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Narratives of First-Generation Mexican American Bilingual Licensed Counselors

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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Abstract

Despite the growing demand for mental health services in Spanish, bilingual counselors are often ill-equipped to provide services in Spanish and frequently enter state-required supervised licensure without adequate training or opportunities for clinical supervision to support their growth as bilingual counseling professionals. The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry was to answer the research question: What are the narratives of first-generation Mexican American bilingual counselors during supervised licensure? Guided by Anzaldua's Borderlands Theory as a conceptual framework, data were collected from eight participants through semi-structured virtual interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed four themes mirroring the stages of Borderlands Theory: Navigating Nepantla, Confronting Duality in Coatlicue State, Reconstructing the Self in Coyolxauhqui State, and Embracing the Self in La Conciencia de la Mestiza. This study addressed a gap in the literature by centering on the experiences, needs, and barriers faced by first-generation Mexican American bilingual counselors, including the need for culturally inclusive education, training, and clinical and linguistic support during supervised licensure. A key recommendation is for future research to support counselor education and supervision programs in creating endorsed competencies or best practices for bilingual supervision. These findings have implications for promoting positive social change by informing counselor education programs, supervisors, and mental health agencies about the need for culturally and linguistically responsive supervision practices, which can support the development of bilingual counselors and enhance the quality of mental health services provided to Spanish-speaking communities.

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Dedication

To every version of myself: the one who dreamed, the one who doubted, the one who kept trying, and the ones that will exist because of this moment. This work exists because of all of you. Thank you for carrying me here.

To all who have ever felt alone or unseen within their systems, this work is also for you. May you find recognition, a sense of belonging, and the strength to continue.

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Next, I would like to thank my committee. To my chair, Dr. Samantha Airhart-Larraga, I am grateful that you believed in my passion for this study and supported me in making it a reality. Thank you for your patience, kindness, and dedication to my project. To my methodologist, Dr. Jade Letourneau, I am deeply grateful for your guidance as a professor, your passion for methodology, your feedback, and your patience throughout this entire process. Your teachings help me understand who I want to be as a researcher and why. Without you two as my committee, my dissertation process would not have been the same.

Furthermore, I would also like to thank Dr. Jennifer Ross. Thank you for reigniting my desire to pursue this dream and for reminding me that “just because you want to, is a good enough reason” and for pushing me to keep going when I felt lost. Finally, I would like to thank my participants who courageously shared their stories and generously gave their time to help make this study possible.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Latines are the largest ethnic and racial minority in the United States and are expected to grow by about 9% by 2060 (Espino, 2016; Garcia, 2020; U.S. Census Bureau, 2021, 2022; U.S. Department of Commerce, 2023; Vega, 2016). With the growth of the population comes a need to fulfill their needs and create resources to support them. These needs include having mental health services available to them since the Latine population is highly susceptible to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression due to social and political stressors, immigration status, discrimination, and self-stigma (Arreola et al., 2024; Atkinson et al., 1992; Delgado-Romero et al., 2018; Held et al., 2022; Ogan et al., 2024; Rahman et al., 2023). The counseling field currently lacks diversity, limited training in languages other than English, and little support for counselors who provide counseling services in languages other than English (Biever et al., 2002; Fuentes Majors, 2022; Thompson et al., 2012; Trepal et al., 2014). Counseling clients tend to prefer their counselor to share cultural identities with them (Ilagan & Heatherington, 2022; Kim & Kang, 2018; Swift et al., 2018). Therefore, the counseling field needs to have more diversity to match the growing Latine community and other minorities. This also creates a need for appropriate training and support to be available for diverse counselors (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018; Fuertes, 2004; Interiano-Shiverdecker et al., 2021; Trepal et al., 2019). Currently, counselor educators and counseling programs are insufficiently preparing Latine counseling students to be bilingual counselors, and many times, these counselors in training do not have access to a

clinical supervisor who understands Spanish (Biever et al., 2002; Castaño et al., 2007; Interiano-Shiverdecker et al., 2021; Trepal et al., 2014). Being inadequately prepared poses an issue for their supervised licensure process; supervised licensure is a fundamental experience for their professional identity and clinical skills development, and they lack the appropriate resources, supervisors, language training, and support (Castaño et al., 2007; Delgado-Romero et al., 2018; Fuentes Majors, 2022; Garrison et al., 2022; Interiano-Shiverdecker et al., 2021; K. W. Nelson & Jackson, 2003). Although there is some research on Latine counseling students and some on Mexican American counselors in training, there is no research available about the experiences of first-generation Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors with their licensure process. This study's findings can potentially impact how counseling programs, counselor educators, and clinical supervisors support counselors in training and approach their work with Mexican American counselors.

In this chapter, I provide background information, outline the study's purpose, present the research question, describe the theoretical framework, explain the nature of the study, and define key terms relevant to this study. Furthermore, I discuss the assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and the significance of the study.

Background

Some Latines may grow up hearing about or seeing their parents struggling at work, financially, with language barriers, and with systemic barriers (Hagelskamp et al., 2010; Langenkamp, 2019). As a result, some individuals choose to pursue higher education to dismantle these barriers. Latines value education and hope that higher

education will lead to a career and a stable life (Espino, 2016; N. E. Hill & Torres, 2010; Vega, 2016). So many likely heard their parents say that education is something that once you have it, “nadie te lo quita [no one can take it away],” and that it will give them a higher chance of a better life, such as financial stability, more luxuries, and more access (Espino, 2016; Vega, 2016). Most Latine individuals have parents who do not have a college education, and about 73% of Latine college students in the United States are first-generation students who are learning to navigate an educational system not designed for them (RTI International, 2023). They must overcome educational barriers, family disconnection, and isolation to achieve their goal (Campa, 2010; K. W. Nelson & Jackson, 2003). The barriers they encounter during the process do not stop them because they are motivated by bettering their family, being a role model, advocating for younger generations, and repaying their parents for their sacrifices (Campa, 2010; Easley et al., 2012; Espino, 2016; Fuentes Majors, 2022; Garcia, 2020; N. E. Hill & Torres, 2010; M. L. Nelson et al., 2008; Vega, 2016). Furthermore, researchers have found that Mexican Americans have a desire to represent their culture in a professional setting and feel honored to receive an education in a field that can serve their community (Easley et al., 2012; Fuentes Majors, 2022; K. W. Nelson & Jackson, 2003).

Professional identity development is a process that most professionals undertake at the beginning of their training programs (Dollarhide et al., 2013; Dong et al., 2018; Gibson et al., 2010; Granello, 2010). The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2024) Standards outline some fundamental teachings

a counseling program must have to ensure counseling students develop their professional identity during their programs, such as helping students identify with the counseling profession, teaching foundational theories and skills, and incorporating culturally competent approaches to counseling.

Professional identity development involves both internal and interpersonal processes that will allow an individual to integrate themselves into the professional community and align their personal values with their professional ethics and training (Dollarhide et al., 2013; Gibson et al., 2010). However, Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) often encounter barriers to these processes due to cultural identities, language preferences, and structures of the counseling field, to name a few (Hyun et al., 2023). Although many BIPOC professionals have characterized their cultural identities as a strength, they also categorize it as a disadvantage due to the power differentials, discriminations, microaggressions, loneliness, isolation, lack of support, and discomfort they experience (Basma et al., 2021; Fuentes Majors, 2022; Garcia, 2020; Gibson et al., 2010; Hyun et al., 2023; N. Thacker & Barrio Minton, 2021; N. E. Thacker et al., 2021). For Latine professionals, relationships are extremely valuable for their professional development, as they are foundational in their culture (Garcia, 2020; K. W. Nelson & Jackson, 2003; N. E. Thacker et al., 2021). However, they often encounter various situations that may provoke a sense of loneliness and isolation early in their careers, such as a lack of diversity, excessive expectations, inadequate support, or difficult experiences in supervision (Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2017; N. E. Thacker et al., 2021).

Clinical supervision has a long history of supporting novice professionals in becoming knowledgeable, skilled, and capable of practicing independently (Borders et al., 2014; Chircop Coleiro et al., 2023; Falender & Shafranske, 2017; Howard et al., 2023; Lohani & Sharma, 2023). For the counseling field, clinical supervision it is part of a counselor's training program and their post masters' supervised licensure requirements (ACA, 2014; ACA, 2016; CACREP, 2024; NBCC, 2023). A counselor in training will likely be supervised by multiple clinical supervisors before becoming licensed to practice independently. Although supervision is one of the most impactful processes in learning clinical skills, many counselors encounter supervision relationships that make them feel unsafe, creating negative impacts on their developmental process (Chircop Coleiro et al., 2023).

For BIPOC supervisees, additional factors may complicate the supervisory relationship, including cross-cultural supervisory dynamics, discrimination, marginalization, and disproportionate power imbalances (Callahan & Love, 2020; Constantine & Sue, 2007). Power differentials and hierarchy inherently exist in supervisory relationships (Association for Counselor Education and Supervision [ACES], 2011, 5.C.ii). When a supervisor is not aware of how the cultural identities of themselves and the supervisee are impacting the relationship, it causes harm to the supervisee's process (Hanks & Hill, 2015; Jain & Aggarwal, 2020; Kissil et al., 2013; Murphy & Wright, 2005; Wilson et al., 2016). Many BIPOC supervisees report multicultural competence and awareness in their supervisors as essential to their working alliance and supervisory experience (Ellis et al., 2014; Hanks & Hill, 2015; Lee, 2018). However,

many researchers have found that supervisees do not always encounter multicultural competence and cognizance in clinical supervision, leading BIPOC supervisees to feelings of fear, worry, discomfort, and stress in supervision (Burkard et al., 2016; Constantine & Sue, 2007; Jernigan et al., 2010; Wilcox et al., 2022a; Wong et al., 2013). These experiences are a disservice to BIPOC counselors in training, and their development is stunted by it (Burkard et al., 2016; Wilcox et al., 2022a; Wilcox et al., 2022b).

Latine bilingual counselors experience additional barriers in supervision and when entering the field. Limited formal counseling training is available for Spanish speakers (Trepal et al., 2014). Further, many times, clinical agencies expect Spanish-speaking novice counselors to provide therapy in Spanish without the support of a clinical supervisor fluent in both languages or the preparation they need to provide the service (Biever et al., 2002; Castaño et al., 2007; Delgado-Romero et al., 2018; Ho & O'donovan, 2018). This lack of training and support can negatively impact young bilingual counselors' skill development, confidence, and professional development (Biever et al., 2002; Castaño et al., 2007; Engstrom & Min, 2004; Estrada et al., 2018; Interiano-Shiverdecker et al., 2021; Trepal et al., 2019; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009).

The literature has significant gaps in understanding Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors. Past researchers have called for additional studies that focus on specific minorities to explore and identify the particular needs of each group (Fuentes Majors, 2022; Tohidian & Quek, 2017). Little is known about Mexican American individuals, despite being the largest Latine subgroup in the United States (Fuentes

Majors, 2022; U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). Additionally, there is a lack of diversity in the counseling field, causing an issue for diverse counselors. Counselors often seek support and mentorship from people who are culturally similar to them, which means diversity in the counseling field is needed not only to support the diverse population of clients seeking therapy but also to allow counselors to have support and mentorship from other culturally diverse counseling professionals (Delgado-Romero et al., 2017; Fuentes Majors, 2022; N. E. Thacker et al., 2021). There is a dearth of literature on the impact that culture has on professional identity development, leaving counselor educators ill-equipped to facilitate and support Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors through this process (Volpe et al., 2019). The literature shows that Latines experience unique difficulties and barriers, and still, there is no research on the impact that those issues may have on Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors during their supervised licensure. Further, there is a shortage of research that focuses on understanding the supervised licensed process.

Problem Statement

The counseling and counselor education fields need more diversity to better serve the population seeking counseling services and entering counseling programs (Fuentes Majors, 2022; Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2017; N. Thacker & Barrio Minton, 2021; N. E. Thacker et al., 2021). Without adequate education, training, support, clinical supervision, and integration into the counseling community, diverse individuals will not receive the necessary training to become professional counselors (Fuentes Majors, 2022; Garcia, 2020). Consequently, counselor education programs are not adequately preparing first-

generation Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors to succeed. There is a dearth of research on the experiences of licensed counselors, particularly those who are first-generation Mexican American and bilingual. Further investigation is needed to understand the narratives of first-generation Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors during their post-graduation supervised practice.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the narratives of first-generation Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors during their state-required supervised experience for licensure. Through the narratives of first-generation Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors, I sought to understand their experiences during supervised licensure. Their experiences help identify ways counselors, mental health providers, clinical supervisors, and counselor educators can better support first-generation Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors during supervised licensure.

Research Question

The research question for the study was: What are the narratives of first-generation Mexican American bilingual counselors during supervised licensure?

Theoretical Framework for the Study

For this study, I drew upon Gloria Anzaldua's (1987) Borderlands theory, as outlined in her book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. In her theory, Anzaldua describes the existence of physical and psychological borders for people living on the border of Mexico and the United States. She explained that most Mexican Americans are tasked with the responsibility of learning to blend their cultures or choose between them

due to societal expectations that do not allow both to exist simultaneously. The Borderlands theory explains how individuals can maintain their mixed identities and thrive. The theory's main concepts are Nepantla, Coatlicue state, Coyolxauhqui state, and la conciencia de la mestiza. These concepts are described in depth in Chapter 2.

Anzaldua (1987) developed this theory, focusing on the experiences of Mexican Americans living on the U.S.-Mexican border. Although the intended population for this study is not people living on the border, the theory incorporates many factors, such as language, gender roles, socioeconomic status, education, values, and beliefs, that are specific to Mexican culture and families. Therefore, Borderlands Theory provides a uniquely tailored lens through which to interpret the data of this study, as it was developed to understand the dynamics and internal struggles of Mexican American individuals. The theory outlines concepts emphasizing a person's intersecting identities, cultures, and internal struggles.

Nature of the Study

The approach of this study is a narrative inquiry. Qualitative narrative inquiry presents an opportunity to gather rich information about a person's story, allowing for a profound understanding of their view of a phenomenon and the meaning they attribute to their experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Furthermore, the population has potential intersecting identities that are essential to consider, and this approach offers the opportunity to incorporate the impact of their cultural factors while listening to their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). In this study, I explored the stories of first-generation Mexican American bilingual licensed

counselors during supervised licensure. I conducted semi-structured interviews with first-generation Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors, and the data from these interviews were coded and analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fraser, 2004), as further discussed in Chapter Three.

Definitions

The following are definitions to terms used throughout this document:

Associate license: A state-provided license for a master's graduate with a degree in counseling who is a practicing counselor under the supervision of a licensed and board-approved supervisor in their state.

Bilingual counselor: A person who is fluent in two languages and provides counseling sessions in both languages. For this study, a bilingual counselor refers to individuals who are proficient in both Spanish and English and offer counseling services in both languages.

Borderlands theory: A theory developed by Gloria Anzaldua in the foundational text, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza.*

First-generation Mexican American: Any person born in the United States with at least one parent born in Mexico.

Independent license: A state-provided license for a master's graduate with a degree in counseling who has completed all licensure requirements and can provide counseling services independently and without supervision.

Latine: This term is a gender-inclusive term for Latino or Latina.

Licensed counselor: A mental health counselor who has graduated from a counseling program and holds an associate or independent license in their state.

Professional identity development: "the successful integration of personal attributes and professional training in the context of a professional community" (Gibson et al., 2010, p. 23-24).

Supervised practice: The time a counseling professional spends practicing under a board-approved licensed supervisor after graduating with their master's degree.

Assumptions

During the study, I assumed that the participants would share rich and descriptive data about their lived experiences as Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors during their supervised licensure, and they would possess knowledge of this phenomenon because they were selected using the participant selection criteria. I also make several assumptions revolving around the integrity of the participants. I assumed the participants would accurately describe and share their narratives, speaking truthfully about their experiences. Furthermore, I assumed that the participants did not intentionally alter their descriptions of the experience. Lastly, I assumed the participants would be honest when sharing the meanings they have created about their experiences and the impact they have had on their lives.

Scope and Delimitations

The study focused on the experiences of first-generation Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors during supervised licensure, and I chose this population for several reasons. First, each minority group deserves to be researched to understand their

individual needs, barriers, and how to support them (Tohidian & Quek, 2017). Second, first-generation Mexican Americans have different experiences compared to subsequent generations because of transnational practices, acculturation, and social and political experiences (Viruell-Fuentes, 2006). Lastly, most researchers use students as the target population, leaving a noticeable gap in the literature about counselors after they have graduated with their degrees (Fuertes, 2004; Ramos et al., 2020; Trepal et al., 2014). More research is needed on the experiences of individuals who have graduated and entered the field.

The exclusion criteria included individuals who did not self-identify as first-generation Mexican Americans and those who possess a clinical social work license. The exclusion criteria ensured the participants could provide rich and detailed data about their experience and could answer the research question.

Although the participants in this study hold unique experiences, they also share similar identities to other populations, such as Mexican Americans, first-generation Americans, counseling professionals, and BIPOC professionals. This study provided a level of detail that allows for some transferability to other similar Latine populations.

Limitations

The nature of narrative research involves the researcher and the participants working together to understand the phenomenon being researched (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Daiute, 2014). This involves the researcher interacting with the participants and the data. The researcher relies on the participants' recollections of their experiences as the data for the study, which some see as a limitation of narrative inquiry

(Foxall et al., 2021; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Another limitation of narrative inquiry is that the study results are based on the perspective of the researcher, which is subjective and biased **(**Clandinin & Connelly, 2004**).** Qualitative research utilizes the experiences and meanings attributed by participants, rather than seeking the "truth," implying that reality is subjective. This perspective can be perceived as a limitation of the research design. These limitations are further discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

My positionality may bias the study, as it may have influenced my interpretation of the data. However, I managed my bias by using a reflexive journal, debriefs with my chair, and member checks. These are discussed further in Chapter 3.

Significance

Latines are a fast-growing population with unique needs and a shortage of resources available to them. The counseling field desperately needs diversity in counselors to provide quality counseling services and in counselor educators to provide adequate education and support to Mexican American counselors. This study aimed to fill the gaps in available research, helping counselor educators and supervisors understand how to educate, train, supervise, and develop this group of counselors. The results of this study also add to the existing literature about Mexican American counselors.

With the results of this study, I listened, learned, and understood the narratives of Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors' experiences during supervised licensure. Hearing and understanding their stories helped me identify their needs, barriers, and strengths during this time, as well as how counselor educators and supervisors can support them.

Summary

In this chapter, I provide background information on the problem, the study's purpose, the research question, the theoretical framework, the nature of the study, important definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and the significance of the study. Chapter 2 will provide an exhaustive review of past and current literature on significant topics relevant to this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The Latine population is the largest minority in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). It comprises 19% of the population and is expected to account for 28% of the total U.S. population by 2060 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021, 2022; U.S. Department of Commerce, 2023). Latine people are at high risk for mental health and substance use issues but are less likely to seek services (Atkinson et al., 1992; Castaño et al., 2007; Delgado-Romero et al., 2018; Trepal et al., 2014; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009). With the growth of the population comes the need for additional resources for clients and professionals equipped to work with, support, and train new Latine counselors (Biever et al., 2002; Jain & Aggarwal, 2020; Tohidian & Quek, 2017). However, there is a dearth of research available about the experiences and needs of licensed Mexican American counselors during supervised practice. In this chapter, the literature search strategies, theoretical foundation, and literature process are outlined. I also reviewed and synthesized the available research on clinical supervision, the role of language in counseling, professional identity development, and the Latine population.

Literature Search Strategy

My comprehensive search of peer-reviewed articles for the background of this study was conducted using Walden University's library multi-database search, APA PsycInfo, Sage Journals, and Google Scholar. Initially, only articles published in the last 5 years were reviewed; then the publication date limit was removed, and additional articles were reviewed. The keywords for the search were counselors, therapists,

psychologists, psychotherapists, Mexican American counselor, Hispanic counselor, Chicano counselor, first-generation counselor, post-graduate counselor, Latinx professional, professional development, BIPOC counselors and supervision, clinical supervision, supervision alliance, language and supervision, Borderlands Theory, Anzaldua, Nepantla, and Coyolxauhqui.

Theoretical Foundation

For this study, I used Gloria Anzaldua's (1987) Borderlands Theory. In her foundational text, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Anzaldua describes the unique experiences that people living on the border of Mexico and the United States experience. She emphasizes the existence and impact of the physical and psychological borders. She defines a borderland as "a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition" (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 17). Most Mexican Americans encounter an inner war where they are forced to decide how much they identify with Mexican or American values, which is a conflict imposed by the cultures they live in (Anzaldua, 1987). In essence, this theory refers to spaces where multiple cultures bleed into each other, where people there are obligated to discern their identities because of cultural and societal expectations. However, instead of choosing, the individual learns to transgress boundaries and dares to hold and use their different identities all at once. The theory's main concepts are Nepantla, Coatlicue state, Coyolxauhqui state, and la conciencia de la *mestiza*. Anzaldua uses terms in Nahuatl. Nahuatl was the Aztec language (Schmal, 2019).

Nepantla

Nepantla means “in the middle” (Hinojosa & Carney, 2016; Keating, 2006; Krewson & Matheis, 2021; Naples, 2010; Orozco-Mendoza, 2008). Anzaldua used the word Nepantla to describe the emotional and psychological borderlands that Mexican Americans and Chicanos experience (Keating, 2006). More specifically, she uses the term to describe possible transitional periods for people’s psyche, spirituality, and identities (Keating, 2006; Krewson & Matheis, 2021; Orozco-Mendoza, 2008). Orozco-Mendoza (2008) described Nepantla as the state in which people learn, grow, reject, discover, and choose the ideas and identities that most suits who they are. It is a place where people can find the strength and knowledge to stand for their identity regardless of the external forces that reject their lives. Nepantla can be a state in which individuals feel anxious and lack control since they are in the middle of combining and creating space for their identity (Aguilar-Valdez et al., 2013; Hinojosa & Carney, 2016; Keating, 2006; Krewson & Matheis, 2021). During supervised licensure, counselors learn about themselves and counseling, grow as professionals and individuals, practice their counseling skills, discover their therapeutic identity, and combine their personal beliefs and values with the profession’s ethics and expectations (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2016; Calley & Hawley, 2008; Dollarhide et al., 2013; Gibson et al., 2010; K. W. Nelson & Jackson, 2003).

Coatlicue State

Coatlicue is the Goddess of birth and death (Anzaldua, 1987; Hinojosa, 2019). She is responsible for giving and taking life, representing duality and contradiction, but

also balance, as she shows that birth and death are both part of the same process (Anzaldua, 1987). The Coatlicue state is brought on by hiding oneself and avoiding seeing the reality one is living (Anzaldua, 1987; Orozco-Mendoza, 2008). It is the resistance to acknowledging the oppression and systems that create it. It is the fear of the unknown territory if they make a change (Anzaldua, 1987). The Coatlicue state is a dark, brutal, yet illuminating process. This stage is one of the most challenging stages of the process in the Borderlands Theory since one is tasked with the responsibility of identifying, understanding, confronting, and disposing of the limiting ideas the society has made one believe about one's cultural composition in order to diminish and repress them (Orozco-Mendoza, 2008). The knowledge creates pain because once it is known, the person has changed. They are not better or worse; they are different (Aguilar-Valdez et al., 2013; Anzaldua, 1987; Krewson & Matheis, 2021; Orozco-Mendoza, 2008).

Coyolxauhqui State

Coyolxauhqui is the Goddess of the Moon and the daughter of Coatlicue (Anzaldua, 1987; Hinojosa & Carney, 2016). The legend of who she is tells that her brother decapitated her and sent her head to space, which is now the moon, and dismembered her body and scattered the pieces across the Earth because he feared her power (Aguilar-Valdez et al., 2013; Anzaldua, 1987; Orozco-Mendoza, 2008). Anzaldua described that people in the borderlands are torn apart by cultural oppression from those who feel threatened by their power (Orozco-Mendoza, 2008). The Coyolxauhqui state is the process of picking up the pieces of the self and putting them back together. The goal is to use the lessons one has learned in the past stages to reunite and merge all the pieces

of themselves and reach a point of reconnecting with their identities. Furthermore, in this state, one needs to be less focused on assimilating, which can remove and isolate part of oneself, and instead focus on empowering oneself by accepting and utilizing their culture. In the Coyolxauhqui state, a person can acknowledge and embrace various identities.

The Conciencia de la Mestiza

The final step of this process is the conciencia de la *mestiza*, sometimes called *mestiza* consciousness (Anzaldua, 1987; Hinojosa & Carney, 2016). Here, a person reaches transformation and is no longer held down by oppressive expectations, pushing past the oppression, recognizing the struggles her ancestors have experienced, and creating a new lens through which to observe and view her people (Anzaldua, 1987). It is a form of resisting domination and oppression (Hinojosa & Carney, 2016; Naples, 2010). With a newly transformed consciousness, the *mestiza* will have a "tolerance for ambiguity" (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 30). She learns to balance and integrate her cultures and personality, finding her voice (Garcia, 2020; Hinojosa & Carney, 2016). She embraces all parts of who she is: the good, the bad, the ugly, and the different.

Nepantla, Coatlicue State, Coyolxauhqui State, and la conciencia de la *Mestiza* are all relevant to the experiences of novice counselors during their supervised licensure process. They are navigating a new profession, learning and mastering counseling skills, discovering counseling ideas that align with their personal values, and implementing all of these are part of the professional development process that newly licensed counselors must experience (Dollarhide et al., 2013; Gibson et al., 2010). Researchers have found that BIPOC counselors often face situations in which they must hide, conceal, or suppress

certain aspects of their identities to fit into the counseling profession, obtain tenure, or ensure their safety (Dong et al., 2018; N. Thacker & Barrio Minton, 2021; N. E. Thacker et al., 2021). Some BIPOC and Latine counselors have described reaching a place in their careers where they are picking up the pieces of their cultural identities that have been suppressed or hidden, as described in the Coyolxauhqui state; however, this is something that takes time (N. Thacker & Barrio Minton, 2021; N. E. Thacker et al., 2021). Their culture, identity process, professional identity development, and personal internal conflict are all relevant to their experience in becoming a licensed counselor. Professional identity development is as much an intrapersonal process as it is an interpersonal one, and Borderlands Theory (Anzaldua, 1987) allowed the researcher to incorporate the added layers of culture while interpreting the participants' stories. Thus, this theory was uniquely useful as the lens through which to interpret the results of this study. It provided concepts that allowed for the consideration of cultural impact, internal struggle, and intersecting identities when interpreting the narratives. Furthermore, this theory was developed specifically to understand Mexican Americans, the population at the center of the study. The interview questions were formulated based on the experiences described by the theory. Meaning that the interview questions were created with the goal of this study expanding on the theory. The interview questions included inquiries into the experiences of counselors' transitional, relational, and psychological changes, the involvement of language in their process, identity ruptures or changes they experienced, and an exploration of whether they had reached *mestiza* consciousness.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

Licensure Process

To legally practice as a counselor in the United States, the counselor must obtain a license through the state where they intend to practice (ACA, 2016). The goal of licensure is to protect the health and well-being of those receiving professional services (ACA, 2016). A counselor must meet several requirements related to education, examination, and experience regulated by the state-appointed board. A provisional or associate license is typically issued to new graduates who meet the educational requirements and are actively working on the examination and experience requirements. All states require applicants for full licensure to complete a 60-semester-hour master's degree in counseling and pass a national comprehensive examination on counseling practice. The last requirement is supervised practice, during which the counselor must practice counseling under the supervision of a board-approved supervisor for a state-specified number of hours. Each state determines the number of hours the counselor must complete under supervision, the number of supervision hours required, and the number of face-to-face hours that must be spent with the chosen supervisor. Once the counselors meet the requirements, they are eligible to apply for full licensure (ACA, 2016). Although there are some similarities in the licensure process for counselors (outlined above), each state's governing board still has full control over the licensure requirements for counselors in that state, which creates some differences between each state's counseling license requirements. Since supervised practice is required for full licensure, and supervision is one of the primary places where new counselors receive most of their

guidance and support, their supervision experience significantly impacts their career and professional development.

Clinical Supervision

The History of Supervision

Clinical supervision involves a supervisor who teaches and mentors a counselor trainee. A supervisor must have the training, competence, pertinent experience, licensure in counseling, and knowledge of supervision theories and models to serve as a clinical supervisor for novice counselors (ACA, 2014; CACREP, 2024). The purpose of supervision is to improve the quality of care the trainee provides, to evaluate and provide feedback to the trainee, to offer support during their development, and to gatekeep the profession. Supervision has been identified as an essential part of a counselor's professional development and the acquisition of skills (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019; Chircop Coleiro et al., 2023). Supervision may help young counseling professionals learn to manage burnout throughout their careers, especially at the beginning (Thompson et al., 2012). Supervised practice is now required for all young professionals entering the counseling field (ACA, 2014; ACA, 2016; NBCC, 2023), and supervision is also used during a counselor-in-training master's program as required by the CACREP (CACREP, 2024).

Borders et al. (2014) note that supervision was recognized as a specialty with the publication of the *Standards for Counseling Supervisors* in 1990 by ACES. This sparked the beginning of documents and research that would lead to the practices now prevalent in the counseling field. However, even though it began to be recognized as a specialty at

that time, supervision can be traced back to Freud's work with other analysts (Lohani & Sharma, 2023). Supervision is now widely used in the helping fields to support novice professionals in their transition to independent practice (Borders et al., 2014; Falender & Shafranske, 2017; Howard et al., 2023)

Experiences in Supervision

Counselors-in-training likely work with several clinical supervisors throughout their professional development. While in their master's programs, they are required to meet for individual or triadic supervision, group supervision, and site supervision (CACREP, 2024). Therefore, by the end of their educational program, they have worked with at least three different supervisors. Post-graduation and during their licensure process, state regulatory boards require counselors to engage in supervised practice, during which they must provide counseling services to clients under the supervision of a clinical supervisor (ACA, 2016). Although clinical supervision is an impactful process, the large majority of supervisees encounter inadequate clinical supervision (Ellis et al., 2014). Counselors tend to internalize and remember their meaningful and hurtful experiences in supervision, especially in their early interactions (Ellis et al., 2014; Gazzola & Theriault, 2007; Walker et al., 2007; Wulf & Nelson, 2000). These experiences are explained throughout this section. This indicates that the supervision process has a lasting impact on the counselor's career. While feedback is vital for a beginning counselor, criticism is damaging to their developmental process (Dong et al., 2018; Gazzola & Theriault, 2007). Novice counselors tend to be sensitive to criticism because they are early in their development. Criticism in supervision can have

detrimental effects on a young counselor, as it may impact their desire to expand their skill set or confidence in trying new skills and techniques (Dong et al., 2018; Gazzola & Theriault, 2007; Wulf & Nelson, 2000). In the early stages, supervisees need positive feedback, role models, and a space where they are heard, respected, validated, and empowered (Gazzola & Theriault, 2007; Wilson et al., 2016). These factors help build their confidence as counselors.

Chircop Coleiro et al. (2023) conducted a qualitative meta-analysis in which they found that a secure learning environment, a supervisor's assistance with learning, and the supervisor's capacity and desire to recognize and discuss differences in supervision were three components that supervisees identified as helpful in supervision. The researchers identified that these aspects were helpful to the supervisees in developing their skills, creating confidence, self-awareness, and self-acceptance, and in learning how to invest themselves in their therapeutic work. In the meta-analysis, they also found that these experiences in supervision lead to a stronger supervisory alliance. The working alliance is essential for the growth and development of a counselor-in-training (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019; Park et al., 2019; Wilcox et al., 2022b). Furthermore, a strong supervisory alliance fosters a space where supervisees gain confidence, feel safe disclosing important information about client sessions, share feelings of burnout, and discuss any ethical concerns they may have related to clients (Callahan & Love, 2020). It is essential to note that research has revealed that supervisory relationships are influenced by several aspects, with culture being a particularly significant one (Chircop Coleiro et al., 2023; Wilcox et al., 2022b). Some cultural aspects that could be crucial in a

supervisory alliance include the supervisor's awareness, inclusion, competence, or lack thereof, as well as any potential cultural differences between the supervisor and the supervisee. In fact, Wilcox et al., (2022b) found that their participants identified having supervisors who were comfortable with multicultural topics created space to discuss culture. They also identified that having a supervisor who was open, empathetic, humble, nonjudgmental, and self-aware of their own development was supportive of their supervisory experience.

In the same meta-analysis Chircop Coleiro et al. (2023) conducted, they found that the factors obstructing supervisees were a lack of sensitivity, accountability, ethical consideration, and a safe and supportive environment. Further, a supervisor's inability to recognize a supervisee's needs also poses an issue in the supervision experience (Barrett & Barber, 2005). Other factors that participants identified included having a poor supervisory alliance, perceiving time constraints when sharing a case, being scared of negative evaluation from their supervisor, fearing disrespect, and noticing their supervisors' restrictions on sharing their knowledge and skills (Barrett & Barber, 2005). They found that the impact of these unhelpful aspects varied greatly. Many participants in the studies reported negative impacts, including withdrawing during supervision, withholding information from supervisors, experiencing physical and psychological health issues, a negative shift in their view of the profession, and a noticeable impact on their work with clients (Bang & Goodyear, 2014; Wong et al., 2013). However, Chircop Coleiro et al. (2023) found that some participants in certain studies reported experiencing a positive outcome after a negative interaction with a supervisor. One positive impact

they identified was an increased understanding of various aspects of counseling dynamics, such as self-disclosure, therapy dynamics, and clinical issues (Bang & Goodyear, 2014; Chircop Coleiro et al., 2023). The other positive impact the participants identified was an improvement in their professional development (Chircop Coleiro et al., 2023).

Some counselors are left craving more expansive conversations in supervision. For example, Thompson et al. (2012) reported that their participants had a desire for more conversation about balancing client work, managing and coping with stress, preparing for administrative tasks, studying for licensure examinations, and searching for employment. Although the lack of discussion on these topics did not create positive or negative experiences, it supports the notion that novice counselors heavily rely on supervisors and clinical supervision to learn about a broad range of topics (Lohani & Sharma, 2023).

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Counselors' Experiences in Supervision

BIPOC experience a disproportionate level of power differentials, and they commonly encounter interactions with others during which they feel inferior, such as experiencing microaggressions, discrimination, and other marginalizing comments (Basma et al., 2021; Constantine & Sue, 2007; Singh-Pillay & Cartwright, 2019). These sorts of experiences during supervision can have negative impacts on the supervisees, but, sadly, are not uncommon(Basma et al., 2021; Callahan & Love, 2020; Constantine & Sue, 2006, 2007). Many helping professions lack explicit regulations that protect BIPOC professionals from discrimination (Howard et al., 2023). Howard et al. (2023) conducted a systematic review of regulatory frameworks across various professions and found that

discrimination in clinical supervision is present in several helping professions. They called for social work regulatory boards to explicitly outline statutory regulations to help protect BIPOC social work supervisees from discrimination in clinical supervision.

Power differentials naturally exist in social interaction, and in supervision, there is an implied hierarchical dynamic due to the supervisor's level of experience and evaluative position (ACA, 2014; Hanks & Hill, 2015; Jain & Aggarwal, 2020; Murphy & Wright, 2005). Due to the complexity and fluctuation of power in relationships, maintaining awareness and attunement to the impact of these factors becomes imperative in a supervisory relationship for both supervisors and supervisees (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019; Jain & Aggarwal, 2020; Kissil et al., 2013; Wilson et al., 2016). In a cross-cultural supervision relationship, the intersectionality of the supervisee's cultural identities influences the power differential in the relationship (Biever et al., 2002; Castaño et al., 2007; Delgado-Romero et al., 2018; Hanks & Hill, 2015; Ho & O'donovan, 2018; Jain & Aggarwal, 2020). The power differential is partially because relational behavior is based on culture and cultural norms; it inevitably impacts cross-cultural clinical supervision (Bang & Goodyear, 2014; Bang & Park, 2009; Castaño et al., 2007; Estrada et al., 2018; Palomares, 1971; Son & Ellis, 2013; Wong et al., 2013). Further, although a supervisor may be aware of cultural differences, they may still see the mainstream culture as the baseline or standard for practice (Constantine & Sue, 2007; Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2017; Jain & Aggarwal, 2020; Wong et al., 2013).

Given the significant impact that supervisors' behavior and teachings have on their supervisees, it is essential for them to be aware of their own cultural biases and

possess the necessary knowledge of their supervisees' cultures to provide culturally relevant clinical supervision (Ellis et al., 2015; Hanks & Hill, 2015; Lee, 2018). A supervisor's awareness and attunement to their cultural biases and power can impact their success in creating a safe and learning-inductive environment for BIPOC supervisees (Ellis et al., 2015; Jain & Aggarwal, 2020). Appropriate awareness of power and marginalization in relationships can foster mindfulness and reflection on multicultural differences in relational dynamics, which are essential in supervisory relationships. Further, cultural inclusion in clinical supervision is imperative for a supervisee's developmental process (Burkard et al., 2016; Wilcox et al., 2022b). Supervisees of all cultural identities have reported that discussing cultural issues and having a culturally competent supervisor increases their supervision alliance and satisfaction (Burkard et al., 2006, 2016; Crockett & Hays, 2015; Kissil et al., 2013; Walker et al., 2007; Wilcox et al., 2022b). Color blindness is not only ineffective for supervision, but it also strains a supervisory relationship (Burkard et al., 2006, 2016).

Assumptions about culture can be unhelpful, and when barriers that cultural minorities experience are either enacted or ignored in supervision, BIPOC supervisees often become uncomfortable (Constantine & Sue, 2007; Wilcox et al., 2022b; Wong et al., 2013). Furthermore, BIPOC supervisees reported feeling scared, stressed, and closed off during supervision when cultural aspects were ignored (Burkard et al., 2016; Jernigan et al., 2010). Ignoring cultural issues during supervision is unhelpful and overlooks the cultural background and identity of a supervisee (Garrison et al., 2022). BIPOC supervisees often feel helpless, anxious, and powerless in front of their supervisors during

negative experiences.; however, due to various cultural values, BIPOC supervisees can struggle with bringing up conflict with their supervisor and are likely to withhold their reactions to conflict or hide the issue from their supervisors altogether (Burkard et al., 2006; Singh-Pillay & Cartwright, 2019; Wilcox et al., 2022b; Wong et al., 2013). Even then, many researchers have found that BIPOC supervisees tend to be the ones to initiate conversations about conflict and ruptures in the supervisory relationship (Bang & Goodyear, 2014; Burkard et al., 2016; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009; Wilcox et al., 2022b). However, the supervisor participants in Nelson et al. (2008) stated that supervisors should be responsible for initiating conversations related to conflict in a supervision relationship. However, research shows that it is not yet in practice.

Underrepresented supervisees have expressed having a fear of their client care being negatively impacted by their supervisor's inability to address and discuss racial issues in supervision (Burkard et al., 2016). Supervisees want to shield their clients from harm when their supervisor ignores cultural issues by not discussing those cases, which would cause issues with the quality of care provided to minority clients due to the lack of support they receive (Constantine & Sue, 2007). Wilcox et al. (2022b) found that discussing culture in clinical supervision impacts the integrality of a supervisee's developmental process, and it improves a counselor's clinical outcomes and ability to provide multiculturally competent care (Jernigan et al., 2010; Soheilian et al., 2014; Tohidian & Quek, 2017). Additionally, the interpersonal relationship between a supervisee and a supervisor, as well as the supervisee's perception of their supervisor’s cultural competence, influences the effectiveness of supervision in facilitating the

supervisee's development (Fuertes, 2004; Kissil et al., 2013; Soheilian et al., 2014). Their supervisory working alliance impacts a counselor trainee's ability to provide appropriate clinical care to clients (Park et al., 2019). Discussing cultural dynamics related to visually distinct cultures (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender) is more common than discussing cultural differences that are not as apparent (e.g., sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, language; Burkard et al., 2009; Soheilian et al., 2014; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009). A lack of discussion about the rest of the client's or supervisee's cultural identities minimizes and ignores the importance that those identities have on them. Cultural responsiveness is not only beneficial for a novice counselor's experience in supervision but also supports their professional development by providing them with tools and examples of how to apply cultural responsiveness in a clinical setting (Burkard et al., 2006; Jain & Aggarwal, 2020; Walker et al., 2007). A supervisor's lack of support and exclusion of culturally relevant clinical interventions led novice counselors to avoid implementing culturally inclusive interventions (Jernigan et al., 2010).

Cross-Cultural Supervision Relationships

Cross-cultural supervision relationships encompass any supervisory dyad in which the supervisor and supervisee have different cultural identities, such as gender, language, race, ethnicity, nationality, or sexual orientation, among others (Burkard et al., 2006; Wong et al., 2013). In these supervisory relationships, respect and trust are essential and must be earned by both the supervisor and the supervisee (M. L. Nelson et al., 2008; Wong et al., 2013). Due to the previously discussed power dynamics in supervision, as well as the intersecting identities of the supervisor and supervisee, there is a need for additional attention to the impact of culture in their supervisory relationship. When a supervisor approaches a culturally diverse supervisee without considering the supervisee's cultural values, it can impact how the supervisee perceives the information and approaches the relationship (Wong et al., 2013). Appreciation and respect for supervisees' cultures improved their experience in cross-cultural supervision (Wong et al., 2013). Further, discussing cultural issues validates the importance and respects the cultural dynamics within the supervisory relationship (Burkard et al., 2006). Culturally responsive supervision, characterized by open and receptive environments, curiosity about cultural issues, and validation, support, and encouragement regarding cultural dynamics, increases confidence and safety within supervision, leading to greater involvement from the supervisee (Burkard et al., 2006, 2016). Supervisees question their competence and skill when they have no support to discuss cultural topics because they assume that discussing the importance of cultural topics in supervision is inappropriate and of no importance (Jernigan et al., 2010; Lee, 2018).

Supervisees experience higher satisfaction in cross-cultural supervision when the supervisor demonstrates cultural competence, and they report feeling isolated when peers or supervisors lack cultural awareness (Seward, 2019; Wong et al., 2013). When white supervisors ignore or inadequately attend to racial issues, it leads to negative evaluative experiences for BIPOC supervisees (Constantine & Sue, 2007; Jernigan et al., 2010). However, discussing racial issues in cross-cultural supervision in an appropriate manner positively impacts both BIPOC and White supervisees in supervision and with clients (Burkard et al., 2006, 2009; Constantine & Sue, 2007). Microaggressions are present in supervision(Constantine & Sue, 2007). Statements can be perceived as microaggressions in a context where cultural values are not considered (Constantine & Sue, 2007; Walker et al., 2007). Some of the ways microaggressions manifest in supervision include supervisors blaming BIPOC supervisees or clients for issues, making stereotypical assumptions about culture, and making recommendations that overlook the cultural values or systemic oppression of the supervisee or their client (Constantine & Sue, 2007). Interpersonal relationships in cross-cultural supervision incorporate the values of a BIPOC supervisee, making it easier for them to trust their supervisor (Fuertes, 2004). Garrison et al. (2022) found that international students valued when their supervisors provided emotional support, modeled ways of implementing techniques, and were creative with their approach.

Comparable to Latine bilingual counseling supervisees, international counseling supervisees in the United States experience issues related to language barriers and professional identity development when their supervisors do not provide adequate

supervision (Castaño et al., 2007; Garrison et al., 2022; Lee, 2018; K. W. Nelson & Jackson, 2003; Trepal et al., 2014, 2019). Lee (2018) explored the dynamics of cross-cultural supervision, with a focus on international students. They found that international supervisees experience language barriers, isolation, and cultural and systemic barriers. They stated that when supervisors prioritize Western views, it negatively impacts their development, which can be detrimental to the counselor's professional identity development and the profession's advancement, as international supervisees are likely to become leaders when expanding the profession in their native countries. Similarly, Mexican American counselors strive to be leaders and role models for younger generations. When their development is stunted, it affects their potential impact on their community, the resources available to the community, and the counseling profession's diversity (Burkard et al., 2006; Campa, 2010; Easley et al., 2012; Espino, 2016; Fuentes Majors, 2022; Garcia, 2020; Vega, 2016; Wong et al., 2013). Furthermore, if an international supervisee speaks English as a second language, they benefit from discussing issues or negative experiences from their sessions that stem from a language barrier, without overemphasizing correct language use, as this approach ignores the supervisee's strengths as a clinician and pushes for language assimilation (Garrison et al., 2022).

Language and Latine Counselors

Language plays a significant role in the counseling process; however, it is not a cultural factor that is frequently discussed or addressed in clinical supervision (Clauss, 1998; Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002; Soheilian et al., 2014). Bilingual counselors

bring their two selves, personal and professional, into a Spanish session as the two need to fuse in order for them to use their professionally learned skills and their childhood language (Biever et al., 2002; Castaño et al., 2007; Clauss, 1998). However, the lack of adequate training and supervision available to novice bilingual counselors affects their development and ability to provide quality care. No formal training is available for bilingual counseling students who want to provide bilingual counseling services (Trepal et al., 2014). Often, Spanish-speaking therapists are expected to provide counseling services in Spanish without receiving training or support from supervision or other Spanish-speaking, trained professionals to consult with (Castaño et al., 2007). New counselors are being asked to provide counseling services in Spanish. However, counseling programs are not testing Spanish-speaking students for their language competency before allowing them to provide services in Spanish (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018; Interiano-Shiverdecker et al., 2021). Universities do not prepare or support trainees for language or communication issues that may arise during sessions, and few resources are available for Spanish-speaking therapists to deliver bilingual services as professionals (Biever et al., 2002; Ho & O'donovan, 2018). Insufficient training, support, or resources for bilingual counselors can pose an ethical concern because they may be practicing outside their scope or providing inadequate care (ACA, 2014, A.4.a., C.2.a., C.2.c., C.2.d.; Interiano-Shiverdecker et al., 2021; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009). Further, it can harm the client, not to mention the counselors' professional development. It is common for novice counselors who are bilingual to be hired at an agency and to be expected to provide counseling services in Spanish and to perform duties for the agency to bridge the

communication gap between the client and the agency (Castaño et al., 2007; Engstrom & Min, 2004; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009). These additional tasks cause strain and burnout for the young professionals (Biever et al., 2002; Castaño et al., 2007; Delgado-Romero et al., 2018; Fuertes, 2004; Ho & O'donovan, 2018; K. W. Nelson & Jackson, 2003; N. Thacker & Barrio Minton, 2021; Trepal et al., 2014).

It is imperative that bilingual counselor supervisees can discuss their work with Spanish-speaking clients since a shift in language may result in the client blurring the professional boundaries of a counseling relationship (Clauss, 1998). Furthermore, many native Spanish speakers prefer to express their emotional experiences in Spanish (Biever et al., 2002; Engstrom & Min, 2004). However, most American-trained counselors are taught to use their counseling skills in English (Biever et al., 2002; Clauss, 1998); therefore, they are more comfortable providing counseling in English, creating a discrepancy in their knowledge and language use when in session with a Spanish speaker (Biever et al., 2002). When bilingual counselor trainees lack confidence or comfort with their Spanish use in a counseling setting, they become more focused on achieving correct pronunciation and word use than on providing effective counseling interventions to their clients (Biever et al., 2002; Castaño et al., 2007; Estrada et al., 2018). When Spanish-speaking therapists struggle to find the appropriate word during a session, they employ alternative strategies to convey their intended meaning (Estrada et al., 2018). Estrada et al. (2018) found that their native Spanish-speaking participants who had formal Spanish training in clinical terminology were significantly more comfortable using the language in therapy compared to native Spanish speakers who had no formal training.

Verdinelli and Biever (2009) suggest that bilingual counselors should only be allowed or required to provide services in Spanish with the appropriate supervision, support, and credit for their work. Nevertheless, very few supervisors possess the expertise to train and supervise novice counselors in becoming competent bilingual counselors (Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002). Supervising a bilingual counselor trainee involves modeling how to approach a client, demonstrating flexibility in applying theory, and adapting interventions (Fuertes, 2004). Furthermore, supervisees working with linguistically diverse clients require case conceptualizations that incorporate discussions about cultural dynamics. Many times, bilingual supervisees lack the opportunity for live supervision, as their supervisors do not understand their clients' language, and typically, the supervisee is required to translate the session (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009). Translating a session adds the burden of producing a transcription or translation and tasks the supervisee with additional work (Biever et al., 2002; Castaño et al., 2007; Delgado-Romero et al., 2018).

Furthermore, this translation produced by the supervisee is their interpretation of the client's words, which already shifts what their supervisor will understand, not to mention the supervisee's proficiency in Spanish (Biever et al., 2002; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009). The increased accessibility of bilingual supervisors enables bilingual counselors to receive additional support, not only with their clinical and theoretical skills, but also with their cultural knowledge and language difficulties when working with Spanish-speaking clients (Trepal et al., 2014). Participants in Castaño et al.'s (2007) study emphasized the need for bilingual and bicultural supervisors who can provide adequate support for

bilingual supervisees, training courses regarding providing Spanish services, and access to consultation with bilingual colleagues (Castaño et al., 2007).

The literature indicates that counselors often lack sufficient training to be effective and competent bilingual counselors (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018; Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002; Trepal et al., 2014), leaving therapists to crave access to formal training opportunities in Spanish (Estrada et al., 2018). A counselor's inability to provide a wide variety of interventions impacts the professional development of the counselor, and the quality of care that Spanish-speaking counseling clients receive—even experienced counselors who feel confident in providing services in Spanish report worrying about their use of interventions and theory (Castaño et al., 2007). Spanish-speaking counselors also encounter issues with assessment tools not being available in Spanish or with the lack of consideration for cultural factors in these tools (Castaño et al., 2007). Counselors should be provided supervision and training on assessing bilingual clients when they are expected to use assessment tools (Verdinelli & Biever, 2009).

Professional Identity Development

Professional identity development is a dynamic and evolving process that typically starts when entering a training program and spans over the lifetime of a professional (Dollarhide et al., 2013; Dong et al., 2018; Gibson et al., 2010; Granello, 2010). The CACREP Standards (2024) are in place to assist counseling programs in educating counselors-in-training so that they graduate with "a strong professional counselor identity" (p. 1). A person's professional identity is said to involve three key factors: self-identification as a professional, integrating their personal worldview with

their professional training, and incorporating themselves within the professional community (Calley & Hawley, 2008; Dollarhide et al., 2013; Gibson et al., 2010). Gibson et al. (2010) defined professional identity development as "the successful integration of personal attributes and professional training in the context of a professional community" (p. 23-24).

Professional identity development is a process that is equally intrapersonal and interpersonal (Dollarhide et al., 2013; Gibson et al., 2010). Internally, the counselor must amalgamate their personal values, beliefs, and culture with the professionally acquired knowledge, skills, ethics, and decision-making processes. Further, they must gain confidence, autonomy, and a sense of professional status (Nelson & Jackson, 2003). Interpersonally, supervisors and other members of the professional community provide the counselor feedback about their integration and approach to the field (Dollarhide et al., 2013). When seeking mentorship, shared identities become significant in young professionals (Fuentes Majors, 2022; N. E. Thacker et al., 2021). External validation is a crucial part of professional identity development, and it can help combat self-criticism, which is detrimental to this process (Dong et al., 2018).

A study conducted by Ahuja et al. (2019) found that coping with emotions related to discrepancies between idealized views of professional identities and lived experiences was crucial for the professional identity development of junior architects. This is echoed in a study done by Dong et al. (2018), which found that professional identity development involves knowledge, skills, and affective development. Further, the interaction between affect and professional identity development is also described by

Gibson et al. (2010) and Thacker et al. (2021). They explained that external validation supports professional identity development, and when BIPOC counselors experience marginalization in the field, their professional identity development process is stunted. Support, validation, and professional relationships among counselors are central to BIPOC counselors' growth in the counseling profession and the quality of care their counseling clients receive (Dollarhide et al., 2013; Dong et al., 2018; Fuentes Majors, 2022; Gibson et al., 2010; K. W. Nelson & Jackson, 2003; Wong et al., 2013).

Professional Identity in BIPOC

Professional identity development can be complex for novice professionals, and BIPOC individuals may experience additional hardships (Volpe et al., 2019). Hyun et al. (2023) found that the professional identity development of foreign-born counselor educators is complicated by several factors, including past experiences in their home country, cultural identities, language, resilience, and the structures of the field. Another barrier described by participants in Hipolito-Delgado et al.'s (2017) study was that sometimes their educational training courses seemed tailored toward White students' identity awareness and development rather than everyone's advancement.

Culturally diverse counselors describe their cultural backgrounds as both an advantage and a disadvantage (Fuentes Majors, 2022; Hyun et al., 2023; N. Thacker & Barrio Minton, 2021; N. E. Thacker et al., 2021). The power differentials that exist in the professional community impact BIPOC counselors' confidence to speak up for themselves out of fear, so they revert to being conservative in order to be accepted (N. E. Thacker et al., 2021). Some counselor educators describe the need to be authentic and

congruent by discussing topics that are true to who they are; yet they often cannot research and publish about the topics that are important to them until they have achieved tenure (N. E. Thacker et al., 2021). Fear of losing their position in academia prevents them from authentically engaging in their profession, hindering their professional identity development by preventing them from integrating themselves into their profession (Dollarhide et al., 2013; Gibson et al., 2010).

It is not uncommon for BIPOC counseling students to experience discrimination, and this poses a severe issue to their professional development (Basma et al., 2021). Feeling comfortable and safe supports authentic expression of identity in a professional setting, but many times, BIPOC counselors have to negotiate or suppress parts of their personal identities (Dollarhide et al., 2013; Garcia, 2020; Gibson et al., 2010; N. E. Thacker et al., 2021). These situations do not allow them to create and develop an authentic professional identity (Dollarhide et al., 2013; Gibson et al., 2010; N. E. Thacker et al., 2021). Self-acceptance is critical for professional identity development, yet research continues to find that BIPOC counselors must suppress or conceal aspects of their identities to fit into the field (Dong et al., 2018; K. W. Nelson & Jackson, 2003; N. E. Thacker et al., 2021). The goal of professional identity development is to integrate and successfully blend the personal and professional aspects, and based on research, it appears that many BIPOC counselors are often prevented from fully incorporating their identities.

Professional Identity Development in Latine Counselors

Nelson and Jackson (2003) found that Hispanic students experience “unique cultural issues in addition to” the issues faced by their non-Hispanic peers (Chamorro, 2004). Some of those distinct factors revolve around the Latine culture's impact on their close identification with their cultural identities, joining critical aspects of their culture into their professional worldview, merging their professional and personal ethics (Nelson & Jackson, 2003), and identity negotiation (N. Thacker & Barrio Minton, 2021; N. E. Thacker et al., 2021). Mexican American counselors need to learn to define counseling within their cultural identity, and they must also combat the perceptions that family, friends, and Hispanic individuals in general have of the counseling field (Dollarhide et al., 2013; K. W. Nelson & Jackson, 2003). Fuentes Major (2022) found that for Mexican American counselors-in-training, integrating their cultural identity improved their professional identity and promoted a deeper connection with their clients. Moreover, similar to foreign-born counselor educators, Mexican American counselors report experiencing a sense of privilege to be a counselor in training (Fuentes Majors, 2022; Hyun et al., 2023). In their study, Nelson and Jackson (2003) reported that many of their participants identified self-sacrifice, as well as emotional and financial costs, as part of becoming a counseling professional. This all impacts their professional identity development process and the work they do to mesh their personal and professional identities.

One of the critical factors in the professional development process is self-identifying as a professional (Calley & Hawley, 2008; Dollarhide et al., 2013; Gibson et

al., 2010). Mexican American counselors have reported that having a community of Hispanic counselors supported them in identifying themselves as professionals in the field of counseling. However, there is a notable lack of representation in the field, which can evoke feelings of isolation and loneliness (Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2017; N. E. Thacker et al., 2021). At times, those feelings of isolation or loneliness can be exacerbated by expectations that are placed on some young novice Latine professionals. Chamorro (2004) explains that it is more common for Latine professionals to be given roles or positions with the responsibilities of an expert in culture compared to their White counterparts (Cavazos Jr. et al., 2009). These responsibilities can create additional anxiety and isolation since they go against what the Latine culture teaches: to respect elders and follow what they teach without questioning it. Nevertheless, relationships are extremely valuable and meaningful to Latine counselors in training and their professional development, complicating their workplace experience (Garcia, 2020; K. W. Nelson & Jackson, 2003; N. E. Thacker et al., 2021).

Activism and social justice are integral components of professional identity and responsibility for counselors, and are essential areas that first-generation Mexican American bilingual counselors need to develop (ACA, 2014). The ACA *Code of Ethics* states that counselors are responsible for advocating and seeking social justice for clients and the community; some counselors may choose to advance their professional identity by becoming counselor educators and advocating for social justice from that position (American Counseling Association, 2014; Calley & Hawley, 2008; Garcia, 2020; N. R. Hill, 2009; N. E. Thacker et al., 2021). Latine counselors who have become counselor

educations have described how they used their positions as counselor educators to diversify the profession and support Latine counselors in training (Garcia, 2020). Participants in Garcia's (2020) study shared that dedicating time to recruiting Latino students, mentoring, writing, and teaching was their way of advocating for the Latine community. However, due to a lack of support, inclusion, or sense of belonging once they have entered the program, Latine counseling students may contemplate quitting their training programs (Garcia, 2020; Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2017; Ramos et al., 2020). These feelings are also worsened by Latine students experiencing microaggressions and not seeing cultural representation in the field (Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2017; N. E. Thacker et al., 2021). Bilingual Mexican American licensed counselors need bilingual counselor educators who are trained to support them in becoming competent bilingual counselors and support them in finding ways to advocate and seek social justice.

Environmental factors are not conducive to genuine and complete expression of identities for minority counselor educators, plus adverse experiences in a professional setting impact minority counselors' personalities (N. E. Thacker et al., 2021). Thacker et al. (2021) found that their minority counselors used the intersection of their marginalized identities and power to empower the expression of some of their other identities. Most current research fails to analyze and incorporate the impact that cultural identities have on professional identity development, leaving counselor educators unaware of how best to support Mexican American counselors during their supervised practice (Volpe et al., 2019).

Latine

Latine parents are migrating to the United States to give their children better opportunities. Many of them perceive education as the ticket to growth and a better life, so they push for their children to get the best education, and at times, they have the hope or expectation for their children to receive a higher education (Chavira et al., 2016; Espino, 2016; N. E. Hill & Torres, 2010; Langenkamp, 2019). It is common for first-generation Latinos to hear stories about their parents' struggles, negative experiences at work, adversity, and sacrifices they have had to make throughout their lives. Parents often use their stories to motivate their children to strive for growth and work toward a better lifestyle (Hagelskamp et al., 2010; Langenkamp, 2019).

About 18.4% of Latine individuals and about 13.95% of Mexican Americans in the United States have a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021), which means it is likely that most Latine students are first-generation students and like the experiences of other first-generation students, this adds to the barriers they may experience. Being a first-generation college student or professional leads to experiences of being isolated, out of place, lost in navigating the processes, and unsafe in their educational settings (Garcia, 2020; Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2017; Ramos et al., 2020). They also feel disconnected from their family systems as they navigate a process most people in their family have not lived (Ramos et al., 2020). Despite their families not understanding the educational process and experience, many Latino students identify family and friends as a protective factor during their educational programs (Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2017; K. W. Nelson & Jackson, 2003).

Latine students and professionals feel motivated to push through the barriers, struggles, and desire to quit to help pave the way for other individuals in their community (Garcia, 2020; Ramos et al., 2020). However, Latine individuals not only use their persistence in an educational setting or for personal goals; they also take the same motivation and push back social, educational, and political structures (Ramos et al., 2020).

Mexican Americans

There is a death of research on Mexican Americans. In the literature, there are a few research articles on some of their motivating factors. Mexican American counselors have discussed the significance of their motivation in helping them overcome barriers, sacrifices, loneliness, isolation, and discomfort while becoming a counselor (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018; Espino, 2016; Fuentes Majors, 2022; K. W. Nelson & Jackson, 2003; N. E. Thacker et al., 2021). Some of the factors that researchers have found motivate Mexican Americans are advocating for and bettering their community, bringing respect to their families, and becoming role models for younger generations in their families and communities (Campa, 2010; Easley et al., 2012; Espino, 2016; Fuentes Majors, 2022; Garcia, 2020; N. E. Hill & Torres, 2010; Vega, 2016). Further, a study found that Mexican American students were driven by their desire to pay back what their parents have sacrificed for them (Easley et al., 2012). Their desire to pay back motivated them to pursue higher education and persist when barriers were hard to overcome. They are also proud to represent their culture in a professional setting and feel privileged to be able to provide resources for the Latine community (Fuentes Majors, 2022). So even

when they have to pay a high emotional and financial price for their achievement, they do so to help increase the representation of the Latine community in professional settings (Easley et al., 2012; K. W. Nelson & Jackson, 2003).

Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature on clinical supervision, language issues, professional identity development, and the Latine community. This literature review demonstrated that Mexican American counselors are experiencing situations that are not well understood. This study aimed to gain a deeper awareness of the experience of licensed Mexican American counselors and how the counseling field can support them. Chapter 3 will thoroughly cover the methodology and research design that were used in this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry was to explore and understand the stories of first-generation Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors during supervised licensure. Understanding their stories could help counseling professionals support and guide first-generation Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors. In this chapter, I discuss the research design, the role of the researcher, the methodology, the sampling strategy, and issues of trustworthiness.

Research Design and Rationale

The research question for the study is: What are the narratives of first-generation Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors during supervised licensure? I used a qualitative approach that focuses on understanding the experiences of first-generation Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors during their supervised practice using a constructivist framework (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). This approach supported the researcher in understanding the views, interpretations, and meaning-making of individuals who have gone through or are currently in their supervised licensure (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Qualitative research emphasizes the context of the situation and the interpretation of participants' perspectives, providing researchers with a deep and rich understanding of an experience (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). This research approach enables scholars to observe and learn about the lived experiences and contexts of people's lives who have experienced a particular event or set of circumstances. The intersectionality of the participants'

identities and experiences also have room to be explored and understood (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Furthermore, a qualitative design enables researchers to identify themes and patterns within participants' experiences, meaning-making, and context (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

I chose to use narrative inquiry for this study because it focuses on understanding the participants' story, the meaning of life events, and perspectives of the collective impacts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Fraser, 2004; Patton, 2015; Polkinghorne, 2007). Further, this approach allows the researcher to focus on capturing the participants' experiences by listening to what they lived through and how they told their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Daiute, 2014). Clandinin and Connelly (2004) described that narrative inquiry incorporates the past, present, and future of the experience, the internal impact the experience created, and the environment or context of the experience. Using these three dimensions in narrative inquiry supported me in understanding and exploring the experiences of first-generation Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors through their supervised licensure experiences.

Through their story, the participants share elements, experiences, and feelings that the researcher can interpret and explain (Daiute, 2014; Foxall et al., 2021). However, Foxall et al. (2021) argued that a limitation of narrative research is the participants' memory of the event. They explain that human memories are fallible, selective, and can change over time. This can create a problem with the trustworthiness of the research. Although there is no way to prove that what the participant remembers is true, the goal of the approach is not to find historical truth but to understand the participants' view of their

experience (Daiute, 2014; Fraser, 2004; Polkinghorne, 2007). Narrative inquiry was the most appropriate approach for this study because it facilitates for deep exploration and analysis of the participants' intersecting identities, cultures, values, and language, which are influential factors in a person's story (Fraser, 2004).

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher was to recruit participants, conduct interviews, and analyze the data collected from them. It is common for a researcher in qualitative methodologies to be heavily involved in the research process because they are the primary tool of inquiry, and they are doing research alongside the participants (Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). I utilized reflexive journaling to maintain an ongoing and active consciousness of my biases, positionality, and identity throughout the research process to identify where my experience may influence my interpretation of the study findings (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Clandinin and Connelly (2004) describe that in narrative research, the researcher's experience is an important aspect of the research, and they are not expected to be neutral parties in the process. However, maintaining awareness, I intentionally examined how my view, biases, or countertransference might have impacted my interpretation of the participants' stories (American Counseling Association, 2014). Furthermore, I took detailed notes during the data collection process, which allowed me to record any immediate reactions or biases that surfaced.

Another consideration is my positionality. As a first-generation Mexican American marriage and family therapist, I have gone through the supervised licensure process. I have also worked with counseling clients who are first-generation Mexican

American professionals, describing issues and difficulties they face in their careers. As a doctoral student, I have witnessed how first-generation Latine counseling trainees encounter various issues and struggle to find appropriate support. These experiences have shaped my interest in helping first-generation Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors be better understood. However, my identification with the intended population for this study could result in some countertransference. Using a reflexive journal helped me to be aware of my biases and potential countertransference at every stage of the research process. Additionally, my personal experience also allowed for a deeper understanding and connection with the participant, facilitating building rapport and increasing their comfort with sharing their story (Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The target population for this study was first-generation Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors. To be considered for the study, a person needed to self-identify as Mexican American and must have been born in the United States with at least one of their biological parents being born in Mexico. They must possess a state counseling license and must provide bilingual counseling services. The individual could possess an associate license and be under supervision for at least one year or have a license to practice independently. Individuals needed to be 18 years old or older to participate. Income was not considered for participation in this study. Participants who did not meet all the inclusion criteria were excluded from participating in the study.

I recruited participants using both purposive and snowball sampling methods. The most appropriate sampling procedure was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative research because it allows researchers to select participants who can provide rich and descriptive data about the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). For this study, this sampling method facilitated the sharing of stories from first-generation Mexican American licensed counselors during their supervised licensure.

Using social media, I disseminated a flyer with information about the study, such as the participant selection requirements, how to contact me to participate, and the time commitment. Each potential participant was sent a survey questionnaire (see Appendix A) to determine whether they met the criteria for participation in the study. If potential participants did not meet the inclusion and exclusion criteria, they were excluded from participating in the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Data saturation is achieved once the data collected are not likely to yield new themes (Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Patton, 2015). Guest et al. (2006) found that after coding 12 interviews, they identified 97% of their codes, but after six interviews, they had established 94% of their codes. However, Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated that no more than 10 participants are necessary for a narrative inquiry. Therefore, the ideal sample for this study was six to eight participants to reach saturation. There were a total of eight participants in this study.

Instrumentation

For this study, participants' stories were collected through semi-structured one-on-one interviews, which included probing questions and an interview guide developed by the researcher (see Appendix B). The gaps in the literature, theoretical framework, and my professional experiences guided the development of the interview questions, which were designed to allow participants to provide an in-depth recount of their story. Probing questions were used as time permitted to ask for clarification and additional details of the participants' unique experiences. My committee also reviewed and approved the interview guide to ensure the alignment between the interview questions, the theoretical framework, and the research question.

In qualitative research, semi-structured interviews are commonly used as the main data collection tool, allowing the participants to elaborate on their views and experiences (Burkholder et al., 2020; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Further, individual interviews were used as the primary data collection strategy in most of the research in the literature review. Narrative inquirers use interviews to collect rich data from the participants about their stories and the meaning they have attached to them (Babbie, 2017; Fraser, 2004). Each participant participated in one virtual interview, lasting up to two hours, where they shared their experience and relayed their story thoroughly.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

For this study, data were collected from eight first-generation Mexican American bilingual, licensed counselors, who were selected using purposive sampling. When not enough participants were recruited because they did not meet the inclusion and exclusion

criteria, I used snowball sampling and adjusted the participant criteria to recruit additional participants. After a potential participant expressed interest in the study, they were sent a criteria questionnaire, which included questions to determine if they met the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Participants who met the criteria were then emailed the informed consent, which they needed to agree to before scheduling an interview. Each participant completed one virtual semi-structured interview that lasted up to two hours. The interviews were conducted on Zoom, recorded, and saved to the cloud for transcription.

To exit the study, I thanked the participants for sharing their stories and gave them one last opportunity to add any additional information they wished to provide. I then informed them that they would receive a summary after the first stage of data analysis, which they could review, revise, add to, edit, or confirm as needed to ensure my interpretation of their story was accurate.

Data Analysis Plan

The intent behind narrative data analysis is to extract the meaning and social significance of the stories collected (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Hays & Wood, 2011). The participants' cultural influences were at the forefront of the analysis throughout the various stages, ensuring the context of their story and the theoretical framework were integrated into this process (Fraser, 2004). Clandinin and Connelly (2004) explained that narrative data analysis is a fluid process that continuously changes as the raw data is reviewed and re-reviewed, as new ideas, themes, or patterns emerge throughout the process (p. 133). With that in mind, the data analysis process adhered to the following

guidelines, which were based on Fraser's (2004) and Braun and Clark's (2006) work: (1) immersing the self in the stories, (2) generating codes, (3) identifying themes, (4) scanning domains of experience, and (5) defining the meaning of themes.

After an interview, I reviewed the transcriptions provided by Zoom for accuracy and made any necessary edits. I then immersed myself in the data. I did this by listening to the interviews to capture the participants' emotions, tone, silences, and other nonverbal cues. I also focused on the interview process and *how* the participants shared their stories. Capturing emotions supports the identification of the meaning that participants attribute to their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Fraser, 2004 Hays & Wood, 2011). I read the transcript and noted any initial impressions, words, and meanings that stood out (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fraser, 2004; Hays & Wood, 2011).

The next phase involved generating codes by scanning the transcripts and notes from the previous step for any words, expressed meanings, ideas, and patterns that were repeated throughout the interviews. Each interview was given equal attention during the coding process to identify the key features of the story (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data that stood out was coded using words or phrases that describe the idea (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Fraser, 2004; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The texts were coded using as many codes as necessary, and during this stage, data were uncoded and recoded as necessary (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, coding may be involved throughout the entire data analysis process.

For the third phase, the codes were analyzed and grouped into broader themes (Braun & Clark, 2006). Exploring the relationship between the codes helped identify

themes and subthemes in the data, capturing the essence of the meaning portrayed in the participants' stories. The identified themes were then reviewed and adjusted as needed depending on the coherence and sustainability of the codes and excerpts for each identified theme (Braun & Clark, 2006). If any additional themes surfaced during the process, they were incorporated, and this stage ended when changes or additions to themes added no substantial meaning to the data interpretation.

The fourth phase involved scanning the themes in each interview and discovering the different domains of experience (Fraser, 2004). This process focused on exploring the participants' narratives for intrapersonal, interpersonal, cultural, and social aspects that they may have noted while sharing their stories.

The final phase was defining the meaning of the themes. This phase aimed to name the essence of each theme and its relationship to the research question (Braun & Clark, 2006). The final themes do not overlap significantly. Instead, each theme told a piece of the overall narrative and worked together to capture the meaning and coherently tell the story that emerged from the data collected.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

The credibility of a study relates to the alignment of all the components. To establish the credibility of this project, my dissertation committee assessed the alignment of the research method, research question, sampling, data collection, and data analysis. Any feedback on misalignment was considered, and any necessary adjustments were made. Other strategies I employed to enhance credibility included reflexive journaling,

member checks, presenting thick descriptions, and debriefs with a committee member (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Transferability

Thick descriptions are one of the main tactics used for transferability (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). This entails providing enough details about the study, including the background, methods, participant selection and restrictions, data collection strategies and settings, and verbatim quotes from the narratives. This information will allow readers and other scholars to better understand the context of this study and make comparisons to other situations.

Dependability

The dependability of a study represents the consistency of the data and its ability to answer the research question (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Various data collection and analysis approaches were considered before selecting the one that best aligned with the research question. I have provided rationales and descriptions for my chosen design, data collection, and analysis.

Confirmability

The confirmability of a study describes the relevance of bias in the study and the systems used to prevent interference (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). I used reflexive journaling to help limit the interference of my bias on the results. I also used member checks to increase the confirmability of the data. With member checks, the participants had the opportunity to confirm, revise, and add details of their story that may be incorrect or missing (Burkholder et al., 2020; Clandinin & Connelly, 2004).

Ethical Procedures

I completed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) application and waited for it to be approved before commencing participant recruitment. The IRB approval number is 12-10-24-1044345. Participants were reminded that participation is voluntary and they were free to terminate their participation at any point. Interested participants filled out the participant criteria survey. If they met the criteria, they were sent the informed consent form and had to agree to participate before scheduling an interview. During the interview, the participants' decisions to answer or to skip questions were respected by not asking additional probing questions and moving on to the next question in the interview guide (ACA, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This approach enabled me to establish respect, consideration, and rapport with the participant, emphasizing that I was conducting the research study with them, not on them (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

The American Counseling Association *Code of Ethics* (2014) dictates that research participant information should be kept confidential. Therefore, to ensure the anonymity of the participants, I used pseudonyms, only the researcher reviewed the raw data, and all identifying data was removed (ACA, 2014; Bach, 2008; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Vogt et al., 2012). The data collected from the interviews will be kept confidential in a password-protected file on a password-protected computer. The electronic data will be permanently deleted 5 years after the completion of the research.

Summary

In this chapter, I have explained the research design and its rationale. I reviewed my positionality, the issues of trustworthiness, and ethical considerations. Furthermore, I

have outlined the participation requirements, sampling procedures, data collection methods, data analysis plan, and issues related to trustworthiness.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This study aimed to explore the narratives of first-generation Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors during their supervised licensure. Their stories contributed to the counseling and counseling education fields' understanding of the experiences of first-generation Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors during supervised licensure, which helped identify ways counselors, mental health providers, clinical supervisors, and counselor educators can better support them during this part of their career. The study answered the following research question: What are the narratives of first-generation Mexican American bilingual counselors during supervised licensure? This chapter presents the study's findings organized into themes and subthemes. Each theme is defined, supported with participant quotes, and analyzed through the lens of Borderlands Theory. Furthermore, I discussed the setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, and evidence of trustworthiness.

Setting

At the time the interviews were conducted, political and social issues related to anti-immigrant rhetoric were predominant. The significant increase in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids and officer presence (Kaste, 2025; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2025), "No Kings" movement (Castellanos, 2025; Pisani & Barrett, 2025), and national political policies may have influenced the participants' decision to participate, their view of their story, and the environment. All participants

were reminded of confidentiality and provided time to ask questions regarding informed consent at the start of their virtual interviews.

Demographics

Eight first-generation Mexican American, bilingual, licensed counselors participated in the study, comprising six women and two men. Three participants reported they were born in Mexico and moved to the United States at a young age. All eight participants identify as Mexican American; this was a requirement for study participation. Four participants live in the Midwest, and the other four live in the western United States. Two of the eight participants hold associate licenses and are under supervision, while the other six have been fully licensed for at least 1 year.

Data Collection

Data collection began in January 2025. The study's recruitment flyer was distributed on social media and to colleagues. However, due to recruitment issues, I adjusted the criteria twice: to clarify one existing criterion and to broaden the scope of another. I submitted the changes to the IRB for approval; once approved, the new recruitment flyer was distributed via social media and to colleagues in my network. Thirty-one people expressed interest in participating and completed the survey assessing their eligibility for participation. Those who were interested but did not meet the criteria were informed via email that they did not meet the participation requirements and could not participate. The persons who met all criteria were emailed the IRB-approved consent form and given the opportunity to ask any questions. Once participants provided consent, their interviews were scheduled. Ten participants were interviewed via a semi-structured

virtual interview, which lasted 48-100 minutes. The participant interviews were conducted via Zoom and recorded, with the recordings saved to the Zoom Cloud for transcription. Two participant interviews were excluded from the data analysis because they did not meet the final participant criteria. One participant was interviewed prior to the change in criteria; she no longer met the updated criteria for participation. The other participant reported at the end of his interview that he did not identify as Mexican American, thereby disqualifying him from participation because he did not fully meet the study's criteria.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began with listening to the participants' interviews while reviewing the transcription produced by Zoom. This was to ensure that the transcript accurately reflected the participants' statements in their interviews. I corrected errors in the transcripts and added any missing segments, including Spanish and Spanglish terms. After the interview transcripts were completed and verified as accurate, I proceeded to the data analysis, which adhered to the following guidelines: (1) immersing the self in the stories, (2) generating codes, (3) identifying themes, (4) scanning domains of experience, and (5) defining the meaning of themes.

Immersing the Self in the Stories

This stage of analysis involved listening to the audio recordings of each interview twice, alongside the transcript, before hand-coding. During this period, the focus remained on tone, emotion, and laughter, which I later used to understand the domains in which these experiences have an impact. I reviewed my interview notes, focusing on

points I identified as unique or significant, including terms related to Borderlands Theory (Anzaldua, 1987).

Generating Codes

On the third listen, the analysis focused on generating codes by highlighting the transcripts and transferring the quotes and assigned codes to an Excel sheet. To ensure I had captured all the relevant codes that told the participant's story, I reviewed the interview one more time. The generated codes included repeated words, information pertinent to the question or theory, and unique information. This process was repeated for all participant interviews, ensuring each interview received equal attention. Once all interviews were initially coded, I reviewed the codes, combining, eliminating, and adjusting any necessary.

Identifying Themes

Identifying themes began after all the codes were clarified and collapsed. At this stage, I reviewed Borderlands Theory (Anzaldua, 1987), the theoretical orientation guiding the study. I used it to understand the stories, organize the codes, and begin to comprehend how the codes fit together to answer the research question. I sorted the codes into distinct categories that co-occurred and then grouped these categories into meaningful themes. I continued to do this until I had greater clarity on the emerging themes, while also noting any significant overlap or redundancy among the themes and between the categories. I explored overlapping categories and themes, adjusting and eliminating them as necessary. I continued this process until the data were organized into distinct themes and subthemes that cohered and conveyed the story the participants told.

Scanning Domains of Experience

At this stage, the analysis focused on identifying the domains of participants' lives affected by their experience during supervised licensure. Fraser (2004) provided example questions to ask oneself when exploring the domains of experience for participants. Some of the questions I asked myself while listening to the interview and reviewing the transcript were: Are there aspects of the stories that highlight intrapersonal experiences that are concealed from others? If there are, what bearing might this have? Which parts of the stories relate to interpersonal relationships and interactions? How do they relate to the other aspects of the stories? Are cultural conventions – or transgressions to cultural conventions – evident? If so, what are the effects? Are social structures – institutionalized or otherwise – present? If so, how do they appear and what is being said about them? The participants reported impacts on their intrapersonal, interpersonal, cultural, and social structures. The effects on their domains will be explained in detail in the results section later in this chapter.

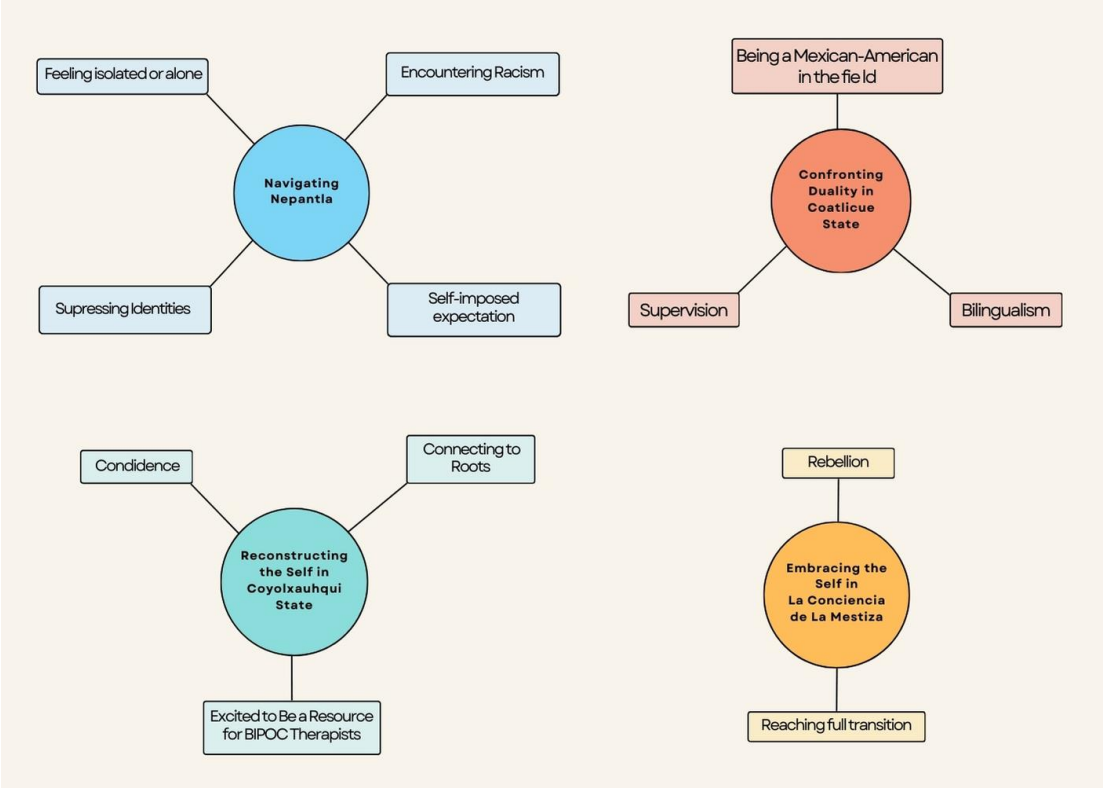
Defining the Meaning of Themes

After understanding how the code and categories fit together and initially naming them, I began exploring how to define and refine the theme names to ensure that they captured the essence of each part of the stories participants shared. Through this process, I observed that the eight participants were at varying stages of the overall process described in the Borderlands Theory (Anzaldua, 1987). Using the four main concepts as the themes would allow me to capture the processes participants reported in their interviews while more fully incorporating the study's theoretical orientation. The themes

and subthemes (see Figure 1) of this study are as follows: Navigating Nepantla (Feeling Isolated, Encountering Racism, Self-Imposed Expectations, and Suppressing Identities), Confronting Duality in Coatlicue State (Supervision, Being Mexican American in the Field, and Bilingualism), Reconstructing the Self in Coyolxauhqui State (Confidence, Excited to Be a Resource for BIPOC Therapists, and Connecting to Roots and Self), and Embracing the Self in La Conciencia de la Mestiza (Rebellion and Reaching Full Transformation).

Figure 1

Themes and Subthemes



To determine which codes and categories fit into each stage of Borderlands Theory (Anzaldua, 1987), I identified the core aspects of each stage. I assigned the categories to the stage that most reflected the participants' described experiences. When a

category appeared to span two stages, I reviewed the quotes to determine whether one stage was more closely aligned or if it was best to split it and assign each part to a different stage.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

The study's credibility was established by carefully assessing the alignment of the research method, research question, sampling, data collection, and data analysis, and by making any necessary adjustments prior to data collection. Additionally, the participants were allowed the opportunity to review, amend, correct, and clarify my interpretation of their interview. They were provided with a summary of the themes and how their story was used in the study's results. They were asked to verify if the interpretation accurately reflected their story and to note any discrepancies and additional insights. Six of the eight participants approved the findings, with no additional feedback or suggested edits. Two participants did not respond.

Transferability

Transferability was achieved by providing thick descriptions of the background, methods, participant selection and restrictions, data collection strategies, and settings. Furthermore, detailed descriptions of the participants' sociocultural identities and verbatim quotes from the narratives were included in the results to enhance transferability. This information will enable readers and other scholars to understand the study's context better and support those interested in replicating it.

Dependability

Dependability was established by carefully selecting data collection and analysis methods that aligned with the study's purpose and answered the research question. My dissertation committee provided feedback on the study's alignment. The dependability was also confirmed by IRB approval of the study's procedures.

Confirmability

To ensure confirmability, I employed triangulation of interview data, my interview notes, and prior research. Reflexive journaling and debriefing with a committee member were also part of my regimen at various stages of data collection and analysis, helping to identify and mitigate bias in these processes. Assumptions and my positionality were explored through journaling to maintain insight into their potential influence on interpretation.

Results

The following research question guided this study: What are the narratives of first-generation Mexican American bilingual counselors during supervised licensure? The participants shared their rich narratives about the barriers, beliefs, triumphs, goals, motivation, and drive throughout their supervised licensure. Some of them shared their experiences since becoming fully licensed. Only one participant had a bilingual supervisor, but her experience was not markedly different from the other participants' accounts. The four final themes and subthemes that emerged were: (1) Navigating Nepantla: Feeling Isolated, Encountering Racism, Self-Imposed Expectations, and Suppressing Identities; (2) Confronting Duality in Coatlicue State: Supervision, Being

Mexican American in the Field, and Bilingualism; (3) Reconstructing the Self in Coyolxauhqui State: Confidence, Excited to Be a Resource for BIPOC Therapists, and Connecting to Roots and Self, and (4) Embracing the Self in La Conciencia de la Mestiza: Rebellion and Reaching Full Transformation which is focus of the following section.

Theme 1: Navigating Nepantla

Navigating Nepantla emerged from the participants describing the beginning of their journey in becoming a counselor, where they noted feeling isolated, suppressing their cultural identities, encountering racism, and having self-imposed expectations. In Borderland Theory, Nepantla is described as "in the middle," a transitional, liminal space through which a person moves. In this space, they are challenged by personal and social expectations that are often at odds with each other. Nepantla is characterized by an awareness, insight, and understanding of one's identities and the constructed social reality that may contradict them. The subthemes of Navigating Nepantla, Feeling Isolated, Encountering Racism, Self-Imposed Expectations, and Suppressing Identities illustrate how participants navigated the instability and challenges of recognizing the dichotomy of expectations imposed on them.

Subtheme 1: Feeling Isolated

This subtheme captures the various ways in which all eight participants experience isolation and loneliness during the process of becoming a counselor. They described it as painful, frightening, disappointing, and as creating additional challenges. For example, Yaotl reported feeling isolated in his graduate program:

> It was because it was very white, like there was a sense of like feeling isolated or not really being understood in in majority classes. …There was a sense of if I bring in the cultural piece, will it be understood, or will it fall flat, or will it be just dismissed? And there was something that felt uncomfortable, if not scary, about feeling dismissed.

Similarly, Metztli noted a lack of Latine and BIPOC representation in her graduate counseling program with both the professors and students, which led to feeling disappointed and underrepresented: "I was like one of 4 or 5 people of, people of Hispanic background, people of color, maybe out of 8." Additionally, she commented on feeling alone at professional events: "I guess I'm doing my part to at least be the beginning of the color representation in this environment." Reminding herself she belonged there, "Oh, you deserve to be here, too."

Building on the field's lack of representation, Amoxtli noted that she observed the underrepresentation of Latine counseling professionals when she began searching for a Latine clinical supervisor at the start of her supervised practice. She stated, "I started to look for a supervisor for my LPC-A, and I had a hard time finding a Hispanic Supervisor. I had like one interview out of, maybe seven that I did, with a Latina LPC-S." Citlalli's experience echoed the same experience: "It felt really isolating, like, yes, I had my mentor. Yes, I had a few people who were supporting me, but at the end of the day, as a Latina, it felt so alone." She described being hopeful that after getting fully licensed, she would find other Latine counselors, but that was not the case, which added to her isolation.

Despite the challenges posed by isolation, some participants reported using it as a motivator to continue their journey and to create the representation they lacked. Citlalli stated, “Having representation really goes far. And I think that's why I'm fighting so hard to be able to be in that position because I noticed, like cuanto hace falta [how much it is needed].” She further explained,

> I want to get a higher degree, so that I could become a supervisor and have that not happen to other Mexican Americans who might have a different identity than being a citizen in the US. And helping them and being a mentor.

Consistent with Citlalli, Xochitl explained that the lack of Latine bilingual counselors was among the reasons she chose to pursue counseling as a career. She stated, “Mental health is very stigmatized and very seen as only crazy people go to therapy, and I wanted to be. I guess, a bridge within the community.” Similarly, Metztli stated that she sought to address a diversity gap she had experienced in her attempts to connect with a therapist. She stated, “If I’m struggling with that, then there's 100,000% chance that everyone else who is of color and doesn't have a therapist has the same background.” Yaotl echoed this sentiment, and added that he wanted to help bridge an accessibility gap by making therapy accessible to Mexicans and all Latines, recalling how, as a teenager, he began to understand ways mental health is and that therapy existed as a resource, but “it felt like it's a thing that's not available or accessible to us, Mexicans.” He shared he was motivated by the idea of “offering something that I wish would been normalized for me as a kiddo.” This desire to heal themselves or their families motivated several participants. They described the isolation or loneliness experienced by a Mexican American individual

within their family and society as a driving force to create a better environment for younger generations. For example, Quetzalli hoped to create a different environment for the next generation in her family, “The whole reason I wanted to become a counselor is to is to help my niece not go through the family dynamics that we went through growing up.” Although the participants had different lived experiences, they all emphasized the crucial role of Latine representation in the counseling field and the expansion of counseling services in Spanish for the Spanish-speaking population.

Additionally, their desire for representation also included the participants’ expressed desire for belongingness with Latine counseling professionals as a response to the isolation they were experiencing. Several participants, including Quetzalli, described that it was difficult to find other Latine counselors to connect with. She stated, “I think we're all looking for each other, and we don't know how to get into contact with each other. … we're like unicorns.” However, Yaotl has a slightly different experience, reporting that he also wanted a connection with Latine therapists or mentors, so he began seeking ways to create a network of bilingual Latine individuals in the field and found it:

> It just feels nice to be a part of because it's other folks that get it. That are in. You know. They wanted to jump in the field because they saw a lack of folks that look like us that understood us.

He also described feeling a sense of belonging once he found that community, saying, “That feels connected. That feels at ease. That feels home. …When I use Spanish with folks that also know Spanish. There is a different level of connection that just feels so good.” Metztli built on this idea, saying that connecting with other BIPOC individuals

allowed her to explore sensitive topics freely, stating, “I feel like we didn't tiptoe around too much.” Quetzalli also shared her experience with having Spanish-speaking colleagues with a sigh of relief and happiness, explaining that they could connect and discuss how they were feeling:

> The few colleagues that I did have that spoke Spanish. I think it was like, Oh, another brown person, cool. Hi! What are you doing? You know it was. It was like a little bit quicker to I think, find some support and solace in the other person.

Another aspect of this subtheme the participants frequently emphasized the loneliness of entering educational and professional spaces that no one in their families had previously occupied, leading them to navigate expectations, norms, and uncertainties without guidance, which intensified their sense of responsibility and isolation. Many recalled moments related to applying to and entering college and graduate school, with some noting that their loved ones supported them in ways they knew how, such as providing encouragement and advice; however, they still felt alone and isolated. For example, Xochitl shared that her parents could not help her through the process, “leaving me to fend for myself, because they didn't have that experience of going to college, or what it is to be in college.” Metztli discussed a slightly different experience because her mother had attended higher education in Mexico, but that still did not give an understanding of how to navigate the United States’ education system: “But when it came to FAFSA, when it came to applications, when it came to what is a what is a GRE like, what are these things?” Another participant, Amoxtli, reported she was lucky to have older siblings who had learned the United States education system and could help her, but

only until she chose to enter graduate school, which is where she had to learn the ways of "navigating the whole license, the supervisor. Navigating my private practice." Yaotl described a sense of blindness regarding how to choose a graduate counseling program, which created a barrier that shaped his overall journey toward becoming a counselor. He noted that had he known how to choose a graduate program, "I think I would have had a different experience." Itzel echoed this as she discussed her experience with finding and selecting a job:

> Those are things that I feel like as a first-gen professional. We don't get taught a lot of those things, or how much we should be getting paid, or finding an environment where you're gonna be able to feel seen and where you are. And I feel like that's where I'm holding back … So there's a lot of I feel like things because we're also not as Mexican as we come from background. You know your job is like good job. Mija, you have a your first job, but they don't tell us what it comes with. And like knowing that you have different options and different options are available to you.

She expressed her disappointment, "I feel like how so many people take advantage of us." Itzel was not alone in that sentiment; several participants, including Quetzalli, reported the same experience. Quetzalli let out a scoff and dry laugh as she reflected on the pay at her first job, "It's almost a slap in the face now. Ugh, the disrespect!" She explained that being alone and not having enough information on how to navigate the board's progress made it scary to make the changes she needed during her supervised practice, which altered her journey and experience as a supervised counselor:

> I think about how I actually could have left at any time that I wanted, and the messages that I was getting about how difficult it is to re-find a supervisor and the messages that I was getting about like a goodness of fit as it comes to supervision.

Expanding on the idea that messages influenced their decision-making, Xochitl explained how her cultural identities and teachings created an invisible barrier, leaving her feeling isolated and unable to ask for help. She shared that it complicated her journey in becoming a licensed counselor since these teachings led to her failing her National Counselor Examination:

> I think what was hard about undergrad was being first-gen, and not knowing, not allowing myself to ask for help. Being first gen, the oldest daughter, the one that had to translate, do all these things. I could never ask anybody for help. It was always me being the one helping.

While the participants faced different challenges and pains, their stories reveal how isolated they felt as first-generation professionals who could not seek support and guidance from their families when navigating these moments.

Another dimension of isolation was that participants reported having to "figure it out" on their own, without mentors or institutional structures to support them. Amoxtli discussed what it has been like to enter spaces and be offered positions that are unknown to her family. She shared that she was offered a position on the Board of Trustees of mental health organizations in her county and has had to navigate the role while learning to explain its meaning to her family. She said, "Nobody's taught it to me like I'm having to learn a lot of it on my own." She described wrestling with the idea of whether she is

“supposed to be in that position” because she does not feel prepared for it. Tenoch described a similar experience: “I had to do everything on my own. I mean, there was no models, not in my family. So, I always had to figure it out on my own.” Furthermore, Itzel elaborated on this perspective by articulating the isolation and exhaustion of constantly being the first, yet recognizing the need to keep pushing. She explained: “I have to be able to be, as tiring as it will be, I have to be able to be the first. And in order to be the first, I have to be able to put myself in uncomfortable situations.” Metztli added to this idea and explained, “There has been a lot to prove to everybody that I belong to have a seat at the table, and I think I'm just tired of having to prove myself to other people.”

Despite the loneliness, participants identified individuals who provided guidance, support, and validation in moments of need, which helped them overcome adversity. For example, Citlalli also shared how applying for licensure seemed easier because she had support: “I had that privilege of having the transition be a little smoother because I had someone I could ask questions to.” Similarly, Yaotl described having a professor remind him he can do the healing work he wants in counseling, even if his program was not aligned with his values, “That was like my saving grace. Where she kind of like reminded me like, ‘Yeah, there's a way that we can still do this work.’” Itzel built on this by reporting feeling lucky to have found mentors who understood her to help her when she feels alone in the process, “Luckily, I've been able to have mentors who are out of state, who are willing to see me and like talk to me, saying like, you're not alone.” Furthermore, participants described resilience as a tool for overcoming hardship. For instance, Xochitl

attributed her ability to be resilient and figure things out to her parents, “They didn't know the language. They used a 5 or 6-year-old to translate for them so they could figure it out along the way. And so, I think definitely the figuring it out along the way came from them.” She explained that trusting her ability to figure things out and being resilient helps her get through difficult times in her life, “no matter what, we're still going to push through, or I'm still going to push through. And I'm gonna figure it out along the way.”

A few participants reported feeling alone in their hardship because their barriers were not acknowledged by their professors, supervisor, or societal structures. Yaotl reported, “as a person of color like, there was not a lot of understanding, maybe, the barriers that I had.” These experiences were shared by Itzel: “I constantly felt alone. I didn't feel. I feel like I had to go above and beyond, just to be noticed.” She added that as a first-generation professional, her financial barrier was also unseen, “talking to the financial piece of things, like being DACA. You're already limited, and with how expensive DACA is to renew. It was like another strain for this license. And nobody recognized that.” The idea of financial strain, encompassing both the emotional burden of navigating costs alone and the pressure of investing time and money in a path that no one in their family had taken before, was echoed by many participants. Yaotl reported that paying for his graduate program was something he had to stop to think about before starting:

> It was challenging because it's like one, I don't come from money in that way, and then two, I'm like, how do I fund this? So, I think that was like something that I struggled with like that, you know. Like, how do I pay for it?

Metztli added to this experience by reporting that when she wanted to give up or was overwhelmed by the harrowing experiences, she reminded herself of the financial and time investment this career had required as a motivator to keep going: “You're investing all this money, you're investing all this time.” Itzel further developed this idea when stating being raised in a Spanish-speaking household eventually caused the need to spend time and money on additional college courses to improve her writing skills, which added to the cost of her education: “I had to spend more money on classes that you know, really taking more classes that I needed to, because my English was never there.” She added that being a licensed counselor is “very expensive,” and that financial strain heavily influences her decision to take another job that may be a better fit. She added, “If I go somewhere else, I have to pay for supervision rather than here, I get it for free, and there's no contract to it.” Likewise, Citlalli added to the idea of “financial strain of” getting licensed. She explained feeling “nobody really names how expensive this license is, and they kind of, there's always this narrative of, well, it's going to be worth it once you’re licensed. It's, you know, it'll pay you back.” She described being unacknowledged in that financial barrier, and recognized that understanding “that narrative, that, doesn't mean that the process is going to be easier, especially for Mexican Americans.”

In addition to cost considerations throughout the process, Tenoch reported that finances influenced his decision to attend the graduate program he chose because he “wanted them to see that the pipeline is easy to get onto.” He stated that he also wanted to show younger generations that even with limited financial resources, they can reach their goals: “I didn't want Latino youth to see that the work that I did is something you need

money for.” Tenoch also expressed some frustration with the financial burden that comes with being a bilingual counselor working with a population that has limited resources and the systemic barriers that the population experiences:

> You know, people have jobs that don't have insurance. So, you know, how do you serve your community that needs to be served? So that was always really hard, most of the time. I mostly always gave sliding scales. And for most of the people that I serve, who are Spanish-speaking and immigrants, I always just give them a sliding scale and whatever it is they can pay. But that was hard. That's definitely hard to make a living like that.

Taken together, these experiences show how isolation shaped participants’ development across personal, academic, and clinical domains. Feeling alone or isolated, whether due to limited representation, financial pressures, or being the first, heightened the emotional labor involved during supervised licensure. Overall, these narratives illustrated resilience and creativity as they sought out connection, mentorship, and community. This subtheme highlights isolation as a defining feature of Nepantla, a stage in which participants navigate the challenges of transition. While isolation is an internal experience, participants also expressed external rejection and isolation when describing their experiences with various forms of racism throughout their journey towards full licensure. The next subtheme highlights those narratives.

Subtheme 2: Encountering Racism

The subtheme encountering racism captures the pervasive and multifaceted ways in which participants encountered bias, discrimination, and cultural misunderstandings

across clinical, supervisory, and institutional settings. Participants described how racist comments from clients, cultural assumptions within supervision, and broader workplace environments contributed to feelings of invisibility, marginalization, and emotional fatigue. These experiences were further complicated by the "ni uno ni otro" experience of not fully belonging in either White-dominant spaces or among Mexican communities. Together, these accounts illustrate how racism operated both overtly and subtly, shaping the conditions under which Mexican American counseling trainees navigated their professional identities, their Mexicanness, and their role as emerging clinicians.

Citlalli reported witnessing how a fellow Mexican American counselor in her supervision group was retaliated against by the board. She explained that this altered her experience as a supervised counselor, "I immediately felt scared of what's going to happen with my identities. And can I get through this?" Building on this, Metztli recalled their experience with feeling invisible or disrespected in their work environment. She recounted an instance in which her supervisor disregarded her clinical recommendation; a few minutes later, a group member repeated it. She added that her supervisor praised the other counselor for their suggestion, even though it was the same thing. She said in disbelief, "I was like, are we in the same room? Am I speaking the same language right now? And I was like, 'Are you kidding me?' I don't feel heard." She stated this led to her decision to leave that position and shared that she often reminds herself, "Don't make yourself smaller. You belong here, too, and your voice matters."

In addition to these experiences, participants recalled interactions with clients in which they made comments questioning their credibility because of their accents or racial

backgrounds, and how they had to navigate those moments ethically and calmly. Metztli recounted an interaction with a White client. She described trying to stay calm and grounded during the interaction, even though she was scared, by telling herself, “Okay, keep it professional. Keep it cool.” She reminded herself of what mattered to her, which was her license, and she focused on responding ethically even though it was “really difficult in that moment.” She sarcastically added, “How funny is it that she was questioning my credentials for two sessions long, and we end up here.” In the same vein, Itzel reported that, due to her accent or difficulty recalling words during sessions, clients question her credibility: “I have to prove that I know what I'm talking about.” Citlalli added to this by illustrating that her accent has also been a topic of interest for some of her clients and colleagues, and by explaining how others’ pointing out her accent negatively affects her confidence and detracts from the effort she has invested in becoming a counselor. She stated her frustration, “It makes me feel again that I have to work harder, so people don't pay attention to that. It makes me frustrated, of course. Because why are people paying attention to this?” Furthermore, participants spoke to the racism they experienced in supervision. Citlalli articulated feeling exhausted by the compounding forms of racism she experienced systemically and relationally in her supervision group. She stated that she was personally attacked. She stated, “I was personally starting to be targeted for my identities because I used to be very open about them.” Citlalli elaborated on how the racism in her group altered her participation in group supervision:

> I think it definitely made me feel like there was a hostile learning environment where I didn't want to ask questions about clients or bring up concerns that I had, because I didn't want anyone to think that I was dumb.

Metztli expanded the concept of how racism manifests in supervision and how she refused to go along with it, especially when some would make "a racist joke or comment. Everyone would kind of laugh along to please the boss." These lived experiences show how encountering racism with clients and in clinical supervision disrupted the participants' clinical and identity development.

Additionally, participants noted feeling as if they were ni de aqui ni aya [I'm neither from here nor there], which intensified the implication of racism in their supervised practice due to additional disconnection from their culture. For instance, Quetzalli shared she sometimes feels like "an other, even within the same culture." She further specified an internal struggle with identifying as Mexican or American:

> For a really long time, internally, I was confused because I was Mexican, but in America, I wasn't Mexican. I was supposed to be American. But in Mexico, I was Mexican, but I wasn't. I was American. It's like this whole. You're not this, not that, and you can't be both, so what are you?"

Tenoch articulated this concept by sharing his experience with racism for being light-skinned, which has been a lifelong journey. He shared that being white-passing at times has worked to his advantage. Still, in serving the Latine community, he faced a disadvantage that required extra effort to overcome. He said, "A lot of Latino people won't choose me because I'm so white." He added that it was isolating and painful to be

rejected by people he identified with, saying, “I was bullied, back then, by Americans and Mexicans because I was white. So, there wasn't a place. There's not a place, you know, that’s for me.” Xochitl echoed Tenoch’s idea of not fully belonging:

> The line that I'm in is kind of unique, because I'm neither from there or be here. Right? I'm not fully, not first gen because I am, I was raised here since I was two. So, I, most of my, I assimilated, yeah, I assimilated enough to be considered first-gen, but then I shouldn't, because I was born in Mexico. So technically, I'm not a child of immigrants, but I am, if that makes sense. So, it's kind of this. It's just messy, right?”

Itzel built on this idea when describing that her clients perceive a separation between them, “they see like an American rather than a Mexican. They see the American side of me, and not the Mexican side of me.” She shared that she intentionally seeks to bridge the gap and build connection by speaking Spanish to inform others about her Mexican heritage. This ongoing sense of not belonging within their own culture complicated their identity development process.

Beyond the explicit forms of racism, the participants encountered another form of racism that they described as involving the disregard or invisibility of their Mexicanness, as others minimized, misunderstood, or failed to acknowledge this aspect of their identity within clinical and academic spaces. Three participants expressed experiencing their identity as Mexican being ignored or undervalued, and it impacted their experience in the field. For instance, Yaotl recalled feeling “very nervous, and I felt like I just I noticed my body tense up walking to this very white space” when attending a continuing education

units training where all the attendees were white women. He explained a particular interaction with another attendee at the training who commented on his gender and her assumption of his sexual orientation, saying that she was uncomfortable with having him in the training. He emphasized his experience with being in the field as a Mexican American individual:

> The field as a whole it feels very white, Eurocentric. And I think that can sometimes feel uninviting. …No one clocked the fact that I'm the only person of color. …I think our field is still very much not welcoming. Not just saying that these experiences sums the whole up, but I think there's still aspects of our field that maybe doesn't feel fully welcoming to a Mexican American.

Consistent with Yaotl, Itzel reports she notices that her professional and cultural identities are not allowed to coexist, "I'm not being seen as someone who's Mexican American. I feel like I'm just being seen as a professional. But being Mexican American is who I identify with as being with a professional." She added that her supervisor has played a role in this experience because she does not feel "seen for who I am. I feel like I have to, I really have to portray a different side of me that's more acceptable towards more of the white community." Quetzalli built on this idea, reporting that it seemed she was hired at her job to serve diversity goals for the agency rather than for what she could contribute to the clinical team: "I felt like I was a token Mexican and not actually like a person that people wanted to be around sometimes. Like they were using me for their benefit."

Overall, these experiences reveal how racism shaped participants' professional development, emotional well-being, and sense of belonging across multiple contexts. Whether through direct client interactions, supervisory dynamics, systemic structures, or microaggressions, participants confronted racialized experiences that altered their supervised licensure. Still, their reflections also highlight resilience, as they navigated these challenges as bilingual supervised counselors. Subtheme three, self-imposed expectations, reflects key factors in Nepantla, in which participants gain awareness of the constructed reality they have been fed and its conflict with their cultural identities.

Subtheme 3: Self-Imposed Expectations

The subtheme Self-Imposed Expectations depicts the internal pressures that participants described as they worked to meet their personal and professional goals. Some of the expectations included the need to excel rapidly, a sense of responsibility to represent their communities, and the expansion of access to therapy for the Latine community. The expectations often stemmed from being the first in their family to pursue higher education and from a sense of responsibility to serve as role models for younger generations who look up to them. These experiences demonstrate how participants balanced their determination to achieve their goals with their sense of obligation to make a positive impact in the field for other Latine individuals.

Participants described feeling significant pressure to complete their programs as quickly as possible, driven by a need to demonstrate their ability to adhere to cultural teachings while balancing their professional ambitions and a desire to minimize the impact of systemic barriers. Xochitl reported that she wanted to demonstrate to her

parents that she could respect her culture's values and expectations while pursuing both personal and professional goals, which runs counter to prevailing expectations. She noted, "You need to have a career before you get married and have kids." She explains that as the eldest daughter, there were also expectations of her "to do everything right." In her eyes, finishing rapidly would show that she was still meeting others' expectations and her own. In the same vein, Metztli reported that she expected herself to complete the process to full licensure in the minimum time required due to personal grief and the limitations she experienced as a supervised counselor. She reflected on the numerous social, individual, and financial sacrifices she had made to achieve it. She outlined that she immediately started her graduate program after completing her bachelor's degree, "I didn't take any breaks. So, I just kind of kept going." She reported that she held two jobs as a licensed supervised clinician because "I wanted to finish my hours as fast as possible," and that she completed her required supervised hours in "minimum time, like 18 to 19 months." Citlalli had a slightly different experience with her self-imposed expectations. She was driven by the barriers like Metztli, but wanted to prove to others that despite the obstacles and painful experiences she had during her supervised practice, she would achieve her goal. She stated, "It almost put this expectation in my head that I had to be good enough, and I had to prove myself even further, so that people would actually see me." She shared that this was one of the reasons she chose to seek a terminal degree. These experiences demonstrate that balancing respect for cultural values with the pursuit of personal goals was a significant factor as participants worked toward full licensure.

Beyond this sense of urgency, another self-imposed expectation was their commitment to expand access to therapy for Latine communities. They viewed their success and growth throughout their journey as a direct reflection of their efforts to address gaps in culturally and linguistically responsive therapy for their community. For instance, Quetzalli reported that she sees herself as the person with the privilege of helping bridge the gap by being part of the group that provides the services they need: "We get to be those people." Additionally, Yaotl explained the expectations he sets for himself as a bilingual counselor, supporting his community, given the scarcity of available resources. He explained that sometimes he does not feel equipped to create mental health programs that will bridge that gap in care, and he has recently decided to hire someone to support him in making them. He shared he noticed the problem and asked himself, "How do I also sort of be a part of that problem-solving process?" He articulated his desire to be part of the solution on a larger scale and now works to create a Latine networking group to help counselors in his area become more connected.

Subtheme three, self-imposed expectations, reflects key facets of Borderland Theory's Nepantla, in which one is challenged by both the expectations of the dominant society and one's own expectations as they move through the liminal space. Another form of experiencing contradicting experiences the participants' conveyed was feeling the need to suppress their identities to meet the dominant culture's expectation of them as counseling professionals, which is discussed in the next section.

Subtheme 4: Suppressing Identities

Suppressing identities emerged as participants described unconsciously setting aside parts of their identities as a strategy to fit in or avoid drawing attention to their cultural differences within their counseling programs and supervision. Many reflected on subtle or automatic shifts in speech, behavior, or self-presentation aimed at conforming to the counseling profession's expectations during the initial phases of their journey. For example, Itzel described how her isolation led her to hide parts of her cultural expression to foster connections with the people around her who were culturally different from her due to her location:

> In the beginning, I was definitely dismembered, quite a bit. And I think the reason goes for that is because I didn't have anybody to identify with. So I had to become, dismember myself, basically, and to be able to fit in, into something that I wasn't.

Metztli added to this idea, stating that she expects herself to conform by avoiding speaking Spanish or Spanglish in professional settings, even when that is not how she normally interacts. She explained how it "censors me." She reflected on the impact that this has on her growth and self-confidence: "It kind of mutes me. It like, tones me down like my vibrance, or like just like my authenticity, maybe a little bit…it makes me feel like less than sometimes." Metztli also described conscious efforts of dressing as someone who "looks put together, but in the Western views." She explained that social expectations influence how clients perceive her based on her attire, so she tries to appeal to those expectations. She elaborated that she sometimes includes culturally

representative items in her outfit, but only for non-professional events. She shared, "When I do go to like very fancy, like work events, I don't wear anything with embroidery beads that could be representing culture." Metztli's decision about what to wear to these events is often an unconscious behavior aimed at meeting expectations, and, as we discussed in the interview, she became disappointed as she recognized her pattern of suppressing her identity.

Further emphasizing this subtheme, Yaotl recalled the covert messages in his program that expected his cultural identities to be suppressed and described feeling frustrated with the covert expectation to "put on a mask." He shared that entering his counseling education program, thinking he would be able to be authentically himself, "I'm going to be able to just be me. I'm going to be this clear, brown, dark-skinned son of immigrant parents." He elaborated that he did not feel fully welcomed and "instead, I was, it was like a reminder of like, 'Oh, no! Shut yourself down, and only be this like version of yourself.' And I was like, 'Oh, shit, like, that's not what I intended to do.'" He stated that he was angry about what happened and that it was encouraged by his counseling education program. Similarly, Quetzalli shared that she "felt almost forced to fit the mold of what the population and the demographic of the clientele" at her first job as a counselor. She added, "It felt weird to be like Mexican…hiding that you know I was religious, or that I did have my own suspicions and superstitions, and all these things." Building on this idea, Citlalli shared that she had to conceal a significant part of her identity to feel comfortable enough to continue the licensure process. She shared that she was proud of her accomplishments because, despite the adversity she faced, she was

achieving her goals. She explained that eventually, people began using her cultural identity as a limitation for her to continue growing, and she decided to stop disclosing it. These reflections illustrated small yet significant ways in which the participants' cultural identities were unwelcome; therefore, they resorted to concealing them as a form of self-preservation.

An additional dimension of concealing aspects of their identities was that it conflicted with their deeply rooted cultural values. Participants describe how they came to recognize that their cultural backgrounds profoundly shaped their worldview, values, and clinical intuition, which, in turn, influenced their perspective on the training they received. For example, Amoxtli shared that her father emphasized the importance of education as a tool for success and growth, which has been a driver for her as a counseling professional:

> He drilled, drilled, drilled: la educación es lo mas importante, you know, like, si ta's educado, lo tienes todo y no vas estar bien jodido. No vas a no saber leer y escribir y leer y y no te va dar vergüenza, so tienen que ir al escuela. [Education is the most important thing, you know? Like, if you're educated, you've got everything, and you're not going to be really screwed. You won't be someone who doesn't know how to read and write, and you won't feel embarrassed. So you have to go to school.]

In a similar vein, Tenoch stated that his parents' mindset and his experience as a Mexican American have influenced his worldview and his "ability to think symbolically," which is integral to his counseling approach. He shared that it has also set

him apart relationally, particularly in supervision and networking with colleagues, as he does not always understand cultural references.

In contrast, a few participants identified how their cultural values compromised their experiences. For instance, Yaotl reported that, as a graduate student, he refrained from speaking even when class discussions deeply affected him because he had learned "don't rock the boat" from his parents during childhood; in turn, this shaped his journey as a counseling professional. Also, Itzel reported that she currently lives in an area that is culturally drastically different than where she grew up. She shared that collaboration is not the norm because it is "very independent, like, that is a very big thing here, being to your only self and yourself only." This causes internal conflict for her as isolation and frustration intensify. Xochitl reinforced this idea, sharing how the cultural experiences and teachings of being a first-generation Mexican American impacted when and how quickly she took the next step in her career. She stated that she felt a sense of obligation "to do what comes next, even if in that moment maybe you shouldn't," which led her to failing her National Counselor Examination. She shared how the pressure to do things as expected weighed heavily on her. These narratives demonstrate that the participants continually balanced their cultural values and teachings with their professional development.

These experiences illustrate how participants navigated their identities within predominantly White clinical and academic settings. While many initially set aside aspects of themselves to meet perceived expectations, they simultaneously recognized the dissonance and misalignment and noticed how their cultural background continued to

influence them. This subtheme illustrates a developmental journey in which identity suppression gradually gave way to Mexican American clinicians' insight into the barriers they faced. Subtheme four, suppressing identities, reflects key aspects of Nepantla, in which the expectations of the dominant society challenge individuals and foster awareness of the dichotomy between individual and collective behaviors.

Overall, Navigating Nepantla contributes to addressing how Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors experienced isolation, cultural dissonance, and emotional strain in the early stages of supervised license shaped the participants' process. The participants navigated barriers such as isolation, racism, lack of cultural representation and learned to balance a sense of obligation with their determination to bridge a notable gap in counseling resources available for Latine. This theme aligns with Borderlands Theory's (Anzaldua, 1987) description of Nepantla as a stage in which individuals navigate an unstable space between two worlds and gain awareness as they work through a transitional period.

Theme 2: Confronting Duality in Coatlicue State

Confronting Duality in Coatlicue State emerged as participants described encountering hidden challenges, barriers, or limitations at different points in their journey as bilingual therapists and expressed concern about what making a change or advocating for themselves would mean for their future. In Borderlands Theory (Anzaldua, 1987), the Coatlicue State is characterized by the confrontation with past limiting social expectations, the abrupt end of those expectations, and the capacity to overcome fear and avoidance to create space for identity reconstruction. This stage is often dark, ruthless,

and terrifying, as the person must acknowledge and resist the oppressive ideas they have internalized. The participants explained how they discarded ideas that did not serve them or their development. The subthemes of Confronting Duality in Coatlicue State, supervision, being Mexican American in the field, and bilingualism reflect the structural, relational, and identity-based negotiations characteristic of the Coatlicue State.

Subtheme 1: Supervision

Supervision emphasizes how participants' clinical training was shaped by the availability, quality, and cultural inclusivity of their supervision experiences. Throughout the interviews, participants described how gaps in bilingual supervision, limited culturally inclusive teachings, and inconsistent support affected their confidence, professional development, and sense of belonging in clinical supervision. At the same time, several participants identified supervisors and group members who served as crucial sources of affirmation, mentorship, and growth during this time, while others noted negative experiences that altered their supervised licensure. Overall, these experiences illustrate the central role of supervision in shaping participants' development within Borderlands' Coatlicue State.

Participants considered their clinical supervision group members' contribution to their sense of belonging, comfort, and openness in clinical supervision, with some discussing the value of connecting with other BIPOC group members. They described these peer relationships as grounding, affirming, and essential for navigating challenges. For instance, Quetzalli recalled that some of her colleagues in group supervision did not consider the client's cultural background a key factor in understanding the client's

symptoms, which created discomfort for her. She explained how she also felt that her clinical approach was sometimes questioned by her group members when she would consider a culture within her clinical conceptualization of a client, because they thought the client needed clinical intervention: “It becomes this this disconnect to where now it feels like I should be taking other clinical approaches when they're technically not needed, because it is a cultural aspect.” Yaotl echoed this by sharing that he was disturbed and frustrated by his classmates in graduate school making comments that were not demonstrating cultural awareness and respect:

> There were certain cultural things that weren't understood. And I think I found a lot of frustration in that, like they're like, especially in our diversity class. You know, there were comments made that to me felt ignorant, but to them not so much

On the other hand, participants reported positive, connecting experiences with other BIPOC members in their supervision group. Xochil described being proud of being part of a clinical supervision group where all the members are BIPOC counselors “I, honestly, I love it. I think it's amazing.” She also shared that having colleagues in her supervision group who were also serving Latine individuals provided her optimism and gratitude to hear how cultural minorities are being served: “Being able to hear how our community is being supported, as well as the needs that our communities need as BIPOC individuals.” Similarly, Citlalli reported she found a sense of belonging and solidarity with group members who also identified as first-generation Americans. she stated with disappointment that felt excluded by those who identified as Mexican, “Unfortunately, it

was that generalized statement that you hear people say of, you know, entre Mexicanos, nos queremos jalar [Among Mexicans, we pull each other down].” However, she explained this wasn’t the case with both of her groups. She shared that in another supervision group, she felt camaraderie and support from colleagues who were also Mexican American: “The other supervision group was a little bit closer to each other, because all of the people who had Mexican American identities, we were trying to support each other because we all felt distress. We all felt unsupported.” Yaotl reinforced this idea when he shared that he felt at ease, comfortable, and safe having a supervision group member who identified as BIPOC because “it felt good to have, to not be the only brown person.” This sense of belonging, validation, and acknowledgment was reiterated by Quetzalli when she said: “I, already, just in that setting felt seen in a different way…and so it was easier for me to feel more comfortable with being able to share those client things that I had been struggling with.” Together, these reflections demonstrate that a sense of belongingness in clinical supervision is essential for Mexican American counselors.

Another layer of supervision that the participants emphasized was the ways in which supervisors either facilitated or hindered their development, noting behaviors ranging from empowering mentorship, meaningful support, validation, and culturally grounded guidance to dismissive or restrictive behaviors, which informed their clinical identity and professional development. Beginning with some dismissive and hurtful supervision experiences, Quetzalli stated that her primary supervision group lacked guidance and quality, and she especially noticed this when her supervisor would not

"give additional guidance on how to handle" matters of cultural influence on client symptoms. She added that her supervisor was typically late to supervision by up to 40 minutes, and when she and her group members pointed out the issue, they were dismissed. She explained that the inconsistency and dismissive nature of her supervisor diminished her trust and sense of safety in her primary supervisor and pushed her to consult with other supervisors and clinicians, "I would do majority of my consultation in my secondary group, and I would do the majority of my consultation with, like other clinicians in the community, because I didn't trust that my clinical supervisor was gonna be present or accessible." Building on this perspective, Citlalli had a similar experience, consulting with other clinicians in her vicinity due to concerns about safety within her primary supervision group. She noted dreading going to supervision because she did not feel safe in her supervision group, and the supervisor's behavior made the experience worse:

> The main supervisor that I had for the majority of the time kind of influenced the dynamics going on and added a lot of fire to the fuel because you could see their biases come out, specifically targeting Mexican Americans.

Further emphasizing the theme that the supervisor had a significant influence on their experience, Metztli conveyed that there was a significant difference between her experience with her licensure supervisor and her employment site supervisor. She stated that her employment supervisor was "very much a really big racist, homophobic, sexist—all the all the ists," and her licensure supervisor was supportive, encouraging, and culturally sensitive. She added that her site supervisor treated her and other Latine

therapists at the agency differently; the additional required supervision for them felt "more like micromanagement, in my opinion, instead of like providing support." Metztli said, "I had to remind myself not to close myself off" because she knew she deserved to learn in clinical supervision. She eventually decided to leave that agency, and when she met with him to give her letter of resignation, the meeting felt unsafe: "We had a meeting, and that felt like psychological warfare," and she had to stay grounded in that process. Metztli emphasized that the understanding, encouraging, and culturally responsive nature of her licensure supervisor helped her feel safe. She noted that she would consult about all of her cases, even when she received supervision on a case with her site supervisor, because she trusted her guidance more than that of her male supervisor: "I would repeat what I talked about with the other, with the male supervisor, just to make sure I'm good." Metztli explained how this supervisor's approach to her learning was supportive in various ways that allowed her to be open and grow as a supervised clinician:

> I didn't feel like I had to hold anything back, and I feel judged for not knowing. I guess the other one I did feel very like judged, and it's like this is just for him to cover his butt. But for her, it wasn't. It never felt like she's covering herself is more like, let me make sure you're competent and ready to be a therapist on your own.

Regarding her work with Spanish-speaking clients, Metztli stated that her supervisor would check in on how she was managing transference and clinical separation when working on topics closely related to her. She recognized how her supervisor's intention to

support her growth, both personally and professionally, helped create a stronger supervisory alliance. She reported that they also discussed other topics, including starting a business and their "experiences as just women in general in the field, and as women of color." As she reflected on her overall supervised experience, she also stressed how important it was for her to have a supervisor who supported and cared about her: "It's good to have someone that has your back." Amoxtli reiterated the importance of a strong supervisory alliance. She acknowledged how being prioritized, trusted, and backed by her supervisor changed her view of her own clinical judgment and confidence in herself: "I was kind of told like, 'You know best. You know you are the professional.'" She also added with excitement and relief, "I feel empowered by her. She would help me. Gosh, it's so amazing." She recalled a moment during her supervised licensure when she was scared, and her supervisor supported her wholeheartedly:

> I was vulnerable. I was scared. I was weak, and I called her. I literally called her right after the session on my other job, and she's like you said, she empowered me, and she gave me the reassurance of, like, you did nothing wrong. And she like provided support. This is what we're gonna do, you know. And so, I do think that because I had that amazing support, I felt more and more confident in my choices and my decisions.

Building on Metztli and Amoxtli's perspectives, Yaotl stated that he felt fortunate to have had a supervisor who cared about him, and "it felt like I was being like, my whole self was being invited" to supervision. He explained how she gently challenged and supported him in finding ways to use the pieces of himself he had "bracketed away" during

graduate school. He pointed out that her commitment to his development and ability to understand him compensated for her not speaking Spanish:

> I got to the point where, like, I didn't even need her to be Mexican or Spanish speaking, because she was very much invested, and so that I think for me is the big thing like she was invested in my growth, and she cared about me, and I felt that.

Similarly, Tenoch stated that his supervisors had set him up "to function well in the profession." He explained that one of his clinical supervisors was skilled at asking questions that would help him conceptualize his clients. Whereas with another supervisor, their clinical alignment helped create a strong connection, even though he did not speak Spanish: "I think what helped is that we had a similar background for understanding the deep work that people have to work through. And I think we had a common language that really helped a lot." This sentiment was echoed by Xochitl. However, she had a Mexican American supervisor who spoke Spanish, and she acknowledged that having a bilingual supervisor positively influenced her overall experience during her supervised licensure. Xochitl reported finding a bilingual supervisor was a non-negotiable for her due to her intended niche: "I couldn't have a supervisor that didn't understand that part of why people immigrate here to the United States, why people choose to do it, whether it's legal or illegally." She emphasized that her supervisor's attentive behavior, such as awareness and empathy regarding the political climate and how that may be affecting her clinical work due to the population she works are moments in which she feels prioritized and backed by her supervisor:

> There's times where it's checking in on me, on how I'm feeling, because it can be very heavy what clients bring to me. Whether it's because of the political state or what they may be going through in their own personal lives. And she makes she makes sure that I'm getting the support I need as an individual, as a therapist, but I'm also being able to provide that support for my clients.

She emphasized that her supervisor supports her decision to establish a private practice and respects how she chooses to balance her personal life and her career. She described how having a supportive supervisor and one who understands the nuances of her culture allows her to feel safe and be herself. Together, these experiences highlight the extent to which a supervisor's behavior toward their supervisee and their awareness of the supervisee's cultural identities can shape the supervisee's supervised practice.

In addition to those experiences, the large majority of the participants described the challenges of navigating clinical work without access to bilingual supervisors, noting that language gaps often limited their ability to provide effective feedback, case conceptualization, clinical support, and process culturally specific client dynamics. Furthermore, some reflected on how supervision by a bilingual supervisor would have enhanced their supervisory alliance. For example, Amoxtli stated she had a wonderful supervision experience, by thinks it would have been better with a bilingual supervisor: "the best way for me to put it is like my supervision was probably 8 out of 10. Have I had a Latina? Had she been a Latina? It would have been a 10 out of 10." She particularly considered the lack of the option to code-switch when conceptualizing her Spanish-speaking clients during clinical supervision. She reported having to describe it instead,

which would not allow her supervisor to fully understand, therefore limiting the clinical support she received for her clients:

> No podiamos hablar español. Y dijo esto esto y el otro [We couldn't speak Spanish. They started saying this, that, and the other.] You know, it was kind of like I have this client, and she kind of like said something along the lines of like, and I didn't really know what to say."

Similarly, Tenoch delineated that a bilingual supervisor may have improved his understanding of the supervised licensure process and shifted the conceptualization of his clients through an "unspoken knowing" of their cultural experience:

> When we're working with people, it's, it's heart to heart, you know, not like idea to idea. It's heart to heart. So working with a supervisor understands the hearts of who you're working, the hearts of the folks you're working with, I think it's very important.

However, he considers that having a bilingual supervisor would not have inherently improved his experience with the legal and bureaucratic aspects of being a clinician. Further emphasizing this theme of wishing they had a bilingual supervisor, Yaotl outlined that having a bilingual supervisor was something he wanted when he first started working with Spanish speakers, due to the limitations and complexities: "I remember thinking like I would love to have a Spanish-speaking supervisor." He explained that having a bilingual supervisor could have created a stronger sense of being understood and validated. He reiterated Tenoch's experience regarding the value of having a role model and guide in the supervised licensure process.

> I think, using Spanish together could have been a different way of connecting and validating my own experience, and like seem like, 'Oh, here's someone that like is already licensed and has been doing this for some time.' I can be that I can look up to that. So like there's a modeling aspect of it. But there's also like, had she been Spanish speaking and her Latina, I think there would have been like a different sort of getting and getting each other, like it, it a different kind of depth in the relationship.

He also reported that he lacks confidence in his clinical skills when serving the Spanish-speaking population, which why echoed by several other participants including Metztli, as she shared that her clinical development as a Spanish-speaking therapist is not reflective of her licensure: "I'm like, still kind of feel like maybe I'm halfway done with my associate hours instead of being done." Similarly, Quetzalli described wishing she had someone who could have listened and helped her develop her clinical skills with Spanish-speaking clients. She added that her process as a bilingual counselor seemed unacknowledged: "There wasn't support available. That side of my clinical work did feel very invisible."

Furthermore, participants expressed frustration with the impact of a lack of bilingual supervision on their counseling sessions and on the quality of services for bilingual clients. Amoxtli reflected on being unprepared to work through specific cultural issues because "she [her supervisor] wasn't really able to talk to me about what it was like to fear being undocumented. You know. We didn't touch the cultural topics that I now have to touch with my population." Additionally, Citlalli recalled how the lack of

experience was disrupting her therapy sessions and her identity as a counselor. She released a heavy sigh and said, “There were so many struggles that I wish my clients didn't have to go through with me.”

Another dimension of this subtheme was that participants emphasized a broader lack of culturally inclusive training, noting that their counseling education programs and clinical supervision often failed to address the needs, contexts, and lived experiences of Latine clients, as well as the clinical need for support as supervised clinicians. For instance, Yaotl shared that he wanted more cultural awareness and exploration in his master’s program: “I wish I'd had more cultural support. I wish I'd had more professors that, they could, like, really be critical in that type of thinking and support.” He added that he received space for cultural exploration from his clinical supervisor during his practicum:

> I felt really supported and really, and, challenged to bring that. To really think about that perspective. …and really honoring, the cultural background and all of the honoring that individual and all of this different sort of parts that they're bringing in.

On a similar note, participants shared how cultural exploration was not invited or encouraged in their supervision group. For example, Citlalli said, “We wouldn't talk about cultural aspects. We wouldn't talk about any dynamics that were happening. It was almost like shameful to bring it up.” This sentiment was echoed by Itzel, who shared that she is fed up with the lack of cultural awareness in her workplace and sometimes speaks up out of frustration and a sense of obligation. She recalled a meeting during which she

told everyone, “We have to be able to be culturally aware and like culturally humbled” because they were ignoring a client’s cultural context. On the other hand, Tenoch expressed feeling fortunate to have his clinical supervisor support him in navigating how to maintain professional yet culturally respectful boundaries at a social event where he would likely encounter some of his clients. He stated, “She was very understanding of that of that nuance, and very, she knew how to support me.” However, these culturally explorative conversations were not available with his other supervisor, as culture “just wasn't his thing.” These reflections convey participants' frustration with the lack of culturally responsive training available to them during crucial developmental periods.

These experiences show how clinical supervision dynamics significantly shaped participants’ professional development, confidence, and cultural responsiveness. Limited bilingual clinical support, absence of culturally inclusive training, and inconsistent supervisor behavior often intensified the complexity of supervised licensure for Mexican American bilingual clinicians. However, participants also identified moments of meaningful guidance from supervisors and peers, highlighting the importance of culturally responsive mentorship and connection. This subtheme, supervision, highlights key characteristics of Coatlicue, in which participants are responsible for acknowledging and resisting the oppressive ideas they have internalized about their place in society. They described being in a dark and distressing place at various moments in clinical supervision. They further identified tension and distress as Mexican American counselors within the counseling profession, which is explored in detail in the next subtheme.

Subtheme 2: Being Mexican American in the Field

This subtheme captures the unique challenges, tensions, and internal negotiations participants faced as they navigated clinical work within a predominantly White field. Participants described how their cultural identity shaped their therapeutic approach, influenced their reactions to clients' stories, and highlighted gaps in the field's cultural inclusivity. These experiences reveal the ongoing process of balancing personal identity with professional expectations while working within frameworks that often overlook the complexities of Mexican American worldviews. These reflections illustrate the process of navigating the complexities of recognizing barriers while seeking to integrate cultural knowledge and lived experiences into clinical training within the Coatlicue State.

Participants expressed frustration and discomfort, emphasizing that their clinical training was grounded in "Westernized" or "White" concepts and theories that rarely incorporated strategies for adapting them to Latine populations, leaving them to bridge the gap between academic theory and the realities of their clients. For example, Yaotl mentioned that he first noticed the "really white concepts of psychology, very Westernized concepts of psychology" in his master's program, which led to fear of not knowing how to apply these lenses to conceptualize his clients, as they seemed "very pathologizing" of their context. Itzel described feeling disconnected from the curriculum, saying, "When you're starting off, you feel like you don't connect with what you're taught." She stated she often wondered, "How do I make this make sense to me, and then make sense to my client?" These insights show the internal conflict they experience due to the lack of cultural incorporation in their training.

An added experience to being a Mexican American counselor, participants highlighted a range of hurdles, including systemic bias, lack of representation, and limited culturally informed resources, that made navigating the field more difficult and isolating. They discussed their experiences entering the field, sharing the hurdles and barriers they had overcome, and their outlook on the process. Many of them described the field as unwelcoming to diverse individuals and as not being structured to support them. For example, Yaotl reported, “the field as a whole, it feels very white, Eurocentric. And I think that can sometimes feel uninviting still.” He continued and shared an uncomfortable interaction with a white female colleague in which he felt his cultural background was ignored. He emphasized the lack of emotional and cultural safety, yet stated that he makes diligent efforts to “show up” proudly. He added:

> There's still ways in which I think our field is still very much not welcoming. Not just saying that these experiences sums the whole up, but I think there's still aspects of our field that, maybe doesn't feel fully welcoming to a Mexican American.”

Other hurdles the participants identified included completing the required educational program, supervised training, and licensure requirements to receive what they deserved or to practice in ways aligned with their cultural values. For instance, Tenoch remarked that once a clinician is in the counseling field, “They can find ways to do deeper work” even if that is not what the field is set up to be, “I think, like, you know, get into the profession and then go find the soul.” He articulated his view of the counseling field as intended to help a person function, and it does not align with his conception of

healing or with how he has seen his clients heal or find meaning. He asserted that his goal as a counselor is to help people discover themselves and do more than help them function: “I'm helping people find deeper meaning in their life, and you can function very well in society, but still feel empty.”

Moreover, another hurdle the participants described was the impact of not being respected or paid appropriately for the services they provided and the skills they possessed, as well as the need to unlearn Westernized teachings from their counseling programs. One example, Quetzalli stated that the first agency she worked seemed to only recognize her bilingualism as a marketing tool rather than an additional tool set: “I almost felt like I was marketed differently and like a commodity more than just like clinical skills…I was kind of seen as like a money sign.” She explained how that job altered who she was as a therapist negatively, and leaving it helped her rediscover herself:

> That first experience was so traumatic in so many different ways. But I think the most traumatic that it was, was for my personality, for my genuine humanness as a person, that then affected the clinical side. And so, I think, getting to just process all of that crap out really allowed me to then like just reform myself and reconnect to those areas, because like, I would be questioning myself and just have so much self-doubt because of that first agency experience.

Yaotl expanded on this by sharing the substantial obstacle and complexity of overcoming pain, anxiety, and sadness that he went through to rediscover himself, his values, and his counseling approach after he graduated with his master’s degree. He expressed sadness as he deconstructed his understanding of counseling to realign himself with an authentic,

culturally grounded approach. He added that he was grateful for his supervisor, who supported him through that "dark" and "painful" process: "I was privileged enough to have the supervisor that I had."

Another aspect of this experience involved participants describing periods of struggle with countertransference, acknowledging that shared language, culture, and lived experiences with Spanish-speaking clients made it difficult to avoid overidentifying with their clients' stories, and that they made additional efforts to address this. First, Amoxtli recalled the anxiety and intimidation she felt when she was asked to facilitate the parent psychoeducational group at her agency. She illustrated the level of impact this had on her confidence due to the contradiction in cultural values and professional expectations:

> When I started this, my Apple Watch would think I was working out because my heart rate was so fast because I was like so anxious. Running my first couple of groups, you know, and it was because this was I was in a group full of parents. And I was a new therapist. And I have to teach them, right? And tell them what they're doing is wrong, you know? Educate them, you know. They're adults. They look like my parents, you know? There's. Oh, my gosh! What am I doing, you know? It's just, of course, they looked at me like I was, I knew what I was doing. And I pretended I was. My heart was racing the whole time. I was like, and it was like that for a couple of weeks, if not months.

Adding to Amoxtli's point, Metztli described her experience with countertransference that occurred when using Spanish in her session because it connected to her personal life: "it was like the native tongue, so like the home, the home language. So, it was more

emotional." She stated that when she noticed it occurring, she would raise awareness of it during clinical supervision. Tenoch echoed this experience and added that he mitigated countertransference by drawing on his awareness and lived experience to help his Spanish-speaking clients understand the relational dynamics within Mexican American households. He especially shared how he uses his experiences as a Mexican American child of immigrants to support older generations in understanding what that is like: "We get to have these kind of conversations where I know what it's like to live here, you know, it's just a different, it's a different beast, different animal."

In addition to these challenges, participants also described how shifts in the political landscape, including anti-immigrant rhetoric, policy changes, and immigration raids, created additional complexity to an already strenuous process of becoming a fully licensed bilingual clinician, as well as uncertainties in both clinical practice and community engagement. These environmental stressors influence how they approach their work, support clients, and experience being first-generation Mexican American bilingual counselors. For example, Citlalli shared that she is experiencing intimidation and fear on a personal and professional level, which made specific steps toward licensure terrifying: "I have an identity that a lot of our community has and is right now under a lot of threat. There's a lot of uncertainty right now with this identity, and it has challenged my process of getting licensed." Moreover, participants reported that the topics of conversation and the clinically significant symptoms their clients exhibit are shifting. Amoxtli expressed worry about not feeling prepared to support her clients through the

political environment and reflected on how not having bilingual clinical support is contributing to her experience:

> I have several clients afraid of the political, like [with everything] going on. I don't feel prepared, you know? Like, I'm like, oh, how do I address this? How do I? How do I? How do I address my, how do I help my client more outside of the, like, let me help you to cope fear. Let me validate your fear. Let me, let me you know. I understand, like, of course, the normal stuff. But had I had a supervisor that was even now, you know she's my boss, and we still talk. We still talk. But even now I could be. If I had somebody different, I could have been like, 'Hey, how do you? How do you help a client that's going through this?'

On the other hand, Metztli shared that she engages in regular communication with other Latine colleagues regarding the weight of the political climate as a way to be a support system for one another:

> With everything going on politically, I guess, in America right now. I noticed that my peers of colors are a whole lot more stressed out and nervous—on edge, lately. Compared to my peers that are not of color, because that's a really big difference in the experience where we're kind of going through, the fear. … My peers, that are mostly Hispanic, are more nervous, and we're able to hold conversation and support regarding that. But people that or not of Hispanic descent, there really isn't like, how are you like? How are you hanging on? How's your family? Are you doing okay, like, mentally? Like, are you feeling okay? But with my peers of color, we're able to check in more.

Similarly, Xochitl shared that her Mexican American bilingual supervisor has been supporting her in finding ways to assist the population she serves that is directly affected by the changes in political policies, raids, and anti-immigration rhetoric through content creation to raise awareness of resources and "helping me come up with ideas on how I can support clients." Overall, these experiences highlight the complex reality of being Mexican American in a field shaped mainly by theories and interventions not tailored to them, lacking culturally inclusive clinical support, and working through issues related to the political climate. Participants navigated emotional and cultural tensions, training limitations, and systemic hurdles while striving to incorporate their cultural identity into their counseling approach. This process required self-awareness, intentional unlearning, and complex decision-making as they worked to serve clients in culturally responsive ways. These reflections further emphasize that culturally diverse connections play a crucial role in participants' development and experiences.

Ultimately, the subtheme of being Mexican American in the field highlights how participants face a pivotal point in their process where they must identify and confront barriers and determine whether to accept, resist, or reject the expectations being imposed on them. They shared the complexity and pain of this process. In the next subtheme, the impact of bilingualism is examined as an additional layer of this confrontation between social conditioning and identity.

Subtheme 3: Bilingualism

This subtheme reflects the complex, nuanced experiences participants navigated as bilingual clinicians, highlighting the influence of practicing in both English and

Spanish. Participants described the emotional, intellectual, and relational dimensions of using two languages in therapeutic settings, including uncertainty, connection, and cultural affirmation. Their observations revealed how language served as a symbol of identity, belonging, and professional confidence. These experiences demonstrate how bilingualism shaped participants' clinical practice and their progression through Borderlands' Coatlicue State.

One of the most prominent challenges identified by the participants was not always finding the "right word" in Spanish during their sessions with Spanish-only speakers, which created moments of self-consciousness, anxiety, hesitation, loneliness, or pressure to speak perfectly. For example, Yaotl stated, "I remember thinking, like I would love to have a Spanish-speaking supervisor…I feel like there are moments that I just get stuck with certain words, and I can't figure it out and I think that's the one thing that I wish I would have had more support in." Amoxtli experienced something similar, and she stated would describe or define the idea instead of naming it, but ultimately, she "felt unprepared" in session. Metztli added to this by emphasizing the loneliness of learning to provide counseling in Spanish, stemming from the lack of clinical conversations with supervisors, limited exposure to clinical reflections, and insufficient feedback. She identified that her confidence was affected by this experience:

> I feel like she would word things really well in English, and I'm like man, I wish I could hear this in Spanish. I wish I could hear the fluidity of it in Spanish. Maybe that would increase my confidence in speaking Spanish with my clients, you know, as a therapist.

As participants described progressing through their supervised licensure and gaining experience, some reported becoming more comfortable without a readily available Spanish clinical term, provided they could explain and accurately convey their intended message. Amoxtli emphasized the importance of expressing herself clearly and understandably, noting that, over time, conversational Spanish has made her sessions feel more relatable and fostered a deeper connection with the client. She has found a balance between knowing the clinical terms and using conversational language when speaking with her clients: “I think that's what's beautiful…I still speak in a way that you're going to understand me, because the common person isn't going to understand all of this professional jargon.” This was echoed by Tenoch as he described acceptance of his level of fluency and Spanish use without letting that get in the way of him providing counseling services. He said, “I just don't know what these terms are in Spanish, you know they're, they're technical. It's an elevated Spanish.” Xochitl, on the other hand, explained how she experienced the option of codeswitching, brainstorming, and conceptualizing a client with ease with her bilingual supervisor:

> It has allowed me to expand my clinical Spanish. I would say, because, even though I, fluent in Spanish, writing it and reading it, and everything. It's still not the same as it being clinically. And again, she's also a first-gen Mexican American. So sometimes we kind of just help each other, whether it's oh, I don't think that word is right, and we figure out a word or a translation that matches closely to what we're, we're trying to support the client with. Because sometimes there's just no words, and the words that Google, or whatever we find, gives us

> isn't just the right one. We don't think it's the correct. We try to figure out together what would be best.

These reflections demonstrate that learning to provide counseling in Spanish requires additional proficiency in Spanish, which participants did not receive in their counselor education programs and that many did not have the opportunity to explore in clinical supervision.

Another aspect the participants discussed regarding bilingualism was their varying degrees of comfort, which they identified as contributing to their confidence, internal experience, and decisions about continuing to provide services in Spanish. For example, Itzel reported she is anxious for all her Spanish-speaking sessions: “I'm always nervous when I meet with them, because I don't know what they expect of me.” This experience was reiterated in most participants’ accounts, and they reported that it took years, practice, and sustained effort to improve their comfort providing counseling services in Spanish. For instance, Amoxtli explained it took her “3 or 4 years of practicing therapy until I was like, ‘Okay, yeah, I feel comfortable.’” Whereas Quetzalli shared, “I've gotten even more comfortable over like the last, like 5 to 7 years.” Participants identified practicing Spanish as an active and conscious choice.

Regardless of comfort and confidence in their skills, the participants described a sense of obligation to provide the services because they wanted to support the Spanish-speaking population, which for some has influenced the populations of Latine bilingual clients they gravitate towards. For example, Yaotl shared that he sometimes has difficulty advertising himself as a bilingual counselor because he lacks confidence in his Spanish

counseling skills, as all of his educational and supervised training was in English. He stated that he feels most confident working with clients who are bilingual or speak Spanglish: “That's like that's a specific sort of like group that I found myself working really well with.” Several participants echoed this experience, noting that they most connect with and feel confident serving the Latine generation, which is bilingual or first-generation. Tenoch reported he also feels confident in providing therapy fully in Spanish, but only with “people who are immigrant, first generation, because our Spanish matches, you know, our Spanish experience matches.” He added that although he is comfortable providing services in Spanish, he is more comfortable providing services in English, which has caused tension when working with couples in which one partner prefers English and the other prefers Spanish. He recalled, “I found myself just always gravitating towards [the client who spoke English] because it felt most comfortable, most familiar, right? And so I've had to be aware of that.” However, the discrepancy in their comfort does not stop them from serving Spanish-only clients. For example, Metztli shared that even though she does not feel completely comfortable, she does not turn Spanish speakers away:

> I feel not a hundred comfortable, like, but I mean it’s not my job to feel comfortable. I’m here to make them feel comfortable, so as long as they feel comfortable, it should be okay, like I’ll still do it. I won’t say no.

An additional layer to their experience as bilingual counselors was that many participants emphasized that their bilingualism shaped their language use and communication style in both therapeutic and professional relationships, where responses

to their bilingualism can negatively affect the relationship and self-confidence, or encourage them to proudly represent their linguistic ability. For example, Tenoch and a few others reported that people quickly see they are bilingual when they first meet them. Tenoch said, “People know I speak another, I come from a Spanish-speaking, or a different, different language-speaking background. They know that. I don't know how they know that, but they know that with just talking to me.” As Yaotl reflected on his view of how bilingualism affects his communication, he noted that he does not care how people may perceive him for how she speaks English, but he cares deeply and is hard on himself when he speaks Spanish:

> I think where I do care more, interestingly enough, is if I'm speaking Spanish, and I'm not saying something the way that I think it needs to sound. …That's where I think it matters more. How my Spanish-speaking colleagues, and that's not a thing we're all on the same page of, like trying to, like, better our Spanish. Yeah, but I, I worry that, that's where I do worry. That my Spanish, my Spanish-speaking colleagues maybe see me as less competent.

Conversely, Citlalli has the opposite experience. When people comment on her English language use or accent, she becomes self-conscious and hyperaware of how she speaks. Therefore, she engages differently: “I've noticed there's some words in English that I will trip up, and I feel embarrassed now. I used to never be embarrassed about it, and now I am.” These insights reiterate that, despite struggling with their use of Spanish and their efforts to become bilingual counselors, they continue to provide services in Spanish to support the expansion of resources for Spanish speakers.

Despite the challenges, the participants emphasized that bilingualism strengthened their therapeutic relationships, fostering trust, cultural understanding, and openness that supported deeper rapport. For example, Xochitl shared that bilingualism has allowed her to connect with clients, be a resource for Spanish speakers, and create safety for her client to process difficult experiences in a language they feel comfortable with: "I think being a bilingual individual has helped me be able to support my clients and meet them where they're at without having to force them to hire a translator to come to therapy." Furthermore, Amoxtli noted that being a Spanish-speaking counseling professional has fostered deep connections with clients and colleagues: "I definitely think that it helps create bonds." She also noted that it has given her professional opportunities:

> I think it's definitely open doors. …When I was appointed to the Board of Trustees [for a mental health organization in the county], the person that appointed me,…is a Latina. She went to Baylor. And when the opportunity arose, one of the things she said is, I want a Latina therapist on that board, because I want somebody who's going to be like paying attention to 'well, how is our community benefiting from this organization?' You know, like I, it was very important to her that I spoke Spanish. It was very important to her that I identified as a Latinx.

Another dimension of bilingualism involved participants expressing a desire for formal training specifically focused on bilingual counseling, noting that their graduate programs lacked guidance on cultural nuance, clinical terminology, clinical support, and resources for providing counseling in Spanish. They often conveyed a similar sense of

loneliness to that in Navigating Nepantla as they sought training, resources, and ways to improve their Spanish fluency independently. Several participants emphasized that being a bilingual counselor felt like more work, with increased responsibility, emotional weight, and expectations, often without support or recognition. For example, Amoxtli shared that she not only did not get any training in Spanish, but she was also expected to do additional administrative tasks, such as helping her colleagues when they needed translations in their sessions: “There were expectations for me to use my language where I wasn't trained and then also even helping my colleagues.” She also emphasized the importance of Spanish-language training for specialized treatments, but acknowledged that such training is often unavailable. Amoxtli stressed the point of having to learn on her own: “I had to do a lot of learning about my culture and how to treat people that look like me by myself or with like my colleagues.” She mentioned wanting someone to process her experience with Spanish-speaking clients and not having that: “I found myself having to have these tough conversations with parents, and like not having someone to be like, Oh, my God! I'm struggling with this! Like, you know, I just kind of, I had to do it on my own.” Similarly, Metztli expressed frustration when sharing how not getting any training in Spanish affects her clinical skills, sense of competence, and vocabulary: “It still bothers me that I don't, I didn't get my training in Spanish.” Many of them spoke about the additional time they had to spend creating resources, translating documents, or researching how to serve the Spanish-speaking population. For instance, Tenoch shared his experience with translating documents: “The hard part has been translating like intake forms. That's hard, because your intake forms also have to be able

to stand up in a court of law." Similarly, Metztli expresses anger about client resources not being in Spanish: "Paperwork, like giving clients worksheets and stuff in Spanish, is a nightmare. I can't. It's so hard to find anything, and when I have my things I like, I have to translate it on my own. That's so frustrating." Part of that additional workload included translating session content from Spanish into English to prepare clinical documents. Quetzalli said:

> I would write their answers in Spanish, and then I had to translate them to English, so that, because they were insurance claims that they needed to be in the language of the insurance that's paying out. And so it ended up actually being double work for me. And then I actually felt like I was falling behind.

Tenoch recognized the additional work and challenges that being bilingual brings, but also feels in awe of his ability to function in two different languages simultaneously:

> It is a lot of work, but it's also like really cool. Because you, you know, sometimes my mind. I'll know what I had. I have said, but I won't know if I had said it in Spanish or English. And so you kind of live in this interesting space with communication, which I really value because it takes you outside of like normal, the norm of what is expected. But it is a lot of work.

In addition to these experiences, some participants expanded on their expectation that they would learn enough on their own about the treatments and their clinical skills to achieve the same level of understanding and confidence in both languages. Amoxtli said, "If I learn a new therapy, I need to be able to know how to translate it." Metztli reinforced this point, saying, "I feel like I should know everything in Spanish, the way I

do in English, like it should be exactly the same." Quetzalli elaborated on this expectation:

> I think sometimes it can be overwhelming to need to learn two things all the time. To make sure that we are up to date in English and up to date in Spanish, because that, it's like, it's a real thing we need to. We need to make sure that we are versed in everything that we know. And sometimes it feels like relearning concepts in Spanish. … So, I think it's just the additional time and effort that is spent to make sure that if I'm going to continue offering, offering sessions in Spanish, that I also continue offering myself those opportunities to stay, stay in those Spanish realms and stay in those things that is going to allow me to continue to develop in that Spanish world. You know? And, and I don't, at least for me personally, I haven't found like this clashing of worlds where everything's just laid out nicely. I think English is English and Spanish is Spanish, and like you have to know both.

Although the desire for formal bilingual counseling training manifested differently across participants, all emphasized that they seek such training in Spanish. A crucial aspect of being bilingual is maintaining or improving linguistic fluency. Some of the participants described feeling scared of losing their Spanish fluency, which motivated them to practice Spanish outside of work to maintain and improve their skills. For example, Metztli shared: "[I am] listening to more audiobooks and trying to have more conversations in Spanish, like, with friends and peers and family." Seeking linguistic support and practice with family and friends was echoed by the majority of participants. These experiences reveal the complex nature of being a bilingual clinician. Participants

navigated linguistic gaps, concerns, and emotional nuances, while also striving to serve clients authentically and with quality. Bilingualism often deepened connections, expanded access for clients, and provided culturally grounded care, even as it introduced moments of self-doubt or pressure. This subtheme, bilingualism, illustrates how language functions as both a tool for connection and a cultural anchor in the Coatlicue state, a pivotal period in their process where they confront past limiting social expectations and put an end to their influence.

In summary, Confronting Duality in Coatlicue State helps advance our understanding of participants' experiences during licensure by highlighting systemic barriers that bilingual counselors face in clinical supervision and counseling education programs, which affect their trajectory in supervised practice. The experiences highlighted throughout, beginning with the initial state of hiding and fear and culminating in noticing, confronting, and disposing of limiting ideas, enable them to begin to transform. Borderlands theory (Anzaldua, 1987) defines the Coatlicue state as a brutal, emotional process where one must confront the painful understanding of internalized oppressive ideals and dispose of them to allow for the reconstruction of one's identity. Identity reconstruction and integration occur within reconstructing the self in the Coyolxauhqui state, as discussed in detail in the next section.

Theme 3: Reconstructing the Self in Coyolxauhqui State

Reconstructing the Self in Coyolxauhqui State represents a shift from assimilation and conformity to expression, intentionality, and self-embracing. This stage focuses on participants navigating transformation and self-acceptance, both personally and

professionally, after overcoming the barriers of the previous two stages. In Borderlands Theory (Anzaldua, 1987), Coyolxauhqui State is characterized by reconstruction and empowerment, in which the coexistence of multiple identities can be embraced simultaneously. The three subthemes, confidence, excited to be a resource for BIPOC therapists, and connecting to roots and self, reflect on the experiences associated with authentic expression, self-acceptance, and empowerment, which allowed the participant to repair their previously dismembered identity.

Subtheme 1: Confidence

The subtheme Confidence reflects participants' evolving sense of competence, self-trust, and professional identity development throughout their training and clinical work. Many began their journeys with uncertainty or self-doubt, shaped by unfamiliar environments, limited representation, or the pressure of being the first in their families to pursue graduate-level careers. Over time, however, participants reported that challenging experiences, supportive feedback, and increased self-awareness strengthened their confidence and sense of capability. These reflections highlight confidence as part of a developmental process shaped by experience, identity, and perseverance. Tenoch described how he has seen a momentous improvement in his confidence between the start of his supervised licensure, when he was stuck in "people pleasing," and now, where he feels "confidence in myself, just as someone that can do this." Building on that, Yaotl shared that he reflected deeply and undertook introspective work to be able to acknowledge his skill and competence:

> There was a lot of work being done around my own cultivation of self-awareness, but also beginning to do some of this trauma healing work. And then transitional stuff that continues, but I think it was, I would say it was my biggest area of growth to be honest. Because it was really looking inward a lot of the times around. How I was impacted, where I felt my limitations were all of my own anxiety and self-doubt and lack of self-esteem and lack of self-confidence, and how that's showing up in room and session with folks, and relearning to trust myself essentially.

Similarly, Quetzalli explained she realized she needed to connect with herself and "I had to trust my intuition a lot more than what I was used to." She explained there is an intuition that she felt disconnected to as a woman of color, and she worked to connect to it: "I connected to those roots, and I connected and started to feel more attracted to nontraditional therapeutic practices.

In contrast, a key aspect of confidence stems from facing and overcoming challenging or emotionally demanding situations. Although difficult, the participants described these experiences as pivotal, ultimately building resilience, skills, and a deeper sense of confidence in their abilities and advocacy. One participant, Itzel, mentioned she thinks she has grown because she is exhausted by the continuous barriers: "I have grown quite a bit. I think I've been able to use more of my voice. But the only [reason] why I have been able to do that is because I got just sick and tired of it." Building on Itzel's sentiment, Metztli also reflected on how the harrowing experiences with one of her supervisors helped her grow. She said she also now recognizes her worth, "I feel more

secure in myself as a person, on a personal matter, and on a professional matter, because I know my worth." She shared that over time, her perceived inadequacy significantly reduced, and now she can overcome it when it shows up:

> I don't have imposter syndrome hit me like a ton of bricks often anymore. It comes every now and then. …But I feel a whole lot more grounded and stable in knowing that I am giving good quality of care.

Further emphasizing this concept, Citlalli articulated that her isolating experience as a first-generation Mexican American counselor in the field was what "kind of what really sealed it for [her]" to decide to pursue higher education to eventually support other Mexican Americans professionally. She highlighted that the lack of cultural representation in the field had influenced her experience, and she wants to help others by proudly representing her culture. She explained that she has begun reading articles and books written by authors who focus on social justice, which has helped her grow both personally and professionally. These introspections highlight the participants' use of advocacy as a means to reconnect with their culture.

For some, another aspect of confidence was becoming fully licensed. Some participants shared their experiences after completing the required supervised licensure hours and obtaining full licensure. For instance, Citlalli described with joy that it continues to astonish her that she is fully licensed, "It was very cool to be able to say it when I officially got it. And then doing things like this [interview] and being like, Yeah, I am a CADC. I'm like, 'Oh, that's very cool.' Yaotl recalled feeling nervous yet "I felt ready" because he had learned to trust himself and his clinical judgement. He reported

feeling nervous about not having additional clinical support from his clinical supervisor, but he knew he was ready to be independently licensed. Although Quetzalli reported feeling excited about achieving full licensure, she described feeling overwhelmed by a mixture of delight and discomfort when her supervision group celebrated her accomplishment.:

> It was really cool, and I found myself in this state of like trying to resist that people wanted to celebrate me because it just felt weird. You know, it felt weird to get praise, and it felt weird to have people share, like, the impact that I had in their lives because of the unique perspective that I brought in.

These reflections demonstrate how participants' confidence evolved throughout their training and professional development. Initial perceived incompetence and cultural disconnection gradually gave way to a stronger sense of competence, built on their lived experience, cultural insight, and grit. As participants learned to trust themselves and embrace their identities, confidence emerged not only in their clinical skills but also in a deeper sense of security, authenticity, and growth within their roles as Mexican American clinicians. This subtheme of confidence reflects key characteristics of Borderlands Theory's (Anzaldua, 1987) Coyolxauhqui State, as depicted by the empowerment of individuals to embrace their culture and be assured in its expression. This empowerment is further highlighted in the next subtheme.

Subtheme 2: Excited to Be a Resource for BIPOC Therapists

Excited to be a resource for BIPOC therapists, captures participants' motivation to support, mentor, and serve as role models for future generations of BIPOC clinicians.

Participants described intentionally focusing their clinical work on populations they care deeply about, expressing excitement and commitment to providing culturally responsive care. Some participants highlighted a deep sense of pride in being Mexican American, describing their cultural identity as a source of motivation, grounding, and responsibility, along with a desire to give back to the community that raised them, address inequities in mental health access, and create pathways that are less isolating for incoming counselors. These insights emphasize the aspirational and community-oriented dimensions of participants' professional identities.

For example, Metztli shared her commitment to serving BIPOC clients and stated, "I actually got the scholarship because I was like, I want to work with people of color that have OCD." Consistent with that, Itzel shared that she feels excited to see Spanish-speaking clients on her schedule because her "people need it, and my people are more than welcome to come in Spanish." She added that she takes on any Spanish-speaking client who needs services. In the same vein, Xochitl stated that her commitment to serving Spanish speakers began long before she entered the field of counseling. She said she had a clear intention: "I went into this profession, knowing that I wanted to be practicing in Spanish." She noted that she feels honored to serve the population she works with and that it is "very rewarding" to speak the client's language. Further emphasizing the desire to serve Latine individuals, Yaotl shared that although he has had to mourn not getting the opportunity to have a bilingual mentor, he looks forward to being "the mentor for someone else." Similarly, Quetzalli stated that she intends to serve as a clinical supervisor to support other Latine counselors and to increase cultural

representation in the field. She identified sacrifice and giving back as central to her process and ongoing journey as a first-generation Mexican American:

> I've been the first child of my generation to accomplish graduating college, graduating all these things, and so like that first generation has been almost a motivating factor. But also like a sense of pride and wanting to make sure that I am making the sacrifices that were made for me to move forward and to be successful, and to give back.

In addition to supervising in their community, participants mentioned that they are creating counseling services for the Latine population to further serve as a resource. For example, Amoxtli stated that her next step in her career is to open a private practice. She stated she wants to "cater to Hispanics, where I want to do immigration evaluations, where I want to just…pour back into the community that poured into me." She stated that her private practice will have a Spanish name to honor her clients.

Additionally, the participants discussed feeling fortunate to come from a Mexican American background. They emphasized how their heritage informs their commitment to serving BIPOC communities, inspiring them to model success, resilience, and cultural pride for future generations of therapists. For instance, Xochitl feels proud of having "established myself as a therapist, a Latina therapist that works specifically with the immigrant and undocumented community. And being recognized as that within my circles." Similarly, Metztli conveys a sense of achievement in being a first-generation Mexican American professional: "I'm doing my part to at least be the beginning of the

color representation in this environment." She also stated that she feels fortunate to love her career and to support people in their growth.

Taken together, these reflections show how participants' professional identities are shaped by a desire to serve, mentor, and advocate for BIPOC communities. By intentionally focusing their clinical work, expressing a commitment to serving their clients, and giving back to future therapists, participants see themselves as both practitioners and role models. This subtheme, which emphasizes being a resource for BIPOC therapists, underscores the interconnection among acceptance of cultural identity, professional identity development, and commitment to community advocacy, which aligns with key Borderlands Theory (Anzaldua, 1987) concepts, specifically Coyolxauhqui State, where one is piecing the self back together. The next subtheme explores another aspect of self-acceptance.

Subtheme 3: Connecting to Roots and Self

Connecting to Roots and Self highlights participants' efforts to maintain and reclaim authentic cultural expression within and outside professional contexts. Participants described finding freedom to express their culture through personal style, attire, and makeup as a means of reconnecting with their identities and cultural roots. These experiences underscore the importance of self-expression and autonomy in fostering well-being and a sense of groundedness, especially in environments that may otherwise constrain individuals' identities. For instance, Citlalli explained that she wants to begin incorporating her culture into her practice, which has led her to read books that discuss it:

> Integrating more traditional and indigenous practices that are erased a lot in our culture. I can think of the author like Gloria Anzaldua. I read her books a lot because I want to integrate a lot of her, her theories, and her ideas into my work. And I think that's really where the roots kind of started for me, and it's it's what I want to continue.

Quetzalli elaborated on this idea when she described how being able to reconnect with the cultural identities that she pushed away to enter the field allowed her to transform and grow as a therapist: “being able to truly backtrack and reconnect with those, those neglected areas of myself, pick them back up and bring them back into the future with me.” She also spoke to her process of decreasing the influence of the teaching that does not serve her:

> I was able to turn them down and to turn myself a little bit more up, and just really trust myself. Because just, in general, I'm a non-traditional person. And so, being able to bring that into my office space, and that the clinical space is what really allowed me to, like, integrate my personality, my you know, my culture into therapy and into healing, and I really got to develop my own personal style.

This idea was further developed when Tenoch explained that music and folk tales included his process of “putting myself back together.” He explained how understanding myths and integrating them into his art helped foster a reconnection with his culture. He said, “I started to create my own relationship to the culture.”

Some participants noted that opportunities to connect with their cultural or personal identities often arose outside professional settings, whereas others described

their attire as a means of expressing their culture and individuality. For example, Itzel shared she can show up more authentically and whole in her personal life, but continues to hide parts of her culture at work: “Yes, but outside of my work, I think. I feel like work; I have to really like, how do you say it? Reducir [shrink]. … my personality, because my personality is, a lot of my cultural personality comes with it.” She shared one way she can show her Latinidad is through her clothes. She stated that for now “that's what I do as far as for myself, to be able to remind myself of where I come from in the workplace.” Metztli elaborated on this describing that at certain events, she tones down any culturally representative clothing and language: “when it comes to like those fancy luncheons, or if I'm gonna be around more people of non-color, I kind of steer away a little bit from the Spanglish.” But she reiterated that she pushes back on expectations in certain settings:

> I will dress very like a modern American, but I will go to work with braids in my hair. I will wear gold jewelry. I will wear espiradas, or, like little, you know, little shoes that are like a little bit cultural. I will wear clothes that has embroidery. I'm at the point where I'm like. I don't care. I'm gonna do it. I'm gonna wear it because I'm like, that's me.

Citlalli shared that she does not feel safe enough to express her identities due to the political climate, but proudly shared that even though she feels scared, she has found a way to wear her makeup as a form of expression:

> Not as much as I would probably want to, but especially right now. It's it's a little scary, but I have decided I'm gonna do it, anyway. So I've been doing a lot of like

Chicana makeup when I go to grad school or when we go to like professional meetings that are required for my interview.

These experiences demonstrate that participants' connections to their cultural roots and personal identities, through everyday practices of self-expression, provided meaningful spaces for authenticity, creativity, and grounding. This subtheme, connecting to roots and self, highlights the relationship between personal identity and professional life, emphasizing fundamental aspects of Borderlands' Coyolxauhqui state, in which individuals move away from assimilation toward authentic cultural expression and empowerment.

Overall, the theme of reconstructing the self in Coyolxauhqui State illustrates the experiences of first-generation Mexican American bilingual counselors and demonstrates the critical role of connection and a sense of belonging, thereby clarifying how supportive relationships contributed to their professional development during supervised licensure. Their reflections indicate that some participants have initiated the process of articulating their identity but have not yet reached a point at which they can fully express themselves, whereas others have been able to connect and integrate their experiences into their clinical practice. This is the essence of Coyolxauhqui state, in which one integrates and assembles the self into an authentic and empowered individual who can embrace diverse identities. This empowerment then enables one to transition into a new level of consciousness.

Theme 4: Embracing the Self in La Conciencia de la Mestiza

Embracing the Self in La Conciencia de la Mestiza is a state of mind in which one tolerates ambiguity and is not limited by social expectation and stereotyping. A stronger identity arises, and they find their voice within society. Individuals can redefine their ancestry and use it to create their own interpretation of their culture. The subthemes of this final theme, rebellion and achieving complete transformation, demonstrate how some participants transitioned from feeling pressured to assimilate to becoming confident, empowered individuals who rebel against harmful systems and present themselves authentically.

Subtheme 1: Rebellion

Rebellion captures participants' ways of asserting autonomy, cultural identity, and self-expression within environments that imposed conformity to expectations that suppress their culture. Participants described acts of resistance that challenged expectations, norms, or judgments regarding language, behavior, and presentation. This rebellious stance was often fueled by frustration or anger at systemic and interpersonal expectations, serving as a mechanism for self-advocacy, affirming one's identity, and promoting personal growth. Collectively, these experiences highlight the role of rebellion as a form of empowerment and self-definition within professional and social contexts.

Participants described deliberately using Spanish in professional or peer settings as a form of cultural assertion, signaling pride in their heritage and resisting pressures to assimilate. Metztli stated, "When there is a specific word in Spanish that I just feel like it

needs to be said in Spanish. Sometimes I'll still say it, even if we're speaking English." This was echoed by a few others, including Yaotl, who said:

> Because I'm bilingual, and I can think in both languages. I think there oftentimes, there are certain words in Spanish that there just isn't an English equivalent and, like, that's what I'm feeling and thinking in the moment. And I just say it, and some of my colleagues don't get it, but some of my colleagues get it because they are Spanish speaking … I still end up using the word, so we'd honor that.

He also explained that he does not care that his bilingualism sometimes affects how he phrases sentences in English, and he does not mind if that affects how others perceive him. Itzel shared a similar sentiment, explaining that she no longer overexplains herself out of fear of being misunderstood, and she is proud of her bilingualism: "I might speak two languages, so you might get two of me." She also stated that she now says her name in Spanish as its intended to sound, rather than tailoring it to non-Spanish speakers: "It's become a part of my identity that every time I introduce myself, I don't say my name in English."

In addition to this linguistic freedom, participants also described how their acts of boldness were often motivated by frustration, anger, or a sense of injustice, transforming negative emotions into purposeful resistance and self-expression. Yaotl and Itzel identified frustration with systemic oppression as a motivation to effect change. Itzel shared that being tired of the oppressive obstacles fueled her decisions to advocate for her needs: "I think I've been able to use more of my voice, but the only thing why I have been able to do that is because I got just sick and tired of it." Yaotl reflected on how his

supervised practice gained enabled him to find clarity and acceptance about what it means to be a Mexican American in our society, a process that involved grieving and entering a "decolonizing process." He shared that he was angry at the fact that he had to experience that at all:

> I think part of it was rebellion. Part of it was the anger that I felt about having to do that in the first place and having a great awareness of like the ways in which I've done it before. I think by that point I was learning a lot about myself and learning how you know, even like growing up, there were ways in which I didn't want to be Mexican. I didn't want to be brown.

Furthermore, participants also emphasized that these rebellious actions contributed to personal growth, fostering confidence, resilience, and a stronger sense of identity. They described learning to embrace their differences as an intentional act of resistance. Rather than striving to blend in, they expressed comfort and pride in being different, framing this acceptance as a form of rebellion against norms that expected conformity. For instance, Metztli also shared she recognizes the merit of her contribution to the field and her ability to learn to navigate new experiences: "I know my worth. I know I'm worth getting paid livable money, livable wage. I deserve to have clients who appreciate and respect my work with them. I deserve clients who want to put the work in with me." She no longer assumes accountability for efforts aimed at satisfying others' expectations: "After a while, I learned like, this is not my problem. That's theirs. And it is what it is. Let it go, let it roll off my back. That's not my problem. It's not my burden to carry." Adding to Metztli's point, Amoxtli described how her supervisor supported her in

learning that when a client is not ready for therapy, it is not a reflection of her professional skills or judgment:

> That it wasn’t on me. That wasn't my fault. That clients could leave. That I could flat out fire clients that you did not like. If a client stopped, just stopped wanting to see me, that's not because I wasn’t, that it wasn't that I'm not a good therapist, because a client stopped seeing me, or ghosted me, or hurt themselves. That has nothing to do with my ability to help others.

Overall, these experiences demonstrate how rebellion functioned as both a coping mechanism and a means of increasing their confidence. By proclaiming cultural identity, disregarding limiting judgments, and turning their anger into growth, they learned to navigate professional and social spaces on their own terms. Rebellion highlights the role of purposeful defiance in promoting resilience, confidence, and personal growth among Mexican American bilingual counselors, which is essential to the mental shift required to cultivate their unique conciencia de la mestiza. Their ability to find and use their voice allows them to tolerate the contradiction between who they are and what society expects. This mental shift is further explored in the next subtheme.

Subtheme 2: Reaching Full Transformation

Although all participants are moving in this direction, only one participant has reached complete transformation. The participants have made strides in navigating the transition from student to licensed counselor, identifying barriers and oppressive systems within the counseling field, and gradually piecing together their identities. They are finding ways to integrate their cultures, present authentically, reconnect with their

cultural roots, and embrace their diverse cultural identities. This subtheme captures the participant's journey toward complete transformation. These reflections highlight this stage not as a fixed trait but as an ever-evolving process. In this section, I will highlight several moments in which he described experiences that helped them recognize their own value, embrace their identity, and reframe challenges as opportunities for learning, personal and professional growth, and the evolution of their perspectives on themselves and the counseling field.

Tenoch described that it has not been a fast process to reach this stage: "It's been a long road. I'm almost 50, so I've had a lot of time on this earth." He expressed that he has learned that hiding oneself does not work: "You can't hide from who you are. It's so weird, you know. It's like you keep running away, from yourself, and you're only running straight into yourself." He explained the significance of the moment he recognized who he was and why. He reported he listened to a song in Spanish and he was deeply moved by it:

> This swell of emotion, just like came over me, and I started to cry, and I started to like tear up and get really emotional. And that is when I realized that I am Mexican American, because there's no way that I just had this experience and I'm not Mexican American. So of course, I'm Mexican American, right? Like, I grew up with this. It doesn't matter how what I look like. I know what it's like to pick fields and to not have a lot of food in the fridge. And you know all these kinds of stuff when your parents are trying their hardest."

Furthermore, he described how he identified with Mexican culture and gained clarity about his identity, beginning with the realization that he is neither purely Mexican nor purely American, but rather a combination of both. He noted that each culture has its own unique beliefs and values, and that he combines them, a process he discovered through self-exploration and therapeutic work. He shared he was able to accept that he is different because of it: “Yeah, I think differently. Yeah, I speak differently. Yeah, I look differently. And so what!”

Beyond personal growth, he noted that being open about his struggles has been integral to his process, helping to raise awareness and normalize this experience. He expressed some frustration when saying that there is an idea that achieving goals will solve emptiness, disconnection, or generational tension, which leads to people feeling lost. He continued by describing a notion he realized during his process:

> The split that Latinos live with for all of their life is so fascinating. And it's where we get a lot of pain, and it's where we also get a lot of creation from right? And when we're in it, when we're when we're in this place and we're not hiding it, it's it's really beautiful. And it's really, it's where everything is born from. I'm sure it's from from where that poet is writing from. You know, it's like this is like the new world. It's like a new world, right? It didn't exist at one time. And now it's like this new thing, right? So that's powerful. And it's beautiful, and it's dark and light all at the same time.

These experiences illustrate his growth, self-discovery, and evolving professional perspectives. By embracing his identities and reflecting on both the challenges and

opportunities, he moved toward full transformation. This subtheme highlights the interplay of self-awareness, cultural identity, and resilience in shaping Tenoch's journey as a counseling professional. Reaching full transformation, identify how this participant has found his voice and uses his new consciousness to understand his experience and redefine his unique place in society.

Overall, the findings in this last theme, full transformation, contributed to answering how first-generation Mexican American bilingual counselors experience supervised licensure by illustrating that confidence, connection to self and culture, and acceptance of themselves allowed the participants to transform into counselors who are whole. Although not all participants have reached this stage, their stories indicate that it is a long, intentional process that often extends beyond their supervised licensure. The experiences highlighted in this theme align with Borderlands Theory's (Anzaldua, 1987) notion that reaching la conciencia de la mestiza is when a person can resist oppression, redefine and embrace themselves and their differences, and transform into someone who has tolerance for contradictions within their lived experience.

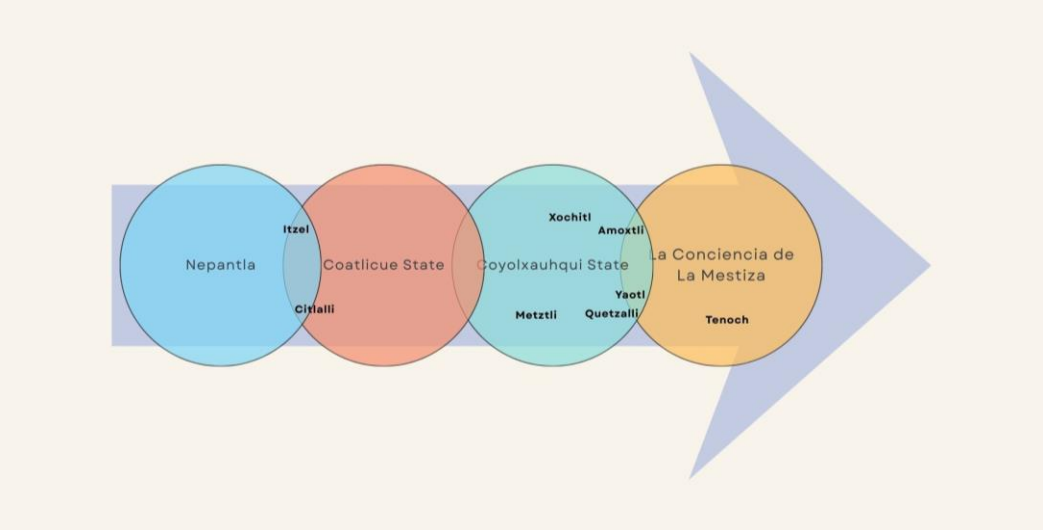
Participants' Progression Through Borderlands Theory Stages

The participants' narratives revealed their movement through the four main stages of Borderlands Theory (Anzaldua, 1987; see Figure 2). All eight participants were at different stages of their journeys. Still, they all described beginning at Nepantla, moving into Coatlicue state, and eventually entering Coyolxauhqui state, with some beginning to move toward la conciencia de la mestiza. Itzel and Citlalli seem to be moving out of Nepantla and entering Coatlicue State. They are actively identifying systemic barriers and

confronting experiences that limit them and are working to dismantle the ideas and systems of expectations that hold them back. They have begun to find the strength to stand for their identities. Xochitl and Metztli seem to be in the Coyolxauhqui state. They have reached a point at which they begin to apply the lessons they have learned as tools to move forward and reconnect with themselves and with whom they aspire to be. They are actively using their identity and cultural background to motivate themselves to recover. Amoxtli, Quetzalli, and Yaotl seem to be between Coyolxauhqui state and la conciencia de la mestiza. They have deconstructed oppressive ideas, reconnecting with their roots, and building futures with their identities at the forefront. Tenoch seems to have fully entered the stage of la conciencia de la mestiza. In Borderlands Theory, this is an ongoing stage in which one recognizes and accepts one's identity without judgment and can resist oppression. Tenoch appreciates the pain and struggles of his people and uses them as fuel to create, both personally and professionally. His cultural background and identities underpin who he is as a therapist and how he approaches therapy and healing. Their stories illustrate the progression of awareness of oppression, confronting its harsh reality, reconnecting with their culture, and ultimately finding ways to use this new consciousness to view themselves within society.

Figure 2

Progression Through Borderlands Theory Stages



Summary

This chapter presented the findings of this qualitative study exploring the lived experiences of first-generation Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors during their supervised practice. Through the analysis of the stories of eight participants, four final themes and their respective subthemes were identified. The four themes were: (1) Navigating Nepantla: Feeling Isolated, Encountering Racism, Self-Imposed Expectations, and Suppressing Identities; (2) Confronting Duality in Coatlicue State: Supervision, Being Mexican American in the Field, and Bilingualism; (3) Reconstructing the Self in Coyolxauhqui State: Confidence, Excited to Be a Resource for BIPOC Therapists, and Connecting to Roots and Self, and (4) Embracing the Self in La Conciencia de la Mestiza: Rebellion and Reaching Full Transformation. These themes reflected the four primary concepts of Borderlands Theory (Anzaldua, 1987), illustrating

how Mexican Americans often navigate similar issues and encounter additional stressors and barriers in the already challenging process of developing as a counseling professional. In Chapter 5, I will present the interpretation of my findings, discuss the study's limitations, provide recommendations for future research, and outline the implications for positive social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry was to explore the lived experiences of first-generation Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors during supervised licensure. The study participants, comprising six women and two men, shared their stories through semi-structured interviews. Limited research is available on first-generation individuals, Mexican American bilingual counselors, and licensed counseling professionals. The goal of the study was to bridge the gap in the literature and understand what first-generation Mexican American bilingual licensed counselors experience on their journey toward full licensure. Narrative inquiry was chosen to support the integration of cultural impact and the participants' meaning-making (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fraser, 2004). The findings reflect key concepts of Borderlands Theory (Anzaldua, 1987) and contribute to the literature available on Mexican Americans and bilingual counselors. In this chapter, the findings are interpreted in terms of major themes, limitations are identified, recommendations for future research are provided, and the implications for positive social change are discussed.

Interpretation of the Findings

Navigating Nepantla

Navigating Nepantla captures the emotional toll and cultural disconnection that shaped the participants' supervised licensure. All participants reported feelings of loneliness, disconnection, and emotional strain. Specifically, participants described

feeling isolated, alone, and sometimes unwelcome in the field and in their education programs. Some shared that their educational programs were not teaching culturally inclusive content or therapeutic interventions, which created dissonance between how they viewed the world and the potential work they would do as counselors. Most described not being able to be fully authentic because they needed to fit the mold of what they were taught or what they were told through covert messages. The isolation increased their desire for connection and belonging with other Latine, but they struggled to find Latine representation in the field. Some participants described feeling anxious about the work they were doing because it conflicted with their cultural values, such as teaching elders how to parent or pointing out that they were doing something wrong. Additionally, their confidence in their counseling skills in Spanish was significantly lower, as they had not been trained to provide counseling in the language, and they also lacked support on how to navigate internal struggles related to identifying with their clients' stories. These experiences highlight that the sense of isolation, cultural disconnection, and lack of cultural acceptance contributed to their sense of inadequacy and ultimately altered their experience in supervised licensure.

This finding is consistent with studies by Hipolito-Delgado et al. (2017) and Thacker et al. (2021), which have found that loneliness and isolation can be provoked by a lack of representation of Latine individuals in the counseling field. Moreover, the findings were consistent with several other studies that have found that first-generation students and professionals can experience isolation, feeling lost or out of place, or unsafe in their educational setting (Garcia, 2020; Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2017; Ramos et al.,

2020). These results align with the principles of Borderland's Theory, Nepantla, where the participants' experiences described how they navigated the isolating space of learning to find their place in the field, feeling anxious, and discovering how to navigate the need to hide their identities. This stage is described by the emotional and psychological borderlands that Mexican Americans experience during a transitional period (Aguilar-Valdez et al., 2013; Anzaldua, 1987; Keating, 2006; Krewson & Matheis, 2021). These findings suggest that counselor education programs and clinical supervisors may position first-generation Mexican American bilingual counselors in a prolonged state of professional uncertainty. Beyond the difficulty of supervised licensure and professional development, the state of uncertainty and resulting isolation hinder their ability to create alignment between their cultural identity and professional expectations, impacting their confidence, emotional state, and growth during supervised licensure.

Confronting Duality in Coatlicue State

Confronting Duality in Coatlicue State highlighted the insufficient training available for bilingual counselors and the lack of clinical support available to them for their Spanish-speaking client cases. The majority of the participants did not have a bilingual supervisor, training in how to provide bilingual counseling, or language training. Most participants described their clinical supervision experience felt like it was missing something, even when they had a strong supervision alliance and felt supported and prioritized by their supervisors. In contrast, Xochitl was the only participant who had a bilingual supervisor who is also Mexican American shared that she had a great supervision experience. She identified how having a strong connection with a supervisor

who understands her culture, identities, and language has shaped her process. Xochil added that receiving clinical support in Spanish allows her to experience supervision on vocabulary, cultural issues, and to help with culturally tailoring interventions. She described how her alliance with someone who understands her passion for the population she serves and is supportive of the culturally informed decisions she makes about her career has made a significant difference in her comfort during her supervised licensure process. The majority of the participants without bilingual supervisors reported struggling with the use of Spanish in their sessions and feeling guilty about the quality of the counseling they could provide for their clients. They noted that most of the time, Spanish-speaking clients were happy to have a Spanish-speaking therapist, and that the challenges they experienced in sessions due to language barriers created a sense of rapport between them. However, this suggests that Spanish-speaking clients receive lower-quality services because counseling professionals are not adequately trained. Some participants shared they felt it was more work to be a bilingual counselor, and most identified ways in which they had to learn on their own, train, and seek resources for themselves. They identified that it is challenging to find resources in Spanish and often had to create them themselves. The participants also shared that they were practicing Spanish with their families or reading to improve their Spanish fluency. Most participants noted it was important to them to speak Spanish appropriately, professionally, and understandably for their clients. This highlights that the lack of training and clinical support can serve as a catalyst for numerous obstacles, including issues related to participants' confidence, preparedness, perceived professional development, and emotional strain.

The predominance of this theme provided additional support for the well-established finding that the current clinical settings, supervision, and counselor education programs are insufficiently educating and supporting bilingual counselors (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018; Interiano-Shiverdecker et al., 2021; Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002; Trepal et al., 2014, 2019). In this study, participants' experiences reflected this process as they shared the barriers and oppression they encountered, such as a lack of bilingual clinical supervision, training, education, or clinical resources in Spanish, and racism. These narratives aligned with part of Anzaldua's concept of Coatlicue State, which emphasizes the point where one is confronted with barriers, challenges, and limitations that are oppressive to their culture (Anzaldua, 1987; Hinojosa, 2019; Orozco-Mendoza, 2008). These findings highlight a gap in counselor preparation for bilingual counselors. Individuals rely on counselor education programs and clinical supervisors to educate, train, and guide them as they enter the counseling field. However, educators and supervisors are not adequately educating, training, or supervising bilingual counselors on culturally inclusive and linguistic issues, and the discrepancy between the bilingual counselors' knowledge and the challenges they face creates distress.

Confronting Duality in Coatlicue State also highlighted the systematic barriers the participants experienced and their need for resilience. The findings revealed that navigating barriers and using their pre-established resilience altered their process during supervised practice. Many reflected on what is was like entering spaces that most people in their family had never been to, the costs associated (both emotional and financial), what it was like to navigate it, how they had to learn to explain it with their family,

feeling taken advantage of, and encountering racism in those spaces. Most participants discussed how the barriers pushed them to learn to advocate for their needs and the process of gaining the courage to do so. Participants cited that their motivational factors, such as wanting to support future generations, recognizing the need for bilingual services among Latine clients, and a desire to be a resource, helped them overcome the barriers, pain, and stress. Most also noted that their resilience stemmed from witnessing how their parents struggled but persevered. Some discussed the pain of having to unlearn and rediscover who they were as therapists that aligned with their cultural identities. The study revealed several recurring barriers that impacted the participants' perceived progress; however, they also described how these challenges led to their growth, resilience, and ability to advocate for themselves.

This finding echoed what Nelson and Jackson (2003) found in their study, that many of their participants noted financial sacrifices and emotional costs as a relevant part of their professional identity development due to the choices they had to make on how to spend their time and money. Delgado-Romero et al. (2018), Espino (2016) Fuentes Majors (2022), and Thacker et al. (2021) found that the motivating factors for a Mexican American counselor are strong drivers for their resilience, which was also found in this study. These results are consistent with the other part of borderland's Coatlicue State. These results describe how the participants learned from the barriers and resisted them by advocating and persevering. They also expressed the duality of being confronted by external barriers while learning to resist their intended oppression, which is characterized by the Coatlicue State, where one has the brutal task of addressing internal systemic

barriers that have been internalized, thereby limiting the person (Anzaldua, 1987; Orozco-Mendoza, 2008). These findings highlight the lack of available cultural and linguistically responsive training and clinical supervision, which altered their overall satisfaction in supervised practice. Additionally, it resulted in delayed professional growth in Spanish counseling skills.

Reconstructing the Self in Coyolxauhqui State

Coyolxauhqui reflected the critical role of connection and a sense of belonging to the participants' development as supervised licensees. All of the participants mentioned seeking connection with colleagues who were Latine or BIPOC, and noticing that at the start, it was difficult to find representation in the field. Some participants described their excitement and relief about finding those connections. They shared that finding a supportive supervisor (even if not bilingual) helped their process. Some shared that their supervisor helped them transform into therapists who could incorporate their culture and worldview into their counseling approach. Many shared how unapologetically integrating their culture through their clothes, therapeutic practices, and speech were some ways they began the process of incorporating their identities into their work. This reveals that a turning point in the participants' process occurred once they were able to establish connections with colleagues, supervisors, or mentors who could guide and support them in reconnecting with their cultural roots and worldview. These findings are consistent with past studies that have indicated connections are extremely valuable and supportive of the professional development of Latine counselors (Garcia, 2020; K. W. Nelson & Jackson, 2003; N. E. Thacker et al., 2021). It also echoes Wong et al.'s (2013) findings

that indicate that a strong and supportive supervisory relationship is essential during supervised practice. These findings reflect the central tenets of Coyolxauhqui state, where, after being fragmented, they are able to rebel and find connections that support their reintegration. The participants' experiences demonstrated their process of picking themselves back up and incorporating their culture in their practice, thereby showing up authentically in their counseling sessions. In Borderlands Theory, Coyolxauhqui state involves the process of piecing together the fragmented self and accepting the coexistence of various identities, embracing them simultaneously after experiencing being torn apart due to oppression based on one's culture, as illustrated in this theme (Anzaldua, 1987; Orozco-Mendoza, 2008). The findings demonstrate that bilingual counselors gained freedom, growth, and confidence through culturally affirming relationships, counseling approaches, linguistic growth, and identity integration. The reintegration of their cultural background enabled the participants to present themselves authentically and aided their professional identity development.

Embracing the Self in La Conciencia de la Mestiza

The final theme, Embracing the Self in La Conciencia de la Mestiza, captured the idea that rebuilding their identity around the authentic expression of their culture can lead them to becoming whole. The data indicate that confidence, connection to self and culture, and acceptance of themselves allow transformation. Participants expressed excitement about representing Mexican Americans in a professional setting and being a resource for incoming bilingual or Latinx counselors. They described an improvement in their confidence when they felt supported by their supervisors, were free to be

themselves, and could provide counseling in a way that was authentic to who they are. The participants began to acknowledge their pain and the barriers they encountered without judgment. They described having the power to push against expectations rather than conform to them. One participant shared that being open about his experience is a way for him to help others know they are not alone in their struggle and that it is possible. He shared his discovery that hiding only pushed one more into the space they are trying to run away from. These experiences suggest that incorporating their culture and worldview rather than hiding it allows them to grow and find wholeness.

These findings add to Dong et al.'s (2018) study, which found that congruence between and integration of the personal and professional selves support a counselor's professional development. This study's findings revealed that cultural integration, which is part of the personal self, being integrated into the participants' therapeutic approach, allowed them to gain a stronger sense of confidence and connection with their clients. Additionally, the findings align with Fuentes Majors (2022), who found that many Mexican Americans feel honored to represent their culture and the Latine community in a professional setting. These results are consistent with the third and fourth stages of Borderlands Theory (Anzaldua, 1987). As previously described, Coyolxauhqui state is the process of reclaiming the self, and this was evident in the study's results, as participants discussed connecting to their roots, taking pride in representing their culture, and being excited to serve as a resource for Latine and BIPOC counselors. The participants' narratives also showed how several of them are finding their voice despite facing oppression, barriers, and a lack of support, which aligns with the central concepts

of the final stage of Borderlands Theory, La Conciencia de la Mestiza. This stage is characterized by a person who is no longer held down by oppressive expectations and integrates their cultures and personality, finding their voice. This level transformation suggests that when someone can authentically and fully integrate themselves with their profession's teachings, they can develop a strong professional identity. Professional identity development is a major goal of clinical supervision, further reinforcing the notion that culturally responsive and affirming supervision is crucial for the long-term development of bilingual licensed counselors. Some participants have reached this stage and described finding a way to connect with their voice, integrating their culture and identities into their work.

The participant stories illustrated the progression through the stages of Borderlands Theory (Anzaldua, 1987) in a personal way. It demonstrated that each stage is not linear and is not completed by simply checking boxes. Many of the participants began in Nepantla, describing how they were forced to identify the barriers and oppression they faced. Followed by the Coatlicue state, which is a painful, dark, and anxiety-inducing process of not ignoring the information they learned in the previous stage, which inherently changed them. Over time, the participants were able to find their voice, gain confidence, and reconnect with cultural roots in Coyolxauhqui State. The connection with others supported them in finding their way and piecing themselves back together. Some have reached a place where they experience wholeness, known as la Conciencia de la Mestiza. They are grounded by their culture and are confident in who

they are as Mexican American bilingual counselors. These stories emphasize how Borderlands Theory is a deeply emotional and transformational journey.

This study adds empirical evidence from an underrepresented population. Specifically, these findings contribute to the limited research on first-generation Mexican Americans, the experiences of bilingual counselors in supervision, and the experiences of counselors during their supervised licensure. Consistent with past research on Latine and multicultural counselors, the results show that culturally responsive, respectful, and inclusive training and supervision are essential to their professional development, while also extending limited available research by demonstrating that bilingual linguistic awareness, training, clinical support, and supervision are crucial for those who want to provide bilingual counseling. Furthermore, the study's findings emphasize the importance of understanding the barriers faced by first-generation Mexican American bilingual counselors and how underrepresentation in the counseling field can significantly impact the growth and development of incoming counselors with diverse cultural backgrounds.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be noted. As this was a qualitative narrative inquiry, the interpretation of the data was based on the researcher's subjective perspective, and one of the main limitations of this study is my insider positionality. Although my positionality may have helped me connect with the participants and provide a deeper understanding of the narrative, it could have also introduced bias in the data interpretation. To mitigate this, I used reflexive journaling, peer debriefing, and member

checking. Another limitation is that the study relied solely on interviews from a small sample for data collection, which requires participants to recall and disclose all the details of their experiences. Due to the socio-political climate, participants may have chosen not to disclose certain information significant to their narratives. These limitations demonstrate the need for future research and offer guidance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, further research is needed to expand our understanding of Mexican American and bilingual counselors. First, future research could investigate the experiences of bilingual counseling professionals who work under bilingual supervisors. This research could support counselor education in creating a bilingual supervision training model, endorsed competencies, or best practices for bilingual supervision that address issues related to isolation, language fluency, the influence of social-cultural issues on counseling sessions, and culturally informed counselor identity development. This would fill gaps in clinical supervision noted by the participants. Likewise, endorsed competencies or best practices could also include training focused on language use in clinical settings and exploring students' Spanish fluency before expecting them to provide services in Spanish. This addresses the participants' challenges, sense of incompetence, and concern for the quality of services their clients receive. Furthermore, studies should investigate training opportunities for faculty and clinical supervisors to determine the support they can provide to bilingual counselors, with a particular focus on clinical supervision techniques that English-only speaking supervisors can use when working with bilingual supervisees. This would

address the participants' sense of isolation and obligation to independently learn to work with Spanish-speaking clients during supervised licensure. Finally, future research should investigate the factors contributing to the underrepresentation of Latine individuals in the counseling field, including accessibility to educational programs, mentorship opportunities, and financial and systemic barriers, to inform strategies for increasing diversity. Together, these recommendations urge counseling professionals and researchers to continue exploring the needs, barriers, and resilience of bilingual Latine professionals because, as this study found, representation matters.

Implications

Positive social change is about creating a real-world impact. This research has several implications for promoting positive social change on individual and systemic levels. First and foremost, the implications for social change could be an improvement in the quality of counseling services that Spanish-speaking communities receive. As the participants discovered the value of their authentic representation, they began advocating for higher-quality care for their communities. Furthermore, the study's results can improve counselor education and supervision professionals in their approach to training bilingual counselors. Counselor educators and supervisors should receive continuing education in bilingual and multicultural supervision, engage in structured or intentional conversations about language use and supervision challenges, and support supervisees in gathering resources to facilitate their clinical development in Spanish. This study found that connection promotes growth and safety, creating opportunities for connection or teaching supervisees how to find connection within the counseling field may foster their

networking skills and help them gain a community they can lean on. Counselor education programs and mental health agencies should hire bilingual counselor educators and supervisors to support the professional development of bilingual counselors. Furthermore, they can create consultation groups that support bilingual counselors. By applying these findings in practice, counselor educators and supervisors can advocate for the creation of more supportive training programs, teaching culturally informed strategies, and fostering relationships that support incoming counselors and the counseling field as a whole.

Conclusion

Overall, this study expands on the existing literature on bilingual and first-generation Mexican American counselors by offering a deeper exploration of how the cultural identity, language, and professional development intersect in supervised licensure. Using Borderlands Theory (Anzaldua, 1987) as a lens through which to analyze the participants' narratives gave the study a unique perspective on the emotional and identity processes the participants navigated during supervised licensure. Some of their experiences included liminality, cultural suppression, and eventual identity reconstruction within predominantly white professional spaces. These findings reiterate the importance of culturally competent and inclusive training and supervision that honors and respects the cultural identities of bilingual counselors, encouraging the integration of these identities into their counselor identity development. Together, these findings contribute to our understanding of the need for counselor education programs and clinical

supervisors to develop culturally responsive and bilingual-informed strategies that strengthen and enhance the experiences of diverse counselors-in-training.

At the heart of these narratives is the pain and passion of the participants. They reveal the weight of navigating new paths to create something greater than themselves and help their communities. Despite their exhaustion from the barriers they encounter, they showed resilience and rebellion against the system that dismembers their identities. Their narratives emphasize the pressing need for greater diversity, inclusivity, cultural competence, and safety within the counseling field. Ultimately, this study reminds us that positive social change can be created through connection, authenticity, and support, helping us move closer to building an inclusive counseling field and systems that truly support those who walk this path.

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Appendix A: Participant Criteria Survey

Individuals interested in participating in the study completed a Qualtrics survey with the following questions to determine their eligibility. These questions were based on the study's required participant criteria:

First name and last name initial

Are you older than 18?

Do you identify as Mexican American?

Where were your biological parents born?

Are you a Spanish/English bilingual counselor?

What counseling license do you hold? How long have you had that license?

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Data were gathered from participants through the following interview guide, followed by probing questions:

1. Tell me your story on what it was/has been like to become a counselor.
2. Tell me how identifying as a first-generation Mexican American has impacted your journey in becoming a counselor.
3. Tell me about your experience in clinical supervision.
4. Tell me about the cultural diversity in your supervision experience.
5. Tell me about your personal growth and professional identity development during supervised licensure.
6. Tell me the impact language had on your professional development.
7. Tell me about your comfort with providing counseling services in Spanish.
8. How did or does language impact your communication with colleagues and clients?
9. Tell me about any instances where you may have felt the need to hide or push away identities or cultural identifiers to fit the profession.
10. If fully licensed: Tell me about any reflections about your supervised licensure process that you have had since becoming independently licensed.