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## Bilingual Counseling Competencies: A Call to the Counseling Profession

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## Bilingual Counseling Competencies: A Call to the Counseling Profession

### Abstract

The Latine population in the United States is increasing, leading to a higher need for bilingual counseling services. Therefore, counselor educators and supervisors must ensure bilingual counselors receive proper ethnocultural and linguistic competence training. This article aims to highlight the significance of bilingual counseling competencies in counselor education, emphasize the importance of linguistic training in cultural competence training, and propose a set of linguistic and ethnocultural competencies to help establish a proficient bilingual counselor. Additionally, future recommendations are discussed.

### Keywords

Bilingual Counseling, Bilingual Counseling Competencies, Linguistic Counseling Competencies, Ethnocultural Counseling Competencies, Multiculturalism, Bilingual Counselor Training, Bilingual Counselor Supervision

### Author's Notes

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The continual growth of diversity within the U.S. population has placed tremendous demand on the counseling profession to increase culturally responsive services and become more reflective of the country's demographics. However, counselors capable of attending to linguistically diverse populations' linguistic and cultural complexities are dire (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018; McCaffrey & Moody, 2015; Trepal et al., 2019). This disparity is particularly evident within the Latine community. As a gender-neutral term, Latine was chosen to encompass the Hispanic, Latino/a/x, Chicano/a/x, and Latin American populations comprising the largest minority group in the U.S. With 62 million people identifying as Hispanic or Latino during the 2020 Census, the Latine community is set to account for 28% of the general population by 2060 (United States Census Bureau [U.S. Census], 2021). Accordingly, Spanish is the most common non-English language spoken in the U.S., with 13.5 percent of the population reporting speaking Spanish at home (U.S. Census, n.d). Yet, according to a national survey by the American Psychological Association (2016), only about 5.5 percent of psychologists can offer services in Spanish, while the number of bilingual counselors is unaccounted for. This lack of access to culturally responsive mental health care services adds to marginalized communities' already existing disparities.

As a profession, counseling has an ethical obligation to address clients' cultural requirements while demonstrating multicultural competency (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2014, National Board for Certified Counselors [NBCC], 2023); however, despite the growing literature on cultural and linguistically responsive services (see Arredondo et al., 2014; Comas-Díaz, 2006), Latine and bilingual providers within mental health fields encounter challenges when it comes to developing their skills in bilingual counseling. Training programs and resources available for counselors and supervisors are limited across the country, with 37 bilingual

certificates or concentration tracks within mental health academic programs as of 2023 and only nine programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) (Interiano-Shiverdecker et al., 2021). It is concerning that there are no clearly defined clinical competencies for bilingual counseling, despite calls to establish guidelines for developing bilingual counseling competence (Arredondo et al., 2014; Fuertes, 2004; Interiano-Shiverdecker et al., 2021; McCaffrey & Moody, 2015; Seto & Forth, 2020). This omission of competencies makes it difficult for counselors, supervisors, and counseling programs to prepare qualified bilingual counselors.

The purpose of this article is to 1) explore the importance of bilingual counseling competencies in counselor education, 2) propose that linguistic concerns should be included in cultural competence training, and 3) recommend a series of linguistic and ethnocultural competencies to establish a proficient bilingual counselor.

### **Bilingual Counseling and the Need for Competencies**

Bilingual counseling has gained significant scholarly interest within the past few decades; however, cultural and linguistic aspects have formed a part of the counseling literature for far longer. Cultural and linguistic issues related to bilingual mental health services surfaced during the 1960s (Landes, 1963; Webb, 1969), gaining further platform with the movement of multicultural counseling competence (Arredondo-Dowd & Gonsalves, 1980; Sue et al., 1992). The manifesto of Multicultural Counseling Competencies (MCC) challenged the counseling field to address its neglect of minoritized populations. As mental health fields endorsed MCC within their ethical codes and practice guidelines (ACA, 2014; NBCC, 2023), ethnocultural and population-centered research began solidifying as a critical force within counseling.

In 2004, Jairo Fuertes directly attended to the clinical practice of bilingual counseling and supervision by characterizing bilingual counseling as a special form involving two types of skill sets. The first set of skills is encompassed within monolingual counseling competencies, while the second takes into account culture-specific components involving the clients' acquisition of both language and culture, the adjustment and acculturation process, and acquired cultural assumptions within the context of "the environmental pressures and sociopolitical realities that impinge on and stress the individual." (Fuertes, 2004, pg. 85). Fuertes's seminal work was pivotal in positioning bilingual counseling as a stand-alone concept within the counseling literature. By 2008, the *Encyclopedia of Counseling* (Leong, 2008) dedicated an entire volume to cross-cultural counseling, with a specific section focused on bilingual counseling. In this text, Gallardo-Cooper (2008) defines bilingual counseling as the "therapeutic discourse that accommodates the client's linguistic characteristics and incorporates bilingual or multilingual factors as vital components of psychological and contextual functioning" (p.1022).

Fuertes' (2004) and Gallardo-Cooper's (2008) definitions continue to inform the understanding of bilingual counseling within the scholarly literature and set a solid foundation for scholars to further explore key elements of bilingual counseling, particularly within the Latine population. Counselors have reported benefits of providing bilingual counseling services, such as a sense of pride and value in speaking two languages, a greater understanding of and connection to their cultural identity, and a sense of accomplishment for contributing to their community (Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b). Bilingual counselors have also reported a higher self-perceived multicultural counseling competence than their monolingual counterparts (Ivers & Villalba, 2015; Trepal et al., 2014). In contrast, providing bilingual counseling services also involves perceived burdens. These challenges are primarily associated with insufficient support, training, and

resources (Seto & Forth, 2020). Bilingual counselors have reported feeling burdened by having to interpret for other professionals, educating others about the clinical needs of minoritized clients, and experiencing feelings of exploitation, isolation, rejection, and burnout (Verdinelli & Biever, 2009a).

Counselors, especially those still in training or who have learned Spanish independently, often feel anxious when dealing with multiple languages (Seto & Forth, 2020). Bilingual counselors also tend to have more responsibilities and need to find supervisors who speak their language, as reported by Trepal et al. (2014) and Verdinelli & Biever (2009a). Finally, it is pertinent to mention that perceived challenges also exist for bilingual supervisors. Feelings of increased responsibility for being one of the limited bilingual supervisors on staff (Reynaga-Abiko, 2010), pressure to access supervisees' bilingual counseling skills and provide additional resources to fill in training gaps (Lopez & Torres-Fernandez, 2019), in addition to having to figure out how to integrate supervision frameworks tailored to monolingual and monocultural supervisee's (Millán, 2010).

Despite the significant advances in the literature on bilingual counseling, many gaps are yet to be filled. For example, linguistic issues are often attended to separately, even though scholars recognize the interconnectedness of language and culture (Ivers & Villalba, 2015). Additionally, MCC measurements have assisted in assessing a counselor's multicultural competence. Still, this process has not always translated into adequately assessing ethnocultural competence, and there is very little guidance on accessing linguistic competence for mental health providers. Establishing bilingual counseling competencies would provide a unified direction to understand better the therapeutic processes involved in bilingual counseling as well as the training and preparation needs of bilingual counselors, which in return would make provision for counselors and supervisors to

increase the cultural responsiveness exhorted within ethical codes and guidelines in the counseling field.

### **Linguistic and Ethnocultural Competence**

Multicultural scholars have made significant progress in promoting cultural responsiveness in counseling. However, more effort is required to advance linguistic responsiveness. Research has shown that language, including bilingualism, can impact a person's internal functioning, such as identity, emotional awareness, and socio-cultural values (Ivers & Villalba, 2015). This effect is relevant for clients and counselors, as language can affect their functioning in these areas. In particular, counselors may experience more significant impacts from language insecurity or self-doubt (Pérez-Rojas et al., 2019; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009a). For this reason, it is essential to assist counselors in understanding the role of language in the therapeutic process and develop counselors in linguistic competence, specifically to empower counselors to pay attention to what is said, how it is said, and in which language it is said. Furthermore, language can facilitate a strong bond between a counselor and a client, improving the counseling relationship.

While we know that bilingualism is the ability to speak more than one language, other aspects of bilingualism are more challenging to decode. The ability to speak a language depends on various factors, including exposure to the language, opportunities for practice, and language status. Exposure to a language includes opportunities to hear the language from proficient speakers. This exposure must include meaningful practice opportunities to develop expressive language skills. The language status in the community will dictate the value and power this language holds, thereby also affecting the language's learning opportunities (Paradis et al., 2021). For example, in the US, English is a majority language of high status, spoken widely across educational settings, television, and government systems. However, despite being spoken widely

throughout the US, Spanish is a minority language and may or may not be supported within its spoken community in educational or academic settings. Therefore, Spanish-English bilingual speakers may have to seek professional opportunities to develop Spanish language skills.

Due to these sociolinguistic factors, bilingual skills fall on a proficiency continuum (Rothman et al., 2023). That is, bilingualism is not binary. Bilingual individuals may display varying levels of skills across languages. For example, if Spanish was acquired informally as a home language, an individual may be academically proficient in English but only conversationally fluent in Spanish. To determine language proficiency, individuals must assess language skills and not assume any specific level of linguistic competency. Therefore, linguistic assessment is essential to determine a bilingual counselor's competency. Clearly defined linguistic competencies would assist in assessing a counselor who is simply bilingual from a *trained* bilingual counselor.

Regarding cultural competence, it is worth noting that multicultural research has explored the concept of cultural responsiveness when working with people from multiple cultural backgrounds on a broad scale. However, there is a need for more clarity when addressing culture-specific concerns within particular cultures, known as ethnocultural concerns. This is particularly relevant for counselors who offer bilingual counseling services and work within a specific cultural context. Connectedly, biculturalism is the internalization of two cultures, meaning the ability to navigate two cultural “knowledge systems” (David et al., 2009). Therefore, a bicultural counselor can address both the client's cultural knowledge system and the knowledge system of the majority culture. This ensures that the client's ethnoculture is also taken into consideration. While language and culture are interconnected, linguistic and ethnocultural inclusivity is crucial to providing equitable mental health access to bilingual populations and actively attending to social justice challenges. Furthermore, linguistic and ethnocultural inclusivity forms part of a necessary



continual recognition of mental health's role in perpetuating social injustice through the misdiagnosis and pathologizing of minoritized groups (ACA, 2014; Crethar & Ratts, 2008; National Latinx Psychological Association, 2020).

### **Bilingual Counseling Competencies**

The proposed Bilingual Counseling Competencies (BCC) follow the Multicultural Counseling Competencies model structure of competency areas defining a competent multicultural counselor (Sue et al., 1992) and the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC) revised conceptual framework (Ratts et al., 2016). The MCC model introduced multicultural counseling competence with a 3 (characteristics) x 3 (dimensions) matrix totaling nine competence areas. The MSJCC framework later revised this matrix as a 4 (developmental domains) x 4 (aspirational and developmental competencies) model to contain 16 areas of competence. Within the MCC model, each area of competence is listed with a set of objectives. The MSJCC framework, on the other hand, has a general description of what encapsulates competency within each domain. The proposed BCC follows the MCC description structure given that without current identified standards for best practice within bilingual counseling, a description of what these areas of competence entail needs to be stated to convey the characteristics of a competent bilingual counselor. Therefore, the BCC's objective description includes the 16 areas of competence within the MSJCC framework and a reflection of MSJCC's four quadrants of privileged and marginalized status between counselors and clients: privileged counselor–marginalized client, privileged counselor–privileged client, marginalized counselor–privileged client, and marginalized counselor–marginalized client).

The MCC and MSJCC frameworks were selected for their wide acceptance among mental health providers, academic and training programs, and professional associations such as the

American Counseling Association (Worthington et al., 2007). Additionally, these frameworks have produced crucial research on assessment measures, training, and supervision that can lay a foundation for further bilingual counseling research and curricula development within CACREP-accredited programs. For this article, the definition of bilingual counseling provided by Gallardo-Cooper (2008) will be modified to cover language, culture, and socio-emotional factors. As such, bilingual counseling constitutes the therapeutic process that integrates the client's language and culture and recognizes linguistic and cultural factors as vital components of the client's psychological, socioemotional, and contextual functioning.

### **Linguistic Competencies**

Linguistic developmental domains encompass the counselors' 1) self-awareness of their linguistic identities and status, 2) understanding of the client's linguistic worldview, 3) understanding of how linguistic worldviews impact the counseling relationship, and 4) linguistic skills and intervention strategies and techniques. Each linguistic developmental domain contains four bilingual aspirational areas of competence: 1) counselors' attitudes and beliefs, 2) counselors' knowledge, 3) counselors' skills, and 4) counselors' actions or responsiveness.

### ***Counselor Self-Awareness***

Bilingual counselors are aware of their privileged and marginalized linguistic status. Therefore, bilingual counselors practice introspection and develop self-awareness around their attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, skills, and actions connected to their linguistic identities and worldviews.

**Beliefs and Attitudes.** Bilingual counselors know and understand various aspects of language, including their own linguistic identities, status, power, privilege, oppression, strengths, and limitations related to language use, acquisition, and acculturation. As counselors learn about

different linguistic groups, it is essential to recognize their assumptions, worldviews, values, beliefs, and biases. This includes both groups that are privileged when it comes to language and those that are marginalized. In addition, it is essential to recognize the impact of one's linguistic status on one's worldview and how it can provide advantages and disadvantages within certain ethno-racial groups. Again, this includes acknowledging both privileged and marginalized linguistic statuses.

**Knowledge.** Bilingual counselors deeply understand their linguistic identities, statuses, power dynamics, privileges, strengths, and limitations related to language use, acquisition, and acculturation. Counselors demonstrate an understanding of the linguistic backgrounds of others and gain knowledge about resources to become more aware of their linguistic identities, statuses, and positions of power, privilege, and oppression. This includes recognizing their assumptions, attitudes, values, beliefs, and biases about language use, acquisition, and acculturation. Further, they would demonstrate an understanding of how historical events have affected the linguistic status of privileged and marginalized groups and how this status can lead to advantages or disadvantages within specific ethnic and racial communities. Bilingual counselors must understand the theories explaining how privilege and marginalized linguistic status affect one's experiences and worldview.

**Skills.** Bilingual counselors have unique skills that allow them to understand better their own linguistic identities and issues relating to power, privilege, and oppression, along with their strengths and limitations with language use, acquisition, and acculturation. First, counselors develop reflective and critical thinking skills to understand better their linguistic assumptions, worldviews, values, beliefs, biases, and privileged and marginalized status. They develop the ability to effectively communicate how their privileged or marginalized linguistic status affects

their worldview and experiences. Learn how to apply this knowledge in personal and professional situations. Analyze and compare your experiences to those of others. Lastly, assess the impact of their linguistic status on their personal and professional experiences.

**Action.** Bilingual counselors actively work to enhance their self-awareness regarding their linguistic identities, positions, power, privileges, strengths, and limitations related to language and its acquisition. As a member of a privileged or marginalized linguistic group, it is essential to educate yourself about the assumptions, worldviews, values, beliefs, and biases of others. Seek professional development opportunities to learn more about your linguistic background and status. Immersing in a specific ethno-racial community to understand how power, privilege, and oppression affect your linguistic experiences. Finally, learn how your privileged or marginalized status influences your communication style.

### ***Client's Worldview***

Bilingual counselors are aware, knowledgeable, skilled, and action-oriented in understanding their clients' linguistic worldviews. Therefore, bilingual counselors are curious about their linguistic experiences.

**Beliefs and Attitudes.** Bilingual counselors understand that clients' outlooks, beliefs, and biases are intertwined with their linguistic identity, status, and experiences with language-related power dynamics such as privilege and oppression. To better serve clients, it is crucial to take an interest in their linguistic history, worldview, background, values, beliefs, biases, and experiences, regardless of whether they are linguistically privileged or marginalized. It is also important to acknowledge that one's linguistic identity can significantly affect their daily life and perspective, regardless of their privilege or marginalization. When working with clients from different linguistic backgrounds, it is vital to acknowledge both their strengths and limitations. It is also

essential to reflect on attitudes and biases toward clients who may be linguistically privileged or marginalized. We should recognize differences within and between different groups of clients and understand how a person's social and economic status may impact their communication style.

**Knowledge.** Bilingual counselors understand their clients' worldviews, attitudes, values, beliefs, assumptions, biases, and experiences with power, privilege, and oppression linked to their linguistic identities and statuses. To better serve linguistically privileged and marginalized clients, it is crucial to deeply understand their backgrounds, values, beliefs, biases, and experiences. This involves being mindful of how linguistic stereotypes, discrimination, power, privilege, and oppression could affect them. It is also essential to know theories and models related to linguistic identity development and keep up with research on their worldview, culture, and life experiences. In addition, recognizing strengths and limitations when working with different linguistic groups and being open to working through any discomfort is paramount. This includes awareness of attitudes, beliefs, prejudices, and biases toward linguistically privileged and marginalized clients. Lastly, we must familiarize ourselves with their communication styles, including any slang or regional accents they may use.

**Skills.** Bilingual counselors have a valuable set of skills that allow them to understand better their clients' perspectives, including their worldviews, assumptions, attitudes, values, beliefs, and biases related to language identities, social statuses, and experiences with power, privilege, and oppression. First, they develop skills to analyze how historic events and current issues shape linguistically privileged and marginalized clients' worldviews and experiences. They improve their critical thinking skills to understand how stereotypes, discrimination, power, privilege, and oppression affect these clients. Counselors can apply their knowledge of multilingual and social justice theories and linguistic identity development models to serve linguistically privileged and

marginalized clients better. Finally, they identify their limitations and strengths when working with these clients through improved assessment skills.

**Action.** Bilingual counselors work to enhance their clients' self-awareness regarding their worldviews, attitudes, beliefs, biases, and assumptions related to their linguistic identities, statuses, and experiences with power, privilege, and oppression. Engaging in conversations about historical events and current issues that have shaped their unique perspectives, values, beliefs, biases, and experiences is essential to effectively working with clients from all linguistic backgrounds. Attending professional development training can help understand how stereotypes, discrimination, power dynamics, privilege, and oppression can impact these clients. Applying theories of multilingualism and social justice, as well as models of linguistic identity development, is crucial. It is also essential to regularly assess your linguistic limitations and strengths. Immersing in the ethno-racial communities of clients and using language to discuss how their linguistic status affects their culture, worldview, experiences, and presenting issues can also be helpful. To ensure that all clients are provided with the best possible service, work with them to understand how their identities are shaped by various aspects of human existence, including language privilege and marginalization. Finally, consistently demonstrating strong bilingual communication skills when interacting with all clients is essential.

### ***Counseling Relationship***

Bilingual counselors are aware, knowledgeable, skilled, and action-oriented in understanding how clients' and counselors' privileged and marginalized linguistic statuses influence the counseling relationship.

**Beliefs and Attitudes.** Bilingual counselors understand how the client's and counselor's views, beliefs, biases, and values related to language identity, status, and experiences with power,

privilege, and oppression can affect the counseling relationship. It is essential to recognize that the perspectives, values, beliefs, and prejudices of both counselors and clients, whether privileged or marginalized, can positively or negatively impact the counseling relationship. The development of the linguistic identity of both parties also plays a role in shaping the counseling relationship, especially for marginalized clients. One's linguistic status can affect the counseling relationship to varying degrees. Language, stereotypes, discrimination, power dynamics, privilege, and oppression can influence the counseling relationship, particularly for group clients who are linguistically marginalized or privileged. Therefore, effective communication in both languages is crucial for connecting with these clients.

**Knowledge.** Bilingual counselors know and acknowledge how the client's and counselor's languages and cultural backgrounds can affect their relationship during counseling. This includes their beliefs, values, biases, and experiences with power and privilege. To enhance the counseling relationship, knowing linguistic identity development theories and how they affect counseling sessions with privileged and marginalized clients is crucial. Understanding the impact of linguistic status on the counseling relationship, as well as the role of language, stereotypes, discrimination, power, privilege, and oppression, is essential. Additionally, knowing when to utilize individual counseling versus systems advocacy when working with linguistically privileged and marginalized clients and understanding bilingual communication theories is crucial.

**Skills.** Bilingual counselors can communicate effectively with clients about how their personal beliefs, biases, linguistic identities, statuses, power, privilege, and oppression can impact their interactions in counseling sessions. Understanding how beliefs can impact communication is crucial. Learning how to use theories to address any issues that arise effectively is essential. Knowing when to provide individual counseling or systems advocacy is equally important,

especially for clients who are linguistically marginalized or privileged. Finally, acquiring bilingual communication skills can help better connect with clients from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

**Action.** Bilingual counselors work to comprehend better how their own and their clients' views, beliefs, biases, and attitudes toward language identity, status, power, privilege, and oppression impact their counseling relationship. This helps them provide more effective support to their clients. Discussing the client's and counselor's worldviews and experiences is crucial to enhancing counseling relationships. This involves examining and addressing how linguistic privilege and marginalization can impact the relationship. It is also beneficial to work with clients to recognize how their linguistic identity development interacts with that of the counselor and how it influences the relationship. To take action, it is essential to initiate conversations about how language, stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, power, privilege, and oppression can impact the relationship, particularly with marginalized or privileged clients. Additionally, it is essential to cooperate with clients to determine whether individual counseling or systems advocacy is the most appropriate approach for linguistically privileged and marginalized clients. Finally, bilingual skills can help connect with privileged and marginalized clients.

### ***Linguistic Skills, Intervention Strategies, and Techniques***

Bilingual counselors have expertise in the language they work with and understand its linguistic challenges. In addition, they have unique skills to cater to clients' linguistic needs by using intervention strategies and techniques that are inclusive and sustainable.

**Attitudes and Beliefs.** Bilingual counselors are knowledgeable about language-related concerns specific to the language they are using. Therefore, they should examine and recognize any assumptions, stereotypes, beliefs, or biases they may have about the language. They should



also address any anxiety they feel about their language skills. Additionally, they should evaluate their assumptions, beliefs, and biases about using interpretation services and interpreters.

**Knowledge.** Bilingual counselors have extensive knowledge about their language, including its unique characteristics and regional differences. They also understand the process of second language acquisition and the research related to bilingualism/multilingualism and its implications in counseling. In addition, they are knowledgeable about the linguistic barriers and stressors faced by members of the specific ethno-racial community they are working with. Finally, they also understand the history of linguistic discrimination and oppression in the United States, other parts of the world, and within mental health professions.

Furthermore, they recognize how language impacts the therapeutic relationship, including rapport/connection building, and how it can create fear in clients receiving services from someone within their community. Bilingual counselors also understand the linguistic mechanisms involved in bilingualism, emotion, memory, and code-switching from a strength-based perspective. Additionally, they are aware of the linguistic implications within the bilingual counseling treatment process, including assessment, diagnosis, and treatment planning.

**Skills.** Bilingual counselors have skills specific to the languages they use in their work. Language proficiency should be assessed for general language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) and mental health-related terminology. Bilingual counselors must expand their familiarity with sub-language differences, including regional terminology and accents of native and foreign-born populations with different language proficiency levels. Bilingual counselors must be able to write and present client cases, treatment plans, and progress notes in both languages to engage the client in their treatment process accurately.

Additionally, it is crucial to comprehend the client's linguistic background and identities and how they impact the counseling process. It is essential to show interest in their language and explain the counseling process in a way that pertains to their language. It is also necessary to adhere to ethical standards and use assessments adapted to their language. When working with interpreters, rely on evidence-based practices. Lastly, utilize therapeutic interventions that cater to the client's linguistic background and needs.

**Action.** Bilingual counselors can better meet the language needs of their clients by using techniques and interventions that are inclusive and sustainable. They are committed to promoting linguistic inclusivity and provide clinical documentation and assessments in different languages whenever possible. They act as language brokers and encourage the development of language skills, pride, and identity. They also acknowledge the protective factors of language and affirm the value of being bilingual or multilingual.

### **Ethnocultural Competencies**

Ethnocultural developmental domains encompass the counselors' 1) self-awareness of their ethnocultural identities and status, 2) understanding of the client's ethnocultural worldview, 3) understanding of how ethnocultural worldviews impact the counseling relationship, and 4) ethnocultural skills and intervention strategies and techniques. Each ethnocultural developmental domain contains four bicultural aspirational areas of competence: 1) counselors' attitudes and beliefs, 2) counselors' knowledge, 3) counselors' skills, and 4) counselors' actions or responsiveness.

### ***Counselor Self-Awareness***

Bicultural counselors are aware of their privileged and marginalized ethnocultural status. Therefore, bicultural counselors practice introspection and develop self-awareness around their

attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, skills, and actions connected to their ethnocultural identities and worldviews.

**Beliefs and Attitudes.** Bicultural counselors understand their identities, power, privileges, strengths, and limitations within their cultural backgrounds and their attitudes, beliefs, and biases about different cultures. Therefore, they should examine their assumptions and values as privileged or marginalized members of diverse cultural groups. Additionally, they must recognize how their cultural background affects their perspectives and advantages/disadvantages within specific ethnic groups.

**Knowledge.** Bicultural counselors deeply understand their ethnocultural background, including their identities, power, privilege, oppression, strengths, and limitations. They also recognize their assumptions, attitudes, values, beliefs, and biases towards ethnoracial groups and issues related to migration, acculturation and enculturation. They acquire knowledge of resources to help them become more aware of their own identities and status. They know the historical events that have led to their privileged or marginalized group and how this affects their experiences and worldview. They also understand the theories that explain how their status influences their lives.

**Skills.** Bicultural counselors have unique skills that help them understand their cultural identities, status, power, privilege, and societal oppression. They also learn to recognize their assumptions, attitudes, values, beliefs, and biases related to their culture and how to think critically about them. In addition, these counselors develop communication skills to explain how their ethnocultural background affects their worldviews and experiences, and they learn how to apply this knowledge in both personal and professional settings. Finally, they also learn to analyze their experiences compared to others and evaluate the impact of their cultural background on their personal and professional lives.

**Action.** Bicultural counselors take steps to become more aware of their ethnocultural identities, statuses, power, privilege, oppression, strengths, and limitations. They also examine their assumptions, attitudes, values, beliefs, and biases regarding ethnocultural and the acquisition of it. They learn about their ethnocultural assumptions, worldviews, values, ideas, and biases as a member of a privileged and marginalized ethnocultural group. They pursue professional development opportunities to learn more about their ethnocultural background and their privileged or marginalized ethnocultural status. Finally, they immerse themselves in a specific ethno-racial community to learn how power, privilege, and oppression affect their ethnoculturally privileged and marginalized experiences.

### ***Client's Worldview***

Bicultural counselors are aware, knowledgeable, skilled, and action-oriented in understanding clients' ethnocultural worldviews. Therefore, bilingual counselors are curious about clients' specific ethnocultural experiences.

**Beliefs and Attitudes.** Bicultural counselors understand that a client's worldview, assumptions, attitudes, values, ideas, and biases are all connected to their ethnocultural identity, status, and experiences with ethnocultural power, privilege, and oppression. Being curious about the ethnoracial history and experiences of both ethnoculturally privileged and marginalized clients is essential. Developing an ethnocultural identity can significantly influence a client's worldview and experiences. It is essential to recognize the strengths and limitations when working with clients from these groups. Recognizing within-group and between-group similarities and differences among ethnoculturally privileged and marginalized clients is paramount. Additionally, it is essential to understand that a client's non-verbal communication style may be influenced by their ethnocultural status.

**Knowledge.** Bicultural counselors possess knowledge about the worldviews, assumptions, attitudes, values, beliefs, biases, and experiences of their clients, particularly those related to ethnocultural identities, statuses, power, privilege, and oppression. To successfully work with ethnoculturally privileged and marginalized clients, counselors must develop an understanding of the historical events and current issues that shape their worldview and cultural background. Understanding how ethnocultural stereotypes, discrimination, power, privilege, and oppression affect these clients is essential. Counselors should acquire knowledge of ethnoculturally responsive theories, ethnocultural identity development models, and research on these clients' worldviews, cultures, and life experiences. Additionally, counselors must understand their limitations and strengths when working with clients from specific ethnic groups and be prepared to work through any discomfort they may experience while learning about their clients. Finally, counselors should be aware of their attitudes, beliefs, prejudices, and biases toward ethnoculturally privileged and marginalized clients and consider their client's communication styles (e.g., slang, accent, etc.).

**Skills.** Bicultural counselors can understand their clients' worldviews, beliefs, biases, attitudes, and values associated with their ethnocultural identities, statuses, and experiences with power, privilege, and oppression. Developing ethnoculturally responsive evaluation skills is essential to analyze how historic events and current issues shape the worldview and experiences of both ethnoculturally privileged and marginalized clients. Critical thinking skills that are ethnoculturally responsive are also essential to gain insight into how stereotypes, discrimination, power, privilege, and oppression influence both ethnoculturally privileged and marginalized clients. It is necessary to acquire ethnoculturally responsive application skills to apply multilingual and social justice theories, ethnocultural identity development models, and research to work with ethnoculturally privileged and marginalized clients. Ethnoculturally responsive assessment skills

should also be developed to identify limitations and strengths when working with ethnoculturally privileged and marginalized clients. Finally, ethnoculturally responsive reflection skills are needed to work through the discomfort of learning about ethnoculturally privileged and marginalized clients.

Additionally, ethnoculturally responsive conceptualization skills are essential to explain how clients' privileged and marginalized ethnocultural status influences their culture, worldview, experiences, and presenting problems. Analytical skills that are ethnoculturally responsive should also be developed to interpret the attitudes, beliefs, prejudices, and biases that may be held about ethnoculturally privileged and marginalized clients. Ethnoculturally responsive conceptualization skills should be acquired to identify the individual, group, and universal dimensions of the human existence of ethnoculturally privileged and marginalized clients. Ethnoculturally responsive communication skills are also essential when interacting with ethnoculturally privileged and marginalized clients.

**Action.** As a bicultural counselor, it is essential to understand and acknowledge clients' worldviews, attitudes, beliefs, and biases based on their ethnocultural identities and experiences with power, privilege, and oppression. To achieve this, seek opportunities to discuss historic events and current issues that shape the cultural background and experiences of privileged and marginalized clients. Attend professional development training to learn how stereotypes, discrimination, power, privilege, and oppression impact clients. When working with clients, apply multilingual and social justice theories, ethnocultural identity development models, and research. Continuously assess your limitations and strengths when working with clients and immersing in ethno-racial communities where clients reside to understand their experiences. Use ethnocultural knowledge to explain how clients' privileged or marginalized status influences their culture,

worldview, experiences, and presenting problems. Then, pursue ethnoculturally responsive counseling to explore attitudes, beliefs, prejudices, and biases about clients. Collaborate with clients to identify the individual, group, and universal dimensions of human existence that shape their identities. Lastly, consistently demonstrate effective bicultural communication skills when interacting with clients.

### ***Counseling Relationship***

Bicultural counselors possess valuable qualities that enable them to understand how clients and their cultural backgrounds can impact the counseling dynamic. In addition, they are well-informed, adept, and proactive in addressing issues of privilege and marginalization.

**Beliefs and Attitudes.** Bicultural counselors understand how the beliefs, values, biases, and experiences related to their client's cultural backgrounds can affect the counseling relationship. They recognize that the worldviews of both counselors and clients, whether privileged or marginalized, can impact the relationship positively or negatively. They also acknowledge that clients' developmental stages and cultural status can influence the relationship. Additionally, they understand that stereotypes, discrimination, power dynamics, and cultural backgrounds can all play a role in the counseling process. Therefore, effective communication that recognizes and respects cultural differences is crucial in building a solid connection with clients of all backgrounds.

**Knowledge.** Bicultural counselors know how cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and biases can affect client relationships during counseling. This includes understanding how power, privilege, and oppression impact their experiences. They also develop knowledge of the worldviews, values, beliefs, and biases held by both privileged and marginalized counselors and clients and how they influence the counseling relationship. They are familiar with ethnocultural identity development theories and how they affect counseling with privileged and marginalized clients. They understand

how counselors' and clients' ethnocultural statuses influence the counseling relationship and how ethno-culture, stereotypes, discrimination, power, privilege, and oppression can either strengthen or hinder the counseling relationship. Bicultural counselors know when to use individual counseling and systems advocacy with privileged and marginalized clients and are well-versed in bicultural communication theories when working with them.

**Skills.** As a bicultural counselor, it is essential to understand how your beliefs and biases and those of your clients can affect the counseling relationship. You should be able to assess the impact of factors like cultural identity, privilege, and discrimination on both counselors and clients. By applying theories and communication skills, counselors can effectively connect with clients from diverse backgrounds and determine when counseling or advocacy may be necessary. Ultimately, the goal is to create a safe and supportive space for all clients, regardless of their cultural background.

**Action.** Bicultural counselors strive to understand how their clients' worldviews, assumptions, attitudes, values, beliefs, and biases related to their cultural identities, statuses, and experiences with power, privilege, and oppression affect the counseling relationship. They can achieve this by collaborating with clients to examine and identify how their worldviews and experiences impact the counseling relationship. Bicultural counselors can foster a deeper understanding of the counseling relationship by discussing ethnocultural, stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, power, privilege, and oppression with privileged and marginalized clients. They can also work with clients to determine whether individual counseling or systems advocacy is needed. Finally, bicultural counselors can use their skills to connect with privileged and marginalized clients.

***Ethnocultural Skills, Intervention Strategies, and Techniques***



Bicultural counselors know and know about ethnocultural issues about the specific ethno-culture they are working with. Bicultural counselors possess ethno-culture-specific skills and are responsive to clients' ethnocultural needs through intervention strategies and techniques that are ethnoculturally inclusive and sustainable.

**Attitudes and Beliefs.** Bicultural counselors know the ethnocultural issues specific to the ethno-culture they are working with. They take the time to recognize and acknowledge any assumptions, beliefs, stereotypes, and biases about the specific ethno-culture they are working with. They also explore and acknowledge any anxiety related to their ethno-culture competence. Finally, skilled bicultural counselors take the time to examine their own acculturation and enculturation processes.

**Knowledge.** Bicultural counselors deeply understand the specific ethno-culture, including ethnocultural issues. They are knowledgeable about the acculturation and enculturation processes and their effects on the therapeutic process. They also understand the physical, psychological, and emotional barriers and stressors clients from different ethno-cultures may face. Bicultural counselors are well-versed in the history of ethnocultural discrimination and oppression, including anti-black and indigenous attitudes prevalent in the United States, other parts of the world, and within the mental health profession. They also have expertise in familial, cultural, and systemic theories relevant to the client's ethno-culture. Finally, bicultural counselors possess knowledge of the ethnocultural implications of bicultural counseling treatment processes such as assessment, diagnosis, and treatment planning.

**Skills.** Bicultural counselors have specialized skills in the languages of the cultures they work with. They understand the influence of their client's cultural backgrounds and identities on the counseling process. They are curious about their clients' cultural backgrounds and explain how

culture affects counseling. They know about cultural aspects of parenthood, parenting styles, discipline, power dynamics, and developmental stages. They identify cultural dynamics like familismo, personalismo, simpatía, respeto, sanación, marianismo, machismo/caballerismo, affection, contextualism, and interconnectedness and use this knowledge in the treatment process.

**Action.** Bicultural counselors can meet the needs of their client's cultural backgrounds by using intervention strategies and techniques that are inclusive and sustainable. As a counselor, it is essential to recognize and appreciate the strengths and resilience of clients from diverse ethnocultural backgrounds. By committing to anti-oppressive and anti-ethno-racist practices, counselors can create a safe and inclusive space for their clients. It is also important to use ethical practices that respect the client's cultural identity in counseling, including assessments with ethnocultural adaptations. Holistic and ethnoculturally responsive theoretical frameworks, such as critical race theories, critical trauma theories, liberation theories, and culture-centered models, can promote healing. Additionally, therapeutic interventions should be chosen based on the client's cultural background and needs. Finally, counselors should encourage ethnic socialization, pride, and identity while respecting and valuing spiritual and natural healing practices.

### **Future Recommendations**

As the Latine population in the United States continues to grow, there is a greater demand for bilingual counseling services. This demand calls for graduate-level counseling programs to address the training needs of bilingual counselors. As such, bilingual counseling programs in counselor education programs would greatly benefit from well-defined CACREP bilingual counselor education standards, particularly for assessing linguistic skills. Given that little is known about how graduate-level counseling programs address bilingual counseling as part of their curriculum, more clarity is needed around issues of preparation and supervision.

The development of bilingual counseling competencies measurement would allow supervisors and counselor education programs to assess bilingual counselors' readiness and growth. Finally, we strongly encourage the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) to proactively integrate these competencies to represent our increasingly diverse society better. Licensing boards must establish standards for continuing education (CE) requirements for bilingual counselors and supervisors. This will help supervisors acquire the necessary competencies to contribute to the training of future competent bilingual counselors.

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