of proficiency in a language, through understanding others and my own lived experiences with language switching in counseling. The results of this study may provide some clarity to counselor educators, counselor supervisors, and other bilingual counselors of the struggles and possible benefits that come from language switching in counseling.

The themes that emerged in this study spoke widely of the level of unpreparedness, inexperience, and lack of support both counselors and CITs experience in their education and supervision. The themes also spoke widely on the connection, enhanced communication/expression, and sense of purpose that counselors and CITs experienced in their counseling sessions. Research in the counseling field is still far too wide and little to fully understand the phenomenon and the impacts it has on the counseling process and therapeutic alliance. While some of the themes were corroborated by previous research, some of the themes appeared to be novel or new to the current study and design. Future research should consider this and expand upon this current study. In doing so, this will shed further light and allow the experiences of engaging in language switching in counseling to be fully understood.

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Appendix 1: Letters of Support

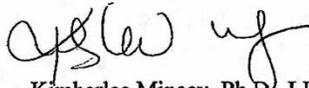
November 20, 2019

Attn: Internal Review Board

Dear Board Members:

Rachelle Morales will be conducting research that involves the lived experiences of bilingual mental health providers who participate in language switching in counseling with their clients at the TAMU-CC Counseling and Training Clinic. She has spoken with me and I am in agreement with the work she is proposing to complete and therefore, have granted her permission to use the Counseling and Training clinic for gathering information for her proposed research.

Sincerely,



Kimberlee Mincey, Ph.D., LPC
Clinical Assistant Professor
Clinic Director, Counseling and Training Clinic
Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology
College of Education and Human Development, NRC 2700
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
6300 Ocean Drive, Unit 5384
Office: 361-825-3995

C²
Counseling

**Christ Centered Counseling
4818 Everhart Rd
Corpus Christi, Texas 78411
(361)334-1437**

December 1, 2019

Attn: Internal Review Board

Dear Board Members:

Rachelle Morales will be conducting research that involves the lived experiences of bilingual mental health providers who participate in language switching in counseling with their clients at C2 Counseling. She has spoken with me and I am in agreement with the work she is proposing to complete; therefore, I have granted her permission to use C2 Counseling for gathering information for her proposed research.

Sincerely,

Yvonne Castillo Ph.D.

Dr. Yvonne Castillo
C2 Counseling, Director
361-334-1437
C2counselor@aol.com

12/11/2019

Gmail - Request for Research Support



Rachelle Morales [REDACTED]

Request for Research Support

2 messages

Rachelle Morales [REDACTED]
To: "Watson, Joshua" <Joshua.Watson@tamucc.edu>

Wed, Nov 20, 2019 at 6:56 AM

Hi Dr. Watson!

I wanted to ask if you would grant me permission to utilize the LISTERV to invite counselors-in-training to participate in my dissertation research. My research is focused on the lived experiences of bilingual mental health providers who engage in language switching in counseling with their clients. The email would have an approved flyer from the IRB with more information about the study, as well as my contact information. If you would like additional information, I would be glad to provide you with it.

Thank you for your assistance in my research.

Regards,
Rachelle Morales

Watson, Joshua <Joshua.Watson@tamucc.edu>
To: Rachelle Morales [REDACTED]

Thu, Nov 21, 2019 at 10:23 AM

Rachelle,

You have permission to post your dissertation survey participation request to the department listserv. I hope your data collections go well, good luck!

JCW

Joshua C. Watson, Ph.D., LPC, NCC, ACS
Executive Editor, *Journal of College Counseling*
Fellow, American Counseling Association
Professor and Department Chair
Counseling and Educational Psychology
College of Education & Human Development, ECDC 150
6300 Ocean Drive, Unit 5834
Corpus Christi, TX 78412-5834
361.825.2739 (O) 361.825.3377 (F)

[Quoted text hidden]

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ik=b5e4f9d5fa&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-a%3Ar3243099501283746275&siml=msg-a%3Ar7259323907...> 1/1

12/11/2019

Gmail - Request for Research Support



Rachelle Morales [REDACTED]

Request for Research Support

2 messages

Rachelle Morales [REDACTED]

Wed, Nov 20, 2019 at 6:54 AM

To: [REDACTED]

Hi Dr. Smith!

I wanted to ask if you would grant me permission to utilize the GCCA membership list to invite individuals to participate in my dissertation research. My research is focused on the lived experiences of bilingual mental health providers who engage in language switching in counseling with their clients. The email would have an approved flyer from the IRB with more information about the study, as well as my contact information. If you would like additional information, I would be glad to provide you with it.

Thank you for your assistance in my research.

Regards,
Rachelle Morales

Wayne Smith [REDACTED]

Wed, Nov 20, 2019 at 11:10 AM

To: Rachelle Morales [REDACTED]

Def!! Go for it!! How many more participants you need?

[Quoted text hidden]

Amanda Landry, LMHC

Amanda Landry, LMHC

Thanks for messaging us. We try to be as responsive as possible. We'll get back to you soon.

Apr 9, 2020, 9:33 AM

Shelly Renee

Thank you so much! I really appreciate it! I just have to get it approved by my IRB, so once I do so, I'll just post a photo of the flyer.

Apr 9, 2020, 9:33 AM

Amanda Landry, LMHC

Yes of course!!!

Mar 31, 2020, 9:59 AM

Amanda Landry, LMHC

Thanks for messaging us. We try to be as responsive as possible. We'll get back to you soon.

Mar 28, 2020, 2:06 PM

Shelly Renee

Hi Amanda! I see you run the The Private Practice Collection group that I am a member of. I wanted to reach out and see if I could post a flier to the page about my my dissertation study? I'm looking to find counselors who have engaged in bilingual counseling with Latinx clients. I'm hoping to further understand counselor experiences with language switching to bring awareness to educators and supervisors who work towards the development of future counselors. I'll be happy to share more info about the study if you'd like! Take care!

Mar 28, 2020, 2:06 PM

Appendix 2: IRB Approval Letter



**TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
CORPUS CHRISTI**

OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE
Division of Research and Innovation
6300 OCEAN DRIVE, UNIT 5844
CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS 78412
Office 361.825.2497

Human Subjects Protection Program

Institutional Review

DATE: April 15, 2020
TO: Marvarene Oliver
CC: Rachelle Morales
FROM: Office of Research Compliance
SUBJECT: Amendment Approval

On 4/15/2020, the Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Institutional Review Board reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Amendment
Protocol Title:	The Experiences of Bilingual Latinos whose Mental Health Providers Engage in Language Switching in Counseling
Investigator:	Marvarene Oliver
IRB ID:	54-19
Funding Source:	Other
Documents Reviewed:	Amendment 54-19 54-19 IRB Application Appendix A - Flyer CLEAN Appendix A - Flyer TRACKED Appendix D - Informed Consent CLEAN Appendix D - Informed Consent TRACKED Appendix F - Letters of Support
Description of Change:	Protocol change: Changed gift card vendor added a new method of recruitment.

TAMU-CC IRB confirmed the study as changed still satisfies the exempt category: 45 CFR 46.104(d)(2) (Research involving use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior).

Approved changes may now be implemented.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Research Compliance with any questions at irb@tamucc.edu or 361-825-2497.

Respectfully,

Rebecca
Ballard, JD,
MA, CIP

Digitally signed by
Rebecca Ballard, JD, MA,
CIP
Date: 2020.04.15
07:52:39 -05'00'

Office of Research Compliance

Appendix 3: Flier

**Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology
Texas A&M Corpus Christi**

**PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH CONCERNING LANGUAGE
SWITCHING IN COUNSELING WITH LATINX CLIENTS**

We are looking for volunteers to take part in a study The Experiences of Bilingual Mental Health Providers Who Engage in Language Switching in Counseling.

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to:

complete a brief demographic questionnaire,

participate in a semi-structured interview, and

review findings and provide any feedback you may have for the researcher.

Your participation would involve the completion of a demographic sheet, which is anticipated to take 5 minutes. The interview portion of your participation is anticipated to last between 45 minutes to an hour. In addition, you will receive information from researchers about initial themes found in your individual interview and will be asked to provide any comments you may have about them. We anticipate the review and feedback will take about 15 minutes.

Participants will be given a \$25.00 HEB gift card at the conclusion of the interview.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study,
please contact:

Rachelle Morales

Department of Counseling and Education Psychology

at



Appendix 4: Script for Counselor Recruitment

Hi, I'm Rachele Morales. I am a doctoral student in the Counselor Education program at Texas A&M University and I am conducting a study about the lived experiences of bilingual mental health providers who switch between English and Spanish in counseling with their Latino clients.

You may care about this study because you provide bilingual counseling services to bilingual Latino clients. Because you are a counselor or counselor-in-training who is bilingual in English and Spanish, you are being asked to participate in this study.

Individuals who choose to participate in this research study will be asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire, complete an audio-recorded interview, and review findings and provide any feedback to me. Participation in the questionnaire and interview may estimate between 50 minutes to an hour. Reviewing of findings and providing of feedback is estimated to take 15 minutes.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and can be terminated at any time. I am providing a flier that includes information about the study as well as my contact information.

Thank you for your assistance with this project.

Appendix 5: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Describe your experience with switching between Spanish and English during counseling.

Follow-up: If someone had been watching, what would they have seen? (intention: to get description of the “what happened”)

2. Tell me what it was like for you at times when you and the client were switching back and forth during sessions. (Intention: to get account of the experience of it)

3. Tell me about your emotional reactions related to switching languages, if any.

If needed for further clarification or to probe, follow up with statement: It could have to do with emotions specifically about the language switching, or it could have to do with using one language more than the other when talking about emotion/emotional situations, or anything else you may have experienced.

4. What were your likes, if any, about going back and forth between English and Spanish in counseling?

Follow-up: What, if anything, was helpful about going back and forth between English and Spanish?

5. What were your dislikes, if any, about going back and forth between English and Spanish in counseling?

Follow up: What, if anything, was unhelpful about switching back and forth between English and Spanish?

6. Tell me about any times you preferred to speak in a particular language.

Follow-up: Tell me about times, if any, when speaking in Spanish seemed to be a better fit or easier.

Follow-up: Tell me about times, if any, when speaking in English seemed to be a better fit or easier.

7. Tell me about any ways you think using both English and Spanish might have affected the relationship with your client and how you were able to work together.

Follow up: What about any effect on the ability for you and your client to agree on goals?

Follow-up: What about any effect on agreeing about or understanding how to reach those goals?

8. Did your client(s) comment on or discuss using English and Spanish in session?

Follow up if yes: What did they say about it?

9. What else do you think I should understand about your experience of switching back and forth between English and Spanish in the counseling process?