A Qualitative Study of Counselors Who Work with Spanish-Speaking Clients: Implications for Counselor Training and Practice

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A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF COUNSELORS WHO WORK WITH SPANISH-SPEAKING CLIENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELOR TRAINING AND PRACTICE

by

Daniel Rolando Romero

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology Western Michigan University December 2013

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A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF COUNSELORS WHO WORK WITH SPANISH-SPEAKING CLIENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELOR TRAINING AND PRACTICE

Daniel Rolando Romero, Ph.D.
Western Michigan University, 2013

The Spanish-speaking population in the United States is growing. As the population grows, need for competent mental health services may also expand. Counselors are currently underprepared to provide these services (Furman, 2006; Lebrón-Striker, 2012). The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients, focusing on their motivations, preparation and work experiences, and recommendations for counselor education.

Two groups were selected for this phenomenological study: Counselors who use interpreters (CWUI) and counselors who do not use interpreters (CWDNU). Themes that emerged related to motivation included helping others, inspirational and affirmative experiences, vocational calling, and career advancement. Themes that related to counselor preparation included cultural immersion experiences, education-related experiences, high cultural identification, and low cultural identification. Themes that related to counseling Spanish-speaking clients included high cultural understanding; anxiety, uncertainty, and skepticism; and low cultural understanding. Finally, themes that related to recommendations included knowledge of the growing demand for
counselors to work with Spanish-speaking clients, meaningful immersion experiences, and humility.

While none of the participants set out to work with Spanish-speaking clients, all described finding themselves working with this population. Graduate training experiences were seldom mentioned as sufficiently preparing participants for their work. Although the purpose of this study was not to compare and contrast CWUI with CWDNUI, descriptions of their preparation and work experiences were different. CWDNUI reported high identification and understanding with their clients, while CWUI described low identification and lack of understanding. For CWUI, low understanding was not always overtly attributed to the use of an interpreter but instead was described as a barrier to making therapeutic contact. This finding suggests that while CWUI value the role that interpreters play, use of interpreters may also inhibit counselors’ ability to establish therapeutic rapport with clients.

Preparation for work with Spanish-speaking clients is a multifaceted and complex process. Participants indicated that their training programs, while important to their multicultural preparation, did not sufficiently prepare them for work with this population. Based on a synthesis of their experiences and recommendations, implications for the counseling profession and future research are discussed.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Daniel Rolando Romero
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Background

Counseling diverse populations has long been a dominant theme in the professional counselor literature as counselor educators seek to provide the most effective training for counseling students (Fuertes, 2004; Sue & Sue, 1999). In 2008, Arredondo, Tovar-Blank, and Parham renewed the call for increased attention in the area of counselor preparation for work with an ever-growing diverse population in the United States. These authors proclaimed that the next 10 to 20 years would require an even greater expansion of cultural awareness and research in the area of multicultural counseling as the United States continues to become more linguistically and culturally diverse (Arredondo et al., 2008). The aim of this present study is to further the understanding of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients, in order to learn more about the current state of counseling and to inform counselor education on how to better prepare counselors to deliver competent services to this significant and growing population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

While the United States has long been a multicultural society (Howard, 1993), there is a growing consensus that counselors need to be doing a better job of meeting the needs of its linguistically diverse population (Arredondo et al., 2008; Heppner, 2006; Timmins, 2002). Though English remains the unofficial primary language spoken by the
majority of people in the United States (Wen-hsien, 2007), there is a growing Spanish-speaking population in the country (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). More than 12% of the U.S. population speaks Spanish as a primary language in the home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

While the Spanish-speaking population in the United States is widely heterogeneous and includes people from more than 20 countries of origin, diverse socioeconomic and racial backgrounds, as well as having documented and undocumented legal status, the overwhelming majority is of Mexican origin, with many having recently immigrated (Passel, 2011; Passel, Capps, & Fix, 2004; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Though many in this population do not often seek out individual or family counseling (Abreu & Sasaki, 2004; Kouyoumdjian, Zamboanga, & Hansen, 2003; Seijo, Gómez, & Freidenberg, 1995; Timmins, 2002), many increasingly find themselves receiving services from counselors and other helping professionals (Ramos, Franklin, Suleiman-Gonzalez, & Abina-Sotomayor, 2011). Counselors and other helping professionals who are called on to work with this population are confronted with the dilemma of providing ethical and efficacious services in a cross-lingual and cross-cultural setting (Biever et al., 2002).

Statement of the Problem

The field of counseling lacks a formal multicultural competency assessment standard (Ponterotto, Rieger, Barrett, & Sparks, 1994). Although most counselor training programs now include a multicultural course, there continues to be little agreement within the profession about what constitutes good multicultural training and how
students’ cultural competence is assessed (Ponterotto et al., 1994). While the demand from the current United States population increasingly requires counselors to be competent to work with Spanish-speaking clients (Arredondo et al., 2008; Lebrón-Striker, 2012), there is not yet a standard competence training for counselors in this area (Biever, Gómez, González, & Patrizio, 2011; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b). The past decade has seen an increase in attention to this need by counselors and other helping professionals who work with this population (Engstrom & Min, 2004; Lebrón-Striker, 2012; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b).

Counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients provide services with the added barrier of language (Biever et al., 2002; Biever et al., 2011; Castaño, Biever, González, & Anderson, 2007; Lebrón-Striker, 2012; Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002). Even bilingual counselors state they have difficulties providing services in Spanish and are aware of their limitations and lack of competence in this area (Engstrom & Min, 2004; Lebrón-Striker, 2012; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b). In their qualitative study on the personal and professional language development of bilingual psychotherapists, Verdinelli and Biever (2009b) found that while participants took pride in their bilingual abilities that allowed them to work with the underserved Spanish-speaking population, they were very aware of their professional limitations, as they had not received training to work in such a setting. Nevertheless, counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients are often assumed to be competent to work with this population, based solely on their linguistic abilities (Biever et al., 2002; Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002). This is a concern for the counseling profession, as it places clients at risk for receiving less than competent
services (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). The last several years have seen an increased call for attention, including training and preparation standards, to work with this population (Arredondo et al., 2008; Biever et al., 2011; Castaño, 2002; Castaño et al., 2007; Engstrom & Min, 2004; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b).

Very little is known about the experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients (Arredondo et al., 2008; Castaño, 2002; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b), as few studies have specifically focused on the experiences of counselor practitioners themselves. It is evident that counselors who provide services to Spanish-speaking clients struggle with serving the unique and dynamic needs of this population (Fuertes, 2004; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b) and that counselor education programs need to better prepare students for work with this population (Biever et al., 2011; Sue et al., 1992).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is two-fold: It is first to explore the lived experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients, and, second, based on these practitioners’ insights, to inform counselor education on ways to better prepare students for more effective work with this population. Two groups of counselors have been identified as the population of interest for this study: (a) counselors who do not speak Spanish and use interpreters in their work with Spanish-speaking clients, and (b) counselors who speak Spanish and provide counseling to Spanish-speaking clients without the use of an interpreter.

The selection of the above-mentioned groups was purposeful and based on a review of the literature and description of counselors and other helping professionals who
provide services to Spanish-speaking clients. Language is one of the most important and overlooked variables in a counseling relationship (Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002). Monolingual English-speaking counselors and other helping professionals often use interpreters when working with Spanish-speaking clients (Karliner, Jacobs, Chen, & Mutha, 2007). Bilingual counselors have varied levels of professional Spanish competence, depending on several factors (Castaño, 2002; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b). Factors such as (a) process and setting of language acquisition, (b) language literacy, and (c) professional and technical language competence, greatly influence an individual’s competence and professional ability to work with Spanish-speaking clients (Biever et al., 2011; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b).

Phenomenological methodology was used to gather descriptive and detailed accounts of counselors from each of the participant groups. Semistructured interviews were conducted with the participants in order to address the research questions. Following interview transcriptions and member checking, the data were examined and analyzed using inductive analysis methods (Creswell, 1998; Hatch, 2002).

**Research Questions**

The present study addressed the following four research questions:

1. How do counselors who provide services to Spanish-speaking clients describe their motivations and reasons for entering a counseling program? (Motivations)
2. How do counselors who provide services to Spanish-speaking clients gain their awareness, understanding, and skills to work with this population? (Competence)

3. What are the personal and professional experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients? (Experiences)

4. How do counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients describe competence needed to work with this population? (Recommendations)

**Significance of the Study**

Recently there has been increased discussion in the professional literature regarding the preparation of counselors to work with diverse populations, and there has been a call for increased multicultural competence in training programs in order to meet the needs of a growing diverse population in the United States (Arredondo et al., 2008). Although counseling ethical codes and standards of practice (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2005) require counselors to demonstrate both professional skills and personal awareness and understanding of their values, the issue of counselor readiness to work with Spanish-speaking clients is a major concern (Castaño et al., 2007; Furman, Bender, Lewis, & Shears, 2006; Furman et al., 2009; Lebrón-Striker, 2012; Gutierrez, Yeakley, & Ortega, 2000; Willerton, Dankoski, & SevillaMartir, 2008). There is minimal information in the literature that describes how counselors are specifically trained to work with this population and an even greater dearth on program recommendations regarding preparation to work with Spanish-speaking clients (Biever et al., 2011; Castaño et al.,
2007; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b). This present research study is an answer to the call for further knowledge and will add to the literature base in counselor education.

To date, there have been few studies that specifically explore the lived experiences of counselor practitioners who provide counseling services to Spanish-speaking clients. Verdinelli and Biever (2009b) conducted a qualitative study using in-depth telephone interviews to examine the training experiences of 13 Spanish-English bilingual therapists. Participants reported feeling professionally isolated and disconnected as they struggled to provide bilingual services without having the appropriate training to do so (Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b). Teresa Castaño’s (2002) dissertation titled Training Experiences of Bilingual Mental Health Service Providers surveyed 183 self-identified providers of bilingual psychological services in order to find out more about their training and preparation to work with Spanish-speaking clients and concluded that, regardless of how practitioners acquire competency to work with Spanish-speaking clients, there is a lack of consistency in training programs to this end. These results suggest the need for special competencies and training in counseling programs to prepare counselors for work with Spanish-speaking clients (Castaño, 2002).

Other studies include Engstrom and Min’s (2004) and Furman, Bender, Lewis, and Shears’ (2006) qualitative explorations in the field of social work. Engstrom and Min’s study utilized snowball sampling and ethnographic interviews to examine the perspectives of 26 bilingual social workers in San Diego. The findings were that participants described limited English proficient (LEP) clients’ cases as more complicated and more time-consuming than those of English-speaking clients.
Participants in this study also indicated that their bilingual and bicultural abilities helped to inform their understanding of LEP clients and made their work with their clients more effective. Underscored in the findings was the indication that bilingual social workers need additional language resources and workload adjustments (Engstrom & Min, 2004).

Furman, Bender, Lewis, and Shears (2006) conducted a qualitative exploration of perceptions of social work faculty in the area of preparing students for work with the Latino population. These authors found that, although a significant portion of faculty members agree that the need for better preparation is important, most do not believe that students are being adequately prepared to work with this population (Furman et al., 2006). This is of growing concern to counselor education as well, as the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2009) requires counseling programs to prepare students in the areas of social and cultural diversity, which includes strategies for working with and advocating for diverse populations, such as the steadily-growing Spanish-speaking population.

Paynter and Estrada (2009) discussed the reflections of a Euro-American female who worked with Mexican immigrant clients during her master’s training internship. However, this article focused primarily on case studies and cultural dynamics of Mexican immigrant families, and not on the lived experiences that informed the student’s understanding and knowledge of this population.

A growing Spanish-speaking population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010) is at risk for substandard community and mental health services because of the lack of preparation that counselors and other helping professionals are apparently receiving in their training.
This present study will contribute to the growing and much called-for literature in this area (Arredondo et al., 2008).

**Conceptual Framework**

Qualitative researchers use conceptual frameworks to understand and connect all aspects of inquiry, including problem definition, purpose, research questions, literature review, methodology, data collection, and analysis (Maxwell, 2005). These frameworks, which are developed over time and with much care by the researchers, provide a system of coherence that act like maps and guide the researcher through every step of the inquiry process.

This researcher’s conceptual framework (Figure 1) was developed from a counselor training perspective for the preparation of counselors for their eventual work with Spanish-speaking clients. In this framework, counseling students who wish to work with Spanish-speaking clients enter counseling training programs with varying degrees of interest and understanding regarding competence necessary to work with this population. As students develop their understanding of the counseling profession, including the ACA (2005) ethical code, CACREP (2009) standards, as well as the Multicultural Counseling Competencies (Sue et al., 1992) and ACA Advocacy Competencies (Lewis, Arnold, House, & Toporek, 2002), they also develop their linguistic, cultural, and advocacy competencies needed to work with Spanish-speaking clients. Through a co-occurrence of mandated requirements (e.g., CACREP Standards, ACA Code of Ethics) and personal
aspiration or motivation, students develop baseline competencies to work with Spanish-speaking clients.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of counseling competency for work with Spanish-speaking clients.

Definition of Terms

Counselors: Helping professionals who have received formal training in counseling or counseling psychology and hold at least a master’s degree in counseling or
counseling psychology and are licensed at the master’s level as either counselors or psychologists.

**Spanish-speaking clients**: Those who receive counseling services and whose primary and preferred language is Spanish.

**Interpreters**: Those who translate orally for parties conversing in different languages.

**Native Spanish-speaker**: An individual who was raised and educated using Spanish as his or her primary language (Valdés, 2005; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b).

**Heritage Spanish-speaker**: An individual who learned Spanish through interactions with family and community, but was primarily educated in English (Valdés, 2005; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b).

**Second language Spanish-speaker**: An individual who has learned Spanish as a second language, usually in school or some kind of formal training.

**Chapter Summary and Dissertation Overview**

This introductory chapter provides a summary overview of the investigated phenomenon, along with the significance and purpose of the study. Also presented are the research questions that guided this study, as well as a brief description of the methodology that was utilized to address the research questions. A conceptual framework for this study was also introduced and explained.

Chapter II of this dissertation provides a review of the literature related to counseling Spanish-speaking clients in the United States. This literature includes historical and current information about multicultural counseling and training, an
overview of the Spanish-speaking population, counseling Spanish-speaking clients, and professional responses. Recent research related to counseling Spanish-speaking clients and counselor training is described.

The third chapter contains an overview of the research methodology utilized in this study. This section outlines the research questions, details about inclusionary and exclusionary criteria for participation in this study, information about participant selection and recruitment, and study instruments. Also laid out in this chapter is the data analysis protocol, including the explanation of rigor used to increase the study’s credibility and trustworthiness.

Chapter IV provides participant demographic descriptions and pertinent professional information. This chapter details the findings from this study and presents the evidence that emerged from the data that related to each of the interview questions.

The final chapter offers a discussion of the results. Major themes are presented in relation to the reviewed literature. Implications for counselor training, research, and practice, including recommendations for future research, are presented.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Overview

In order to examine the lived experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients, including their personal motivations for wanting to become counselors, how they apply their skills and training in their work with Spanish-speaking clients, as well as their recommendations for improved counselor training, it is vital to understand more fully the broader context of services with Spanish-speaking clients, and the unique and complex needs of counselors as they provide services to this population (Engstrom, Piedra, & Won Min, 2009). This chapter begins with a review of the call from the counseling profession for multicultural and advocacy competencies for work with diverse populations and includes an overview of the recent multicultural counseling and social justice advocacy discussion and its relevance for counselors’ work with Spanish-speaking clients. Also included in this chapter is an overview of the literature regarding Spanish-speaking clients and the helping professionals who work with this population. History of the Spanish-speaking population in the United States, including the recent immigration surge from Mexico and Latin-American countries and the cultural and social impact on the United States, is discussed.
The Call for Multicultural and Advocacy Competency

In the 20 years since the counseling profession adopted the Multicultural Counselor Competencies (Sue et al., 1992), and the 10 years since the American Counseling Association (ACA) Governing Council endorsed the Advocacy Competencies (Lewis, Arnold, House, & Toporek, 2002), there have been increased awareness and discussion in the area of both multicultural and advocacy competencies and practice. As the United States became increasingly diverse, counselor education and other helping professions began to recognize the need for practitioners to be culturally competent. While there had been steady growing awareness and discussion in the area of counselor preparation and practice with diverse populations since the 1960s, the recognition and adoption of these standards by ACA made cultural and advocacy competency in training and practice a professional imperative (Arredondo et al., 2008; Lewis et al., 2002; Myers, Sweeney, & White, 2002; Sue et al., 1992). Despite pressing efforts by counselor education to produce culturally competent counselors (CACREP, 2009), there continues to be a gap in preparation for work in cross-cultural and linguistic settings (Arredondo et al., 2008; Biever et al., 2002; Biever et al., 2011; Castaño et al., 2007; Chung, Bemak, & Grabosky, 2011; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b).

The American Counseling Association (ACA, 2005), the leading professional counseling organization, and the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP, 2009), the professional accreditation body for counseling programs, have both recognized the importance of preparing counselors in multicultural and advocacy competencies (Arredondo et al., 2008; Lewis et al., 2002; Sue et al., 1992).
ACA’s adoption of the Multicultural Counseling Competencies (Sue et al., 1992) and the Social Justice Advocacy Competencies (Lewis et al., 2002) in 1993 and 2003, respectively, signaled an evolution in the professional counselor identity paradigm that has prompted ongoing scholarly debate and served to develop and strengthen the profession.

With the Multicultural Counseling Competencies in place, the focus in counselor education programs began to reflect the importance of cultural competency in its training of counselors. The 2009 CACREP standards called for programs to provide student learning evidence in the areas of multicultural competence and diversity and advocacy. This expectation to produce practitioners competent in case conceptualization, diagnosis, treatment, referral, and prevention of mental and emotional disorders for diverse populations continues to be critical in training programs and an ongoing concern for many in the profession.

Although counselors are expected to provide “developmental and cultural sensitivity” to their clients (ACA, 2005, Standard A.2.c), offering language appropriate services to ensure client comprehension, there is no professional training required for counselors who work with clients who speak other languages (Biever et al., 2011; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b). For this reason, counselors who provide services to non-English-speaking clients often deliver services in an unethical manner, as they have not received training to work with linguistically diverse clients (Biever et al., 2002). Paul Heppner, past president of Division 17 (Counseling Psychology) of the American Psychological Association, cited ethnocentricity and monolingualism as a major barrier to
the cultural competence development of Western psychologists and called for global competence by way of enhancing cross-cultural awareness and knowledge, promoting cross-cultural research, promoting cross-cultural counseling supervision and consultation, and promoting cross-cultural teaching (Heppner, 2006). As the United States becomes more diverse, including linguistically, Heppner (2006) challenged the counseling profession to develop global competence by confronting our ethnocentric values, xenophobia, difficulty in accepting others’ worldviews, accepting differences across cultures as simply differences, and universality assumptions (Heppner, 2006).

The values that Heppner (2006) espouses may appear to many counselors to be in contrast to the “All-American” and “American Exceptionalism” ideals that many identify as being uniquely “American,” and for that reason may not become genuinely embraced by many in the profession, especially those who value traditional and social conservative values and ideals. The notion that the country is rapidly “changing” may be a difficult concept for some to accept and even more difficult to champion. It is this passion for “what has been” versus “what is socially just” that is at the heart of the multicultural and social justice advocacy debate in the professional literature (Smith, Reynolds, & Rovnak, 2009).

**Historical Review of Mexican Immigration**

In order to have a discussion on the Spanish-speaking population in the United States, it is important to recognize the issue and impact of Mexican immigrants and, more specifically, the social phenomenon of Mexican immigration, and to define and explain key terms. As there have been various terms used to describe persons who lack
immigration status, such as *undocumented*, *unauthorized*, and *illegal*, it is important to note the connotations that go along with them. While *undocumented* and *unauthorized* are terms that suspend individual judgment and acknowledge a degree of contextual understanding of political and socioeconomic realities, the term *illegal* denotes a more insensitive and simplistic approach to what many consider a complicated and dynamic social issue. Other antagonistic and hostile terms have also been used to describe Mexican illegal immigrants that are not helpful in understanding the phenomenon from a sociologically responsible perspective.

Social scientists have explained Mexican-U.S. migration in terms of economic pressures, social capital, and policy (Garcia y Griego, 2002). According to Garcia y Griego, these are the key factors that lead a person to immigrate to the United States (either legally or illegally). According to this model, before an individual decides to leave home, there must be some sort of economic pressure that an individual believes can be relieved by the work and income derived from moving to the United States. It is important to note the push-pull factors (Garcia y Griego, 2002; Loue & Sajatovic, 2009; Parkins, 2010) faced by many individuals and families as they consider immigration. Push factors refer to the conditions that cause people to leave their home, including lack of economic opportunities, crime and lawlessness, war, lack of social services, and lack of safety. Pull factors refer to reasons people want to move to an area, including higher employment, better social services, services, safer environment, and better life for their family.
Social capital and social networks refer to family and kinship connections that are used to overcome obstacles in immigration. It is not uncommon for families from Mexico and Central America to immigrate little by little for financial reasons. Often one family member will leave to find work and then, after a period of establishment in the receiving place, send for the others. Immigrants use any social connections available to them in order to be successful in their transition, including borrowing money from friends and relatives, cohabitation to save money, and relying on their network of connections for employment (Garcia y Griego, 2002).

Policy refers to the rules that determine eligibility for admittance to the United States as well as affect the migration process. While new immigrants are often not aware of immigration policy, its impact is far-reaching and affects housing, employment, transportation, healthcare, and many other aspects of daily living, as well as determines deportability of illegal immigrants. Limited education and literacy skills often lead to lack of knowledge and insecurity, and ultimately a culture of fear and secrecy among undocumented immigrants (Mendez-Shannon, 2011).

The United States has long been a country of destination for immigrants from around the world, but the early 1990s signaled a change in the immigration patterns from previous periods (Card & Lewis, 2007; Garcia y Griego, 2002). As the 20th century drew to an end, immigration from previously high sending European countries decreased, while Mexican immigration significantly increased (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Several policy changes, including the passing of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 and the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in
1994, laid the groundwork for mass immigration from Mexico. The Immigration and Reform and Control Act, signed into law by President Ronald Reagan, allowed for nearly three million illegal immigrants to receive amnesty in the United States and opened the door to changes in the immigration passage for millions more under family reunification and agricultural workers laws. The implementation of NAFTA in 1994 was significant because of the changes in trade laws and the growth of a global economy, which drove displaced Mexican laborers to the United States in search of work (Camp, 2011; Kemper, 2004).

Also significant in 1994 was the passing of Proposition 187 in California, which banned state benefits and basic public services to *illegal aliens* (Castañeda, 2004). This came in reaction to what was viewed as a growing problem with illegal immigrants in California. In 1994, the illegal immigrant population in California was estimated at 1.3 million, including approximately 308,000 illegal immigrant children. There was concern that these illegal immigrants were a burden to the taxpayers of California and that something needed to be done to address this problem. While some viewed Proposition 187 as a political ploy that helped then-Governor Pete Wilson’s re-election, it served to frame the current national immigration debate. California’s illegal immigrant population rose to 2.5 million in 2000 and continues to rise (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2011).

Although Proposition 187 was later overturned by the state courts, it served to shape national public opinion regarding illegal immigrants, and other states such as Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Nevada, New Mexico, New York,
Oklahoma, and Texas have since followed with similar debates and passed immigration laws of their own. Attention to this issue has sparked a national debate that is not expected to slow down any time soon. President Obama vowed to address immigration reform during his presidency, but tabled this issue for his second term (Reuters, 2012).

**Linguistic Diversity of Spanish-Speaking Population**

Spanish is spoken worldwide by nearly half a billion people (Summer Institute for Linguistics, 1999). In the United States, Spanish is spoken primarily by the Latino population, which in 2011 was estimated at 50 million people, the grand majority being of Mexican ancestry (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Spanish-speakers in the United States fall into three broad categories: *Native-speakers, heritage-speakers, and second-language speakers* (Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002; Hancock, 2002; Tallon, 2011).

*Native Spanish speakers* are those who learned Spanish as a first language and have formal training in Spanish. These individuals are Spanish-literate and have a degree of familiarity with verbal and written Spanish. *Heritage Spanish-speakers* are individuals who sometimes consider themselves to be native speakers as they also learned to understand and speak Spanish at home while growing up, but have never formally studied the Spanish language. While heritage Spanish-speakers often have a basic command of conversational Spanish, their literacy abilities are generally underdeveloped as they are not usually trained in written Spanish, or in the grammar, spelling, accents, or language style (Hancock, 2002; Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002). *Second-language Spanish-speakers* are individuals who did not grow up speaking Spanish in the home, but rather learned to speak Spanish later on after they had already established and developed their
first language (Hancock, 2002; Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002). Second-language Spanish-speakers are all at different levels with their spoken Spanish, comprehension, and literacy, as some stay in a basic learning phase and others become fluent experts. It is important to note that the Spanish language is very dynamic, and different forms and dialects are spoken by the incredibly diverse Spanish-speaking population.

A person who speaks two languages is described as being bilingual, as opposed to speaking one language or being monolingual. It is a common opinion among researchers that more people in the world are bilingual than are monolingual (Bialystok, 2001). For a variety of reasons in the United States, however, this is not the case (Fitzgerald, 1993; Wen-hsien, 2007). Psycholinguists Ervin (1961) and Ervin and Osgood (1954) distinguished bilinguals as compound or coordinate, the main difference coming from the way that they become bilingual. These authors theorized that the way that individuals develop their bilingualism is essential to their ultimate proficiency in both or either language. What sets compound bilinguals apart, according to Ervin (1961), is the notion that they have only one representational/conceptual meaning system, which they can access and in turn make sense of in two separate languages. Because of this key facet, compound bilinguals essentially grow up learning two languages simultaneously. Children who are born into and raised in bilingual environments often develop as compound bilinguals. On the other hand, coordinate bilinguals develop two independent language systems, each with its own meaning, experiences, and words. Coordinate bilinguals must then coordinate or balance two completely different representational meaning systems and access their language comprehension and spoken ability from one
or the other (Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002). Coordinate bilinguals generally are individuals who learned a second language after establishing and developing their first language.

**Overview of Spanish-Speaking Population**

Much of the growth in the Spanish-speaking population of the United States has come from recent immigrants from Mexico and other Latin American countries (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Immigration issues in the United States are not a new phenomenon; however, the last 20 years have seen major shifts in immigration trends (Camarota, 2004; Haverluk & Trautman, 2008). These trends have significant implications for counselors and other helping professions (Furman et al., 2006; Orozco & Thakore-Dunlap, 2010; Prendes-Lintel & Peterson, 2008; Timmins, 2002).

The immigrant population in the United States reached an all-time high of 40 million in 2010, including both legal and illegal immigrants (Camarota, 2004; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The decade between 2000 and 2010 saw 14 million new immigrants, making this the highest decade of immigration in American history (Camarota, 2004; Haverluk & Trautman, 2008). While, historically, new immigrants have settled predominantly in New York, California, New Jersey, Florida, Texas, and Illinois, all states have seen dramatic increases in new immigrant population (Haverluk & Trautman, 2008; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), with immigrants from Mexico being by far the largest subgroup (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Spanish-speaking individuals living in the United States face a myriad of challenges, from trauma resulting from family separation, to learning to adapt to a new
host culture, to issues surrounding being undocumented (Branigin, 1998; Conde, 2006; Orozco & Thakore-Dunlap, 2010). In the mid 1990s, the Mexican economy took a downturn just as the U.S. economy was entering the longest expansion period since World War II. These two factors drove an unprecedented growth in undocumented migration, which continued until its peak in 2008, when the U.S. economy began to decline. At this time, the total undocumented population reached 12.5 million, more than half of those being from Mexico. In a report published February 1, 2011, the Pew Hispanic Center (2011) estimated that there were about 11.2 million undocumented immigrants living in the U.S. in March 2010, with Mexican immigrants comprising 59% or nearly 7 million. This is down from an estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants living in the U.S. in March 2007. Most analysts agree that economic recession in the U.S. explains much of the decrease in the undocumented population between the years 2007 and 2010. Removals (previously known as deportations) have reportedly increased during this time period, as the Obama administration has activated resources to remove illegal immigrants with criminal records (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). In 2010, deportees of Hispanic origin accounted for 97% of all deportees, with Mexican immigrants accounting for 73% of deportees (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011).

Ongoing long-term family separation is a stressful reality for many Mexican immigrants. Historically, individuals and families have migrated to other countries because of economic stressors. When the situation at home has become dire and news of opportunities elsewhere becomes known, people often make moves to improve their standing. Until the early to mid-1990s, the draw for individuals and families to leave their
small Mexican towns and head north to the United States had been primarily for work in agriculture in California, Texas, and Arizona. There was a seasonal shortage in low-skilled farm laborers that was filled by Mexican workers who were willing to transport themselves and their families and become “migrant workers.” These laborers, who were largely from Mexico, became known as migrant workers, because they would be constantly moving around to wherever the work was. By the mid-1990s, however, the economy in the United States was booming and the need for factory workers and other unskilled laborers became apparent. Millions of Mexicans crossed illegally into the country during this period of economic growth and opportunity.

**Professional Responses**

The counseling profession’s response to the shift in population demographics came in part with the adoption of the Multicultural Counseling Competencies (Sue et al., 1992), which led the way for multicultural competence to become a key component in counselor training (CACREP, 2009). While there has been significant progress both in understanding how to better serve diverse populations and in better preparing counselors to work with diverse populations, Arredondo et al.’s. (2008) renewed call for cultural competence served as a reminder to the counseling profession that the challenges remain many and there is yet much to be done to fulfill the promise of cultural competence, which has been mandated by the profession (Arredondo et al., 2008). As Arredondo was a key contributor to the Multicultural Counselor Competencies (Sue et al., 1992) 20 years ago, her call for renewed commitment to research and training in this area is especially noteworthy.
Others, such as Furman et al. (2009) and Heppner (2006), have made strong calls for increased attention in the area of working with the Spanish-speaking population and have challenged counselors and others in helping professions to develop a “global perspective” (Helms, 1992; Heppner, 2006). Heppner (2006) addressed the challenges of becoming culturally competent and acknowledged his own shortcomings and inadequacies, and described cultural competence as a lifelong journey that needs to be constantly processed and evaluated (Heppner, 2006). In their study of faculty perceptions of curricular deficits in preparing social work students for practice with the Latino population, Furman et al. (2009) discovered that, while 90% of social work faculty agreed or strongly agreed that it is important to train students to work with this population, only 42% believed that students were actually being adequately prepared to work with this population. This finding suggests a glaring disconnection between the acknowledged need for helping professionals to be prepared to work with Spanish-speaking clients and what is actually happening in training programs.

**Counseling Spanish-Speaking Clients**

In the 1990s as counselors and other helping professionals became increasingly interested and familiar with the dynamics of working with the Spanish-speaking population, many began to publish articles with their findings and recommendations. Themes such as migration and legal issues, work and education, socioeconomic status, family and cultural values, and language issues became popular topics for scholars in counselor education and related professions (Arredondo et al., 2008; Baum & Flores, 2011; Borjas, 2011; Carreira, 2000; Sciarra & Ponterotto, 1991).
Issues such as employment and education, cultural ties, migration issues, poverty, and language make many in this population vulnerable and become barriers to success for Spanish-speaking families and individuals in the United States (Borjas, 2011; Carreira, 2000; Furman et al, 2006; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2002; Landale, Thomas, & Van Hook, 2011; Passel, 2011; Pew Hispanic Center, 2009; Tienda & Haskins, 2011). Counselors and other helping professionals are faced with a wide range of issues that they may not be familiar with when working with this population (Furman et al., 2006). Because these are often salient issues for Spanish-speaking clients, it is imperative for counselors to understand clients’ perspectives in order to build a therapeutic alliance and be effective helpers (Castaño et al., 2007).

Counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients are confronted with the challenge of providing services through the use of interpreters, or in Spanish, which is seldom the language of their professional training (Biever et al., 2011; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b). Counselors who use interpreters are faced with considerations ranging from understanding the role of professional interpreters, finding professional and competent interpreters, learning to navigate and deliver competent counseling through the use of a third party professional, and ensuring professional standards of practice such as confidentiality are observed and maintained (Paone & Malott, 2008; Soondar, 2008; Tribe & Lane, 2009). Counselors who do not use interpreters must consider issues such as their Spanish therapeutic language competence and their ability to establish a therapeutic rapport with their clients (Biever et al., 2002; Biever et al., 2011; Castaño et al., 2007; Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002). While the language issue is often the
single most noticeable obstacle in the counseling room with Spanish-speaking clients, cultural barriers between counselors and Spanish-speaking clients also impact the counseling dynamic in profound ways whether using interpreters or not (Castaño et al., 2007; Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002).

More recently, there has been considerable growth and development in the professional literature in the way that counselors and other helping professionals work with Spanish-speaking clients. Many authors have consistently drawn attention to the importance of specific competencies for work with this population (Arredondo et al., 2008; Castaño et al., 2007; Heppner, 2006; Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002; Timmins, 2002; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b). Verdinelli and Biever (2009b) contend that without proper communication techniques and training, it is virtually impossible to work in a therapeutically relevant way with Spanish-speaking clients.

Castaño et al. (2007) assert that while language and culture are equally important when working with Spanish-speaking clients, these two variables are not necessarily commensurate to each other. For this reason, a counselor who claims to be proficient in Spanish cannot be assumed to be culturally competent for work with this population (Gómez & Biever, 2006); however, there is not presently a standard for determining cultural and linguistic competency, thus many clients may be at risk for receiving less than competent services (Biever et al., 2011; Castaño et al., 2007).

Even though the United States is a multicultural and multilingual society and home to an unprecedented number of non-English-speaking individuals, the basic institutions, including education, health care, and community mental health, are largely
set up to serve English-speakers (Timmins, 2002). Other obstacles include the English-
only political movement (Padilla et al., 1991; Wen-hsien, 2007). Furthermore, since
counselors and other helping professionals most often receive their training in English
and must be English-proficient regardless of other-language proficiency, there is a
general language disconnection between counselors and their Spanish-speaking clients
(Castaño et al., 2007).

As counseling is relationship-based in nature, it is essential that counselors are
able to quickly establish a therapeutic alliance when making initial contact with clients.
This alliance is largely established through use of similar language (Clauss, 1998). Clauss
(1998) described language as the unspoken variable in psychotherapy practice, as it is
often not the focus of psychological literature and clinical training, even though it is a
profound element in our work. When working with Spanish-speaking clients, alliance
building becomes challenging, as the language barrier can overshadow the therapy work
(Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002). The right for counseling to be in the client’s
language of preference is protected by professional ethical guidelines (ACA, 2005;
American Psychological Association [APA], 1993). An increasing number of individuals
in the United States claim Spanish as a first language, and therefore as their preferred and
mandatory language for counseling (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Bilingual counselors are often hired by agencies with the understanding that they
will provide services to clients who require services in Spanish. Although programs such
as the Psychological Services for Spanish-Speaking Populations (Biever et al., 2011)
have been established for the expressed purposes of training counselor practitioners to
work with the U.S. Spanish-speaking population and have incorporated Spanish language, Latino heritage, and Latino psychology courses into the training (Biever et al., 2011), these programs are highly specialized and are not widely available. As the Spanish-language dominant population has surged in all regions of the United States, there must be a corresponding surge in bilingual and bicultural counselors to provide services for this population (Arredondo et al., 2008; Biever et al., 2002; Castaño, 2002; Castaño et al., 2007; Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002; Smith & Montilla, 2009).

Counselors and other helping professionals who work with Spanish-speaking clients must be aware of the unique challenges and dynamics faced by their clients, as well as the challenges in providing services to this population if they are to be effective helpers (Arredondo et al., 2008; Castaño et al., 2007; Chung et al., 2011; Conde, 2006; Fuertes, 2004; Heppner, 2006; Hunter & Weaver, 2004; Orozco & Thakore-Dunlap, 2010; Santa Ana et al., 2009; Santiago-Rivera, 1995; Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002; Sciarra & Ponterotto, 1991; Timmins, 2002; Villalba, 2009). Issues such as language barriers, legal issues, assimilation, as well as counselors’ attitudes and beliefs, can be barriers to the helping process (Arredondo et al., 2008; Chung et al., 2011; Furman et al., 2006; Kiselica, 1998; Orozco & Thakore-Dunlap, 2010; Prendes-Lintel & Peterson, 2008; Santa Ana et al., 2009). These difficulties in providing effective cross-cultural counseling have been well documented (Carreira, 2000; Heppner, 2006; Kouyoumdjian et al., 2003; Timmins, 2002), as well as recommendations for best practice based on the direct experiences of counselors and other helping practitioners who work with this population (Nassar-McMillan & Hakim-Larson, 2003).
Counselors and other helping professionals need to recognize the important role of language and culture when counseling Spanish-speaking clients (Biever et al., 2002; Clauss, 1998; Hunter & Weaver, 2004; Kiselica, 1998; Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002). Without this clear understanding, there is a substantial risk for inadequate assessment, improper diagnosis, and unethical practice (ACA, 2005; Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002). It is also more likely that clients will not find counseling helpful and will continue to go untreated for their mental health issues (Timmins, 2002).

While counselors and other helping professionals are required to have coursework in multicultural counseling and are increasingly being prepared to work in cross-cultural settings, as this is a clear focus in many counseling programs, they may not develop a clear understanding of Spanish-speaking population and Latino issues in their training programs (Biever et al., 2002; Furman et al., 2006). Counselors, thus, may not understand some of the basic issues and trends faced by their low-income Mexican immigrant clients (Conde, 2006). When counselors’ biases are unexamined, their preconceived notions about minority groups remain intact, leaving their clients at risk for unethical treatment and services that are not helpful (Kiselica, 1998; Sue et al., 1992).

Counselors who are not Spanish-language competent must acknowledge their lack of competence to work with Spanish-speaking clients and have a professional obligation to refer these clients to a language-competent practitioner (ACA, 2005). In the case where a Spanish-speaking counselor is not available, counselors must collaborate with professional Spanish-English interpreters for the purpose of effective cross-cultural counseling (Tribe & Lane, 2009).
The practice of using interpreters when working with Spanish-speaking clients is logical and necessary, as there are not enough bilingual counselors trained to provide counseling services (Biever et al., 2011). Professional interpreting services have been established to meet the growing need for helping professionals to work with the Spanish-speaking population (Hamerdinger & Karlin, 2003); however, counselors who use interpreters to communicate with their Spanish-speaking clients seldom receive special training in how to practice effectively and ethically with interpreters (Hamerdinger & Karlin, 2003). The assumption is simply that the interpreter is used to speak verbatim what the counselor is saying to the client and then to tell the counselor exactly what the client is saying back. This technique may prove effective if the only difference between the counselor and client was the spoken language, but what is often misunderstood is the cultural difference that exists and is also very much a part of the counseling dynamic (Castaño et al., 2007). When counselors fail to recognize the importance of language and culture with their Spanish-speaking clients, they risk alienating their clients and practicing in an unethical manner (Biever et al., 2002; Castaño et al., 2007; Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002).

Although the challenges of using interpreters in counseling settings are many (Tribe & Lane, 2009), it is critical for counselors who use interpreters in their work with Spanish-speaking clients to understand these challenges as well as recommendations for best practices when interpreters must be used. Paone and Malott (2008) indicate that some counselors may feel threatened by the collaborative process that occurs with an interpreter, as they perceive the interpreter as an outside force and an invader of their
session (Tribe, 1999). Counselors may also feel judged by the interpreter for their counseling skills and cross-cultural ineptness (Dezelueta, 1990).

Other challenges posed by this dynamic include interpreter competency, where the interpreter may not be a professional and, in some instances, may be a child or other family member who is more competent in English; linguistic complexity, where the interpreter is not familiar with counseling jargon or unfamiliar with the counseling concepts to be interpreted and thus misinterprets meanings and nuances; linguistic alterations, where interpreters may omit words that they do not understand or that they find embarrassing for themselves or the client (Amodeo, Grigg-Saito, & Robb, 1997). Other examples of linguistic alterations include interpreters’ additions or elaborations when the interpreter senses the information given by the counselor was incomplete; role exchange, where the interpreter assumes the lead role of counselor and advocate, as the interpreter and client may develop a closer professional relationship based on the direct rapport they share; professional knowledge and understanding, where the interpreter does not pick up on or relay important nonverbal cues that could potentially lead to misdiagnosis or worse; and contextual knowledge, where the interpreter may lack knowledge in the client’s specific culture and sociopolitical context and misinterpret dialogue or behaviors of the client (Lopez, 2002; Paone & Malott, 2008).

Although the challenges of working with clients through the use of interpreters are many and the very use of interpreters is a barrier to services (Hamerdinger & Karlin, 2003), as long as counselors lack linguistic competence to work with Spanish-speaking clients, their services will be required. Therefore, when using interpreters with Spanish-
speaking clients, counselors should be aware of the challenges and limitations and strive toward the most efficacious outcome.

Training Counselors for Work with the Spanish-Speaking Population

Over the last several decades, the United States has been a major destination for immigrants (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Although the United States has long been a receiving nation for immigrants in search of a better life, the past 30 years have seen a massive swelling of immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries, with the overwhelming majority from Mexico (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). In this relatively short period, the United States has become the second largest Spanish-speaking country in the world, with only Mexico having a larger Spanish-speaking population (U. S. Census Bureau, 2010). While this population is vastly diverse with regard to its ethnic, socioeconomic, and country of origin makeup, it is strongly unified by language and culture (Carreira, 2000). Counseling the Spanish-speaking population in the United States is a unique and dynamic process, which the counseling profession has begun to recognize (Castaño, 2002; Castaño et al., 2007; Sciarra & Ponterotto, 1991; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009a, 2009b).

All clients are individuals and are obligated to be treated as such by professional counselors, with their individual traits and presenting problems at the forefront of the counseling process (ACA, 2005). While counselors work with individuals and help them to address their unique needs and issues through the use of therapeutic rapport, counseling techniques, and theoretical models, it is critical for counselors to recognize the impact of language and culture on the counseling process when working with Spanish-
speaking clients (Castaño, 2002; Castaño et al., 2007; Sciarra & Ponterotto, 1991; Verdinelli & Biever, 2009a, 2009b).

While counselors possess varying degrees of competence in any of the many areas that require professional awareness, knowledge, and skills, the ACA (2005) ethical code has set a minimum standard of competence with regard to the way that counselors work with their clients and states that “the primary responsibility of counselors is to respect the dignity and promote the welfare of clients” (ACA, 2005, A.1.a). The CACREP (2009) standards also demonstrated this shift toward a multicultural focus in the profession, as well as incorporated the need for advocacy competence in the counseling profession.

**Summary**

Because of the surge of the Spanish-speaking population over the past 20 years (U. S. Census Bureau, 2010), it is increasingly important for the counseling profession to have a greater understanding of the counselor practitioners who work with this dynamic and diverse group. The current issues of the Spanish-speaking population, including the significant number of Mexican immigrant families and children, have been identified by researchers and continue to be the focus of many studies in counselor education and related fields (Abreu & Sasaki, 2004; Chung et al., 2011; Orozco & Thakore-Dunlap, 2010; Ramos-Sánchez, Atkinson, & Fraga, 1999; Smith & Montilla, 2006). It is imperative for researchers and practitioners to continue to know more about the current issues and experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients, as it has a tremendous impact on the professional training and preparation of counselors, and on the whole of our profession.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter offers a detailed explanation and rationale for the methodology that was utilized in this study. Included in this chapter will be (a) a description of qualitative research and rationale for its use with this study; (b) a description of phenomenology and rationale for its use with this study; (c) an overview of the data collection methods and procedures; and (d) an explanation of the steps and procedures for managing, analyzing, and interpreting the data using inductive data analysis.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research has been used to gain insight into people’s attitudes, behaviors, value systems, concerns, motivations, aspirations, culture, and lifestyles through studying them in their natural settings (Hatch, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In his synthesis of characteristics of qualitative research, Hatch (2002) described key features as natural settings, participant perspectives, researcher as data-gathering instrument, extended firsthand engagement, centrality of meaning, wholeness and complexity, subjectivity, emergent design, inductive data analysis, and reflexivity.

The researcher utilized qualitative methodology to explore the experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients with respect to how they describe,
react to, make meaning, and understand their work with this population. Interview questions were developed for the purpose of answering the research questions. Armed with these questions, a carefully planned design, and structure for data analysis, the researcher carried out the study as an objective outside observer, while being aware of his subjective inclinations.

There were several reasons why qualitative research methodology was used to address the research questions in this study. First, there is limited foundational knowledge regarding counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients, so the researcher wanted to develop an initial understanding of their experiences. Qualitative inquiry lent itself to exploring the lived experiences of this population, including their motivations to become counselors, their preparation and work experiences, and their recommendations to practitioners and the profession. Second, it was critical to shed light on the voices of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients and to capture the subjective nuances and complexities of their diverse lived experiences. Also, qualitative methodology allowed for a richness to emerge from the data that was necessary to develop a deeper understanding of the participants’ lived experiences.

**Phenomenology**

A phenomenological approach is often used by researchers to explain the structure and essence of the experiences of a group of people (Moustakas, 1994). A phenomenologist is concerned with understanding certain group behaviors from that group’s point of view. Rather than reaching for assumptions and drawing conclusions about the group’s behaviors, a phenomenological researcher tries to find out what
significance this phenomenon has. Phenomenological inquiry requires that researchers go through a series of steps in which they try to eliminate their own assumptions and biases, examine the phenomenon without presuppositions, and describe the “deep structure” of the phenomenon based on internal themes that are discovered (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

Bruyn (1970) points out the phenomenologist’s intent is to “study symbolic meanings as they constitute themselves in human consciousness” (p. 286). According to Welman and Kruger (1999), “The phenomenologists are concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomenon from the perspectives of people involved” (p. 189). The phenomenological researcher is concerned with the lived experiences of the people involved with the issue that is being researched (Greene, 1997; Holloway, 1997; Kruger, 1988; Kvale, 1996).

The phenomenon that this researcher was interested in knowing more about was the lived experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients. While it is known that counselors provide services to Spanish-speaking clients, very little is known about the training needs of these practitioners (Verdinelli & Biever, 2009b). The findings from this present study will seek to add to this knowledge base and will impact counselor education by providing specific recommendations for preparing counselors to work with Spanish-speaking clients.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions were used to address the issue of the experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients:
1. How do counselors who provide services to Spanish-speaking clients describe their motivations and reasons for entering a counseling training program? (Motivations)

2. How do counselors who provide services to Spanish-speaking clients gain their awareness, understanding, and skills to work with this population? (Competence)

3. What are the personal and professional experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients? (Experiences)

4. How do counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients describe competence needed to work with this population? (Recommendations)

**Procedures**

In the tradition of phenomenology, which has been used for research in educational settings, this investigator conducted a series of semistructured interviews in order to address the research questions that were the basis for the present study (Creswell, 1998; Hatch, 2002). After obtaining approval from the Human Subject Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) of Western Michigan University, this investigator recruited 10 participants for this study using purposive sampling. Although purposive sampling is often criticized for being overly convenient, it can be a useful method of gaining access to the desired group of people who hold the information desired by the investigator (Hatch, 2002). This investigator acknowledged his closeness to this study and took careful steps to ensure that the goals and objectives of this research were reached through the use of inductive analysis (Hatch, 2002).
Inductive analysis (Hatch, 2002) was utilized to identify emergent themes described by research participants. In inductive analysis, the researcher looks for patterns of meaning in order to make general statements regarding the investigated phenomenon. Hatch outlined nine steps of inductive analysis that include (1) reading the data and identifying frames of analysis; (2) creating domains based on semantic relationships discovered within frames of analysis; (3) identifying salient domains, assigning them codes, and putting others aside; (4) rereading the data, refining salient domains, and keeping a record of where relationships are found in the data; (5) making the decision that the data support specific domains; (6) completing analysis within domains; (7) doing a search of themes across domains; (8) crafting a master outline that reveals relationships within and among domains; and (9) selecting data excerpts to support the elements of the outline.

Sample size in qualitative research has been much debated (Mason, 2010). Since qualitative research is concerned with making meaning from its findings and not with making generalized statements, it is not always feasible or advantageous to have a large sample size. What is important in qualitative research is for the researcher to facilitate an environment that will allow the richness and depth in the data to emerge from the participants who hold the coveted information (Maxwell, 2005). After consent was obtained and in order to reach saturation and desired depth from the data, the researcher conducted semistructured interviews with each of the 10 participants. After the interviews were completed, participants were asked to reflect on the interview questions in order to prepare for a follow-up telephone interview. During the follow-up telephone interviews,
which were conducted 6 to 8 weeks following the original interviews, the researcher invited participants to share their reflections and clarify their responses at that time. The time lapse between the face-to-face formal interview and the follow-up telephone interview allowed a period for participants to further reflect on the questions and their answers and added to the strength of the research design and findings.

**Inclusionary and Exclusionary Criteria**

Participation in this study was open to counselor practitioners who currently deliver counseling services to Spanish-speaking clients. Participation in the study was not open to social workers, as the purpose was specifically to inform and make recommendations for counselor education training programs. As potential participants were recruited, they were asked questions such as, “Are you licensed as a counselor?” and “Do you ever provide counseling services to Spanish-speaking clients?” Potential participants were also asked if they were willing to offer approximately 2 hours of their time to participate in this study.

**Participant Recruitment**

This researcher recruited participants for this study by identifying and contacting social service agencies in the Midwest region of the United States that provide counseling services in their respective communities. First contact to social service agencies was made through an introductory telephone call (Appendix A). This researcher called social service agencies located in the region and asked about their programs that offer counseling services. This researcher then called program directors to inform them of the
present study (see Appendix A) and requested the contact information of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients for the purpose of possible participation with this study. This researcher followed the script outlined in Appendix A to contact and respond to counseling program directors and to subsequently contact potential participants concerning their eligibility and interest to participate in this study.

Potential participants were contacted and informed of the inclusionary criteria for this study. This researcher asked potential participants if they knew of others who may fit the criteria for this study and asked for contact information for them as well so that the researcher could contact them regarding their possible participation in this study.

Potential participants were asked if they met the criteria for participation in this study. Upon the criteria being met, this researcher asked potential participants if he could email or send in the mail an informed consent document (Appendix D) that offers more detailed information about the study. At this time, the researcher asked for the potential participants’ email or home address in order to send the informed consent document (Appendix D). The researcher then asked potential participants for their permission to contact them by either email or telephone in approximately 1 week in order to follow up with them concerning their interest in participating with the study after having read the informed consent document.

During the follow up email or telephone call, the researcher asked potential participants if they were interested in participating with the study after having read the informed consent document (Appendix D). The researcher explained to potential participants that should they be invited to participate with this study, they would be
required to meet with the researcher to participate in a face-to-face interview with the researcher, as well as a follow-up telephone post-interview. The researcher then asked potential participants how they preferred for the researcher to collect the signed informed consent document. The researcher offered to meet potential participants at convenient locations in order to collect the signed document or asked them to return the signed document to this researcher in the provided self-addressed stamped envelope. The researcher then called or emailed potential participants in order to complete a demographics questionnaire (Appendix F), which took approximately 3 to 5 minutes of their time.

This researcher thanked the potential participants for their time and interest and let them know that he would contact them within the next several weeks in order to let them know if they have been selected to participate in this study. Selected participants were then invited to participate in the study and this researcher scheduled a one-and-a-half hour interview with each participant. This researcher arranged for the interviews to take place at locations convenient for the participants.

**Participant Selection Rationale**

Ten participants were selected to participate in this study based on the following criteria: (a) five counselors who use interpreters in their work with their Spanish-speaking clients and five counselors who do not use interpreters in their work with their Spanish-speaking clients; and (b) those potential participants who the researcher determines are most likely to provide information pertinent to this study (i.e. years of experience, relevant credentials, racial, age, and gender diversity).
Informed Consent Process

At the time of the interviews, participants were asked if they had any questions regarding this study. This researcher answered questions regarding the study and participants’ involvement at this time. This researcher then reminded participants that the interviews would be audio-recorded and asked for their consent of this for the purpose of transcription and use as raw data for this study. The participants were reminded that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice or penalty. This researcher reviewed the contact information, including telephone numbers and email addresses of this investigator and the principal investigator, which were given on the consent form. Participants were also entered into a drawing for a $100 gift card at this time.

Protection of Human Participants

To ensure participants were protected, this researcher adhered to informed consent practices, which included receiving approval from Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at Western Michigan University before beginning any process of data collection. In addition, confidentiality of the research data and privacy of the research participants were closely monitored and maintained. A summary of the plan the researcher followed for protecting confidentiality is discussed below.

This investigator protected human participants by following the guidelines of the ethical codes of the American Counseling Association (ACA). According to the ACA (2005) *Code of Ethics*, researchers should “maintain all research records in a secure
manner” (Standard B.7.c.). Additionally, the ACA *Code of Ethics* states that ethical researchers should “conduct research in accordance with the approved research protocol” (Standard B.7.c.). Similarly, researchers are required not to “disclose confidential information that reasonably could lead to the identification of a research participant unless they have obtained the prior consent of that person” (Standard B.7.d.). Researchers must also follow the HSIRB guidelines to ensure the protection of all volunteer participants in the study. This student investigator therefore ensured the protection of research participants by following (a) the guidelines of the ACA ethical code, and (b) the research protocol approved for this study by the HSIRB at Western Michigan University.

In order to protect the identity of participants, confidentiality of the research data was maintained through the use of pseudonyms for all of the participants interviewed. Information and identifiers that have a potential of disclosing the identity of participants were masked. All audiotapes and transcriptions of the participant’s interviews were coded with numbers. This student investigator kept a list of the names of the participants with the corresponding coded numbers in a different and safe location. Recorded interviews and transcriptions were kept in a locked filing cabinet in this student investigator’s office. Recorded files were erased once the interview transcripts were checked and verified by the researcher and his advisor.

During data analysis, the researcher consulted with HSIRB at Western Michigan University regarding the use of direct quotes from participants, as the researcher wanted to ensure that the participants’ identities remained anonymous. At that time, HSIRB indicated that a revised consent form/permission statement needed to be signed by all
participants, thereby granting researcher permission to use direct quotations in the presentation of results. All 10 participants were contacted and subsequently returned their signed consent form (Appendix I) to the researcher.

**Interview Procedure**

Participants were asked to respond to 11 semistructured interview questions (Appendix G). Once the interview had been completed and the audio-recorder had been shut off, the investigator answered any questions that the participants had about the study and reviewed the appropriate contact information with participants so that they could contact him or the principal investigator, Dr. Stephen Craig, with any questions or concerns at any time during the study. The participants were thanked for participating in this study.

**Member Checking**

After transcribing the interviews, this researcher reviewed the transcripts and summarized them for the purpose of member checking. Transcript summaries reflected the themes and subthemes found in each of the interviews. This researcher then emailed participants to arrange a convenient time to contact them in order to review their interviews and responses with them.

This researcher then called each of the participants for a brief follow-up telephone interview. During this follow-up telephone call, this researcher reviewed the interview questions along with the participants’ responses and asked participants to reflect on and verify whether the summary accurately reflected their responses to the interview
questions regarding their work with Spanish-speaking clients. Participants were asked to make corrections, if necessary, to their interview summary.

**Gift Certificate Drawing and Mailing**

Upon completion of the follow-up telephone member check interview, this researcher completed a gift card drawing and mailed the $100 gift card to the selected participant.

**Data Collection**

This researcher utilized phenomenological analysis in order to explore the experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients with respect to how they describe their motivation for entering the counseling profession, awareness and knowledge influences for their work with their Spanish-speaking clients, realities of their work with their Spanish-speaking clients, and their recommendations to counselors and counselor education based on their experiences with their Spanish-speaking clients. This study used three sources of data collection: (a) demographic/screening questionnaire (Appendix F), (b) in-depth interviews (Appendix G), and (c) participants’ member checking (Appendix H).

**Demographic Survey**

Potential participants were asked to complete a demographic/screening questionnaire (Appendix F) either before or at the time of the interview. This questionnaire was used to collect descriptive information about the participants, including
age, year of graduation from counseling program, licensure, Spanish language fluency, racial identity, and length of time working with Spanish-speaking clients. This information helped to ensure that participants did, in fact, meet the inclusionary criteria for the study.

**In-depth Interviews**

In-depth interviews were used to assist the researcher in understanding the deep meaning and experiences of the participants from their own words (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The semistructured interviews consisted of 10 open-ended questions (Appendix F) related to the participants’ experiences with Spanish-speaking clients. Participants were promoted to share their stories in order to understand how they create meaning about their experiences with Spanish-speaking clients. Specifically, participants were asked to share about what led them to study counseling, how they were prepared to work with Spanish-speaking clients, what it is like for them to work with Spanish-speaking clients, and their recommendations for work with this population. Follow-up questions were asked by this researcher to clarify answers or to provoke more in-depth sharing and information. An example of a follow-up question was, “Can you give me another example of a challenge you face when working with Spanish-speaking clients?” The interview questions were utilized as a guide and to keep the interview focused. The researcher was aware that comfort level of participants varied and attempts were made to make the participants feel at ease with the interview.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted at a place chosen by the participants themselves, where each participant felt safe and comfortable. Three interviews were
conducted at the participants’ workplace, three were conducted at a bookstore, two at restaurants, one at a university, and one at the participant’s residence. The audio-taped interviews lasted between 35 to 90 minutes.

Prior to each interview, this researcher prepared himself by documenting his expectations and thoughts about the participant and how the interview would go. This bracketing process was done in an effort to remain objective regarding anticipated outcomes during the interview and data analysis process. Marshall and Rossman (1995) advise investigators to engage in self-reflection in order to “uncover personal subjectivities” (p. 205). The researcher’s self-reflection is related in this chapter in the background and personal perspective of the researcher section. As advised by Marshall and Rossman (1995), this researcher reflected on his emotional connection to this topic, proclivities, and biases, prior to each interview. In addition, a brief summary was completed by the researcher following each interview in order to review and document the main themes and important information.

**Research Design and Rationale**

The researcher recruited a total of 10 participants who presently work with Spanish-speaking clients—5 who use interpreters and 5 who do not use interpreters. Participants who did not use interpreters with Spanish-speaking clients were further categorized as follows: two native Spanish-speakers, one heritage Spanish-speaker, and two second-language Spanish-speakers (see Table 1).
Table 1

*Participant Language*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counselors Who Use Interpreters (CWUI)</th>
<th>Counselors Who Do Not Use Interpreters (CWDNUI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 total Participants</td>
<td>5 total participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spanish as First Language</strong></td>
<td><strong>Spanish as Second Language</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage</td>
<td>Heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Heritage Spanish-speakers are individuals who learned to understand and speak Spanish at home while growing up, but never formally studied in Spanish. Native speakers are individuals who learned Spanish as a first language and have formal training in Spanish (Hancock, 2002). Second-language Spanish-speakers are those who were not raised around Spanish, but learned it later in life after they had already developed native language competence. As the literature described the language and cultural competence of counselors and helping professionals who work with Spanish-speaking clients, the researcher also wanted to include them as variables, as a way of adding a layer of depth and relevance to the study.

The two linguistic variables of CWUI (counselors who use interpreters) and CWDNUI (counselors who do not use interpreters) were identified and selected as the participants of interest for this study based on Tribe and Lane’s (2009) description of the way that counselors and other helping professionals provide services to Spanish-speaking clients. Tribe and Lane indicated that counselors who do not speak Spanish use interpreters when working with Spanish-speaking clients. They, along with other authors,
also suggest that counselors who speak Spanish have a wide variation of Spanish competency, depending on many factors and answers to questions such as how and when did they learn Spanish? Did they receive formal training or did they learn at home or on the street? Are they familiar with professional counseling terms? Do they have Spanish literacy skills? Do they speak Spanish as a first language? And if so, are they heritage speakers or native speakers (Biever et al., 2002; Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002)?

For the purpose of this study, the researcher identified and selected potential participants on the basis of their use of interpreters. Potential participants were asked only if they used interpreters or not in their work with their Spanish-speaking clients, in order to determine group classification.

**Data Treatment and Analysis**

Qualitative researchers concern themselves with doing their best to interpret the data as accurately as possible. This is done through what is sometimes referred to as “rigor” or “goodness” in qualitative research. Arminio and Hultgren (2002) suggested the following six ways to ensure goodness in a qualitative study: (a) the study should be based on a specific theoretical foundation, such as phenomenology; (b) the methodology should outline a specific plan of action; (c) the data-collection techniques should be clearly identified; (d) the researcher should reflect and define his or her voice and experience with regard to the study; (e) the interpretation process should result in some new insight; and (f) the researcher should provide clear recommendations for professional practice based on the results. In an attempt to ensure goodness of this study, the researcher was careful and deliberate to incorporate all six of these elements.
Interviews were conducted with counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients. National population demographics suggested a trend of significant growth in the number of Spanish-speakers in the United States population, including the Midwest region where this study was conducted. Criterion sampling was used to ensure that all of the participants selected for this study had experience working with Spanish-speaking clients. In-depth interviews, approximately 1 hour in length, were conducted with 10 participants, focusing on their preparation for and work experiences with Spanish-speaking clients, and their recommendations for work with this population.

The researcher began the data analysis by striving to formulate a sense of the meaning from the interviews. The first step in this process was for the researcher to immerse himself in the data by listening to the interviews several times, transcribe them verbatim, and read and re-read the transcriptions. The researcher used member checking to enhance trustworthiness of the data. Creswell (1998) and Hatch (2002) describe member checking as critical for enhancing trustworthiness and to ensure accuracy in the data. The member checking was done following the transcription and reading of the interviews. The researcher contacted the participants for clarification surrounding their interviews in order to ensure that he had captured the essence from the interviews. The researcher summarized the interviews, including the questions and participant responses, and asked participants if they would like to add to or amend their responses. All participants reported satisfaction with their original responses in the transcription. None of the participants requested anything to be removed or amended in their interviews. However, several of the participants reiterated and reinforced their answers regarding
their experiences with Spanish-speaking clients. The researcher took careful notes during the member-checking process in order to continue with data analysis.

Moustakas (1994) and Creswell (1998) described the importance of phenomenological data reduction in qualitative data analysis. In an effort to follow this process, the researcher “bracketed” out the outside world, including his own preconceived notions of the phenomenon and made a concerted effort to look at the data from the participants’ perspectives. The researcher was aware of his closeness to the study, especially as he had his own experiences with Spanish-speaking clients. It was very important that the researcher spent time reflecting and journaling about his own experiences so that he was clear on what his experiences were and to avoid confusing his experiences with those of the participants. Before the researcher interviewed each participant, he reviewed the interview questions for himself and answered them according to his own experiences. As he interviewed each participant, he was careful to suspend judgment and let each of the participants answer the questions according to his or her experience.

Following the interviews and initial reviews of the data, the researcher began the meticulous process of developing basic codes or categories based on the data presented. Moustakas (1994) and Creswell (1998) describe this process of coding as horizontalization of the data. In horizontalization, horizons and the possibilities for discovery are open and unlimited. Participants’ experiences and descriptions are not limited to the researcher’s preconceived understanding and lived experience of the phenomenon, but are infinite in their scope of possibilities. In order to gain an
understanding of the phenomenon being studied, the researcher must deliberately free himself from previous understanding by setting these notions aside and focusing solely on the experiences of research participants.

As the researcher immersed himself in the data, he noticed themes emerging within and across the interviews. Through note-taking and data reduction, the researcher began the process of describing and classifying the data in order to describe the meaning of the experience for the participants. This was done by grouping what appeared to be very specific themes with others that seemed similar. Moustakas (1994) referred to this as individual and composite textural description of the data. The researcher grouped the participant experiences and perspectives into structural descriptions, in order to understand “how” the participants experience the phenomenon individually and collectively. The researcher synthesized the above processes to understand and describe the “essence” of the participants’ experiences as a group.

As the researcher coded the data, he was careful to judge the data using the criteria of external homogeneity (the degree to which the data do not belong together) and internal homogeneity (the degree to which the data belong together as a certain category). Creswell (1998) suggested using a data-analysis spiral, a non-linear approach in which he describes the researcher constantly reading, re-reading, coding, clustering, and finally writing about the phenomenological account based on the participants’ experiences. The researcher utilized this process to analyze the data.

While qualitative analysis is sometimes dismissed by quantitative researchers because of the absence of objectivity, reliability, and validity used in quantitative
research (Northcote, 2012), qualitative researchers rely on strenuous verification in their data analysis in order to ensure credibility and goodness of the data (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002; Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, qualitative research is not intended to make generalizations about a population or phenomenon occurring within a population, but instead is interested in perspectives and uncovering themes that may be shared by a particular group.

**Background and Personal Perspective of the Researcher**

My language and culture experiences shaped who I am as a counselor and researcher and had an impact on my choice for dissertation topic. It was important to acknowledge my background and put aside assumptions in an effort to stay true to addressing my research questions through qualitative methodology. Here I will discuss relevant aspects of my background in order to provide a context for myself as researcher.

I was born in Latin America and came to the United States with my family for the first time as a young child. I had an older brother and two younger sisters, one of whom was only several weeks old. My experience of coming to the United States was very significant for me, particularly because of my young age.

After several years in the United States, where my parents pursued higher education, my family returned to our native land with the addition of my new baby American-born brother. My parents had come to value the American education system and desired for their children to speak fluent English, so they moved to an American-style community and enrolled my siblings and me in an American-style school. Although my parents might have had some awareness of the cultural challenges their children
would face in a cross-cultural environment, they were confident that it would only enhance our personal and cultural well-being.

This experience largely formed and cemented my identity as a Third Culture Kid, a term coined by sociologist and anthropologist Ruth Hill Useem and expanded on by Pollock and Van Reken (2009) to refer to persons who have spent a significant part of their developmental years outside of their parents’ culture. After high school, I applied for a student visa and moved to the United States, where I attended college. Although I retained my country of origin citizenship as a temporary resident in the United States, I never returned to live in Latin America. During my dissertation, after many visa renewals and changes in immigrant status, I became a naturalized U.S. citizen.

Throughout my childhood, I felt, for the most part, comfortable speaking in English. Like many children who grow up in cross-cultural and linguistic settings, I addressed my parents in English even when they spoke to me in Spanish. This was sometimes awkward, as I did not know of anyone else outside of my immediate family who experienced this sort of language dynamic with their parents. It was not until years later that I recognized the value of Spanish and decided to work on bilingual fluency. From that time on, I chose to work in bilingual settings so that I could utilize Spanish and have an impact on other Spanish-speakers.

As I worked on my dissertation about the experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients and found myself on the verge of my own transition of becoming a naturalized United States citizen, I realized my socioeconomic privilege. Even though I do not always feel privileged, I was moved by the barrier that would now
be placed between me and others who are not as privileged. With privilege comes great responsibility. A part of mine will be to respect and honor the counseling profession as I strive to impact it through the training of counselors to work with a growing diverse United States population.

Summary

Analyzing the data in this qualitative study was an inductive process that required the researcher to become immersed in the data and look at the world through the eyes and senses of the participants. In order for the researcher to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of the experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients, it was critical that he set aside his own biases and previous understanding of the phenomenon, and focus only on the participants’ experiences through the data. Since qualitative research has the potential to generate an abundance of data, one of the researcher’s tasks was to reduce the data by developing categories or codes of patterns that seemed to emerge from the data. As the patterns and semantic relationships became more clear and developed into themes, the researcher refined the categories and codes and met with his advisor to talk through and review the process. As the themes emerged from the data, the researcher was able to present the findings as they related to each of the research questions.
CHAPTER IV
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter will include an aggregate description of the research participants, an
in-depth analysis of the interviews, and the research findings produced from the 10
interviews with counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients. In order to ensure
confidentiality for participants, their identities and demographic information will be
described in composite form only. While a richer understanding and picture of individual
participants may be useful to the reader and may be helpful to better understand the data,
it was important to protect participants through preservation of their anonymity.
Throughout Chapters IV and V, pseudonyms are used solely for the purpose of data
organization and dissemination.

This chapter presents the themes that emerged from the participants’ interviews.
The interpretations of these themes were a result of inductive data analysis and data
reduction. The inductive process involved the researcher’s immersion in the specifics of
the data and coding procedures that take into account external homogeneity, the degree to
which the data do not belong together, and internal homogeneity, the degree to which the
data do belong together (Creswell, 1998).

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to report on the themes that
emerged to address the study’s four research questions. The study’s research questions
aimed to gather data on participants’ motivations for entering their counseling program; participants’ personal and professional experiences with Spanish-speaking clients, including their preparation process for work with Spanish-speaking clients; and their recommendations for new counselors and counseling training programs based on these experiences. Open-ended individual interviews based on the interview protocol were conducted. These interviews lasted approximately 1 hour, with follow-up phone calls upon completion of transcription phase for clarification. All participants in this study were counselor practitioners who work with Spanish-speaking clients in the Midwest region of the United States. Trustworthiness of the data was accomplished through thick, rich descriptions; member check; and peer review (Creswell, 1998).

During the interviews, participants described their personal and professional experiences regarding their motivation to become counselors, preparation experiences that readied them for work with Spanish-speaking clients, their personal and professional experiences, and recommendations for counselor preparation and training based on these experiences. Participants’ stories were richly detailed with regard to significant events and experiences that related to their work with Spanish-speaking clients.

**Participants**

Participants for this study were 10 counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients. In keeping with the literature’s description of counselor’s work with this population, two groups of counselors were recruited and invited to participate with this study, counselors who do not use interpreters (CWDNUI) in their work with Spanish-speaking clients, and counselors who use interpreters (CWUI) in their work with
Spanish-speaking clients. Although there were many parallels in their overall experiences, there were also significant differences in the way that the two groups described their experiences. This chapter will lay out the themes that emerged from the 10 participants and inform readers of the significant findings.

From the beginnings of his interactions with potential participants, the researcher found that CWDNUI seemed to have a more natural understanding of this study and reasons this researcher was interested in interviewing them about their experiences with Spanish-speaking clients. This researcher explained to all participants that their voices were equally important and coveted, as some counselors use interpreters and others do not use interpreters in their work with this population, and very little is known about either group’s lived experiences.

The participants were seven female and three male counselor practitioners ranging in age from mid-20s to 60s. Half of the participants indicated some degree of Spanish-language fluency and half indicated no fluency. More than half of the participants self-identified as Caucasian; the remainder self-identified as Hispanic/Latino and African American. More than half of the participants indicated working with Spanish-speaking clients for 3 or more years; the remainder indicated about 6 months working with this population (see Table 2).
Table 2

Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Spanish-language fluency</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Length of time working with Spanish-speaking clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 female</td>
<td>Range: 20s to 60s</td>
<td>5 some degree of fluency</td>
<td>&gt;5 Caucasian</td>
<td>&gt;5 3+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 male</td>
<td>Mean age: 42</td>
<td>5 no fluency</td>
<td>&lt;5 Hispanic/Latino &amp; African American</td>
<td>&lt;5 about 6 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings

After data transcription, careful reading, and many rounds of data reduction, several themes emerged to relate to the study’s following four research questions:

1. How do counselors who provide services to Spanish-speaking clients describe their motivations and reasons for entering a counseling program?

2. How do counselors who provide services to Spanish-speaking clients gain their awareness, understanding, and skills to work with this population?

3. What are the personal and professional experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients?

4. How do counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients describe competence needed to work with this population?

As subthemes emerged and were identified, gathered, and coded to make meaning of the data, thematic connections and patterns also began to emerge. In order to organize and make sense of the findings, the themes will be described and discussed in relation to their corresponding research question (see Table 3).
Table 3

Summary of Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ 1. How do counselors who provide services to Spanish-speaking clients</td>
<td>Helping others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>describe their motivations and reasons for entering a counseling program?</td>
<td>Inspirational and affirmative experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocational calling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 2. How do Counselors who Provide Services to Spanish-Speaking Clients Gain</td>
<td>Cultural immersion experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their Awareness, Understanding, and Skills to work with this population?</td>
<td>Education-related experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High cultural identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low cultural identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 3. What are the personal and professional experiences of counselors who work</td>
<td>High cultural understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with Spanish-speaking clients?</td>
<td>Anxiety, uncertainty, and skepticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low cultural understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 4. How do counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients describe competence</td>
<td>Knowledge of the growing demand from the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>needed to work with this population?</td>
<td>population for counselors to work with Spanish-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaking clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meaningful immersion experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Humility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For research question 1, relating to counselors’ motivations for entering their
counseling programs, the themes that emerged were helping others, inspirational and
affirmative experiences, vocational calling, and career advancement. For research
question 2, relating to counselors’ experiences that helped prepare them for work with
Spanish-speaking clients, the themes included cultural immersion experiences,
education-related experiences, high cultural identification, and low cultural
identification. For research question 3, relating to counselors’ work experiences with
Spanish-speaking clients, the themes that emerged were *high cultural understanding*; *anxiety, uncertainty, skepticism*; and *low cultural understanding*. And finally, for research question 4, relating to competence needed to work with Spanish-speaking clients, the emergent themes were *knowledge of the growing demand from the population for counselors to work with Spanish-speaking clients, meaningful immersion experiences*, and *humility*. These themes became evident through data analysis and reduction and contributed to understanding and making meaning of the experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients. The following section contains the research findings arranged in the sequence of the research questions. The coded data from the interviews is presented in the tables and summary findings below.

**Findings for Research Question 1**

*How do counselors who provide services to Spanish-speaking clients describe their motivations and reasons for entering a counseling program?*

Table 4 indicates how counselors described their motivations for entering a counseling program. Through rigorous data analysis and reduction, four themes emerged from the interviews that related to this research question. Participants reported helping others, inspirational and affirmative experiences, vocational calling, and career advancement as significantly influencing them to study counseling. Table 4 indicates the themes that emerged for each participant.
Table 4

Variables Influencing Participants’ Motivation to Enter Counseling Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonym</th>
<th>Helping Others</th>
<th>Inspirational and Affirmative Experiences</th>
<th>Vocational Calling</th>
<th>Career Advancement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gina</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 reflects the following findings:

1. Nearly all participants described being highly influenced and motivated to enter a counseling program by their desire to help others and through their inspirational and affirmative experiences.

2. Half of the participants, including CWDNUI and CWUI, described being influenced and motivated to become counselors by a vocational calling.
3. Less than half of the participants, including both CWDNUI and CWUI, reported career advancement as a significant influence in their decision to enter their graduate counseling program.

These thematic variables can be distinctively categorized as either idealistic or pragmatic. The fact that all participants reported being idealistically motivated to enter the counseling profession, while only three reported pragmatic motivations, was a significant finding. Idealistic motivations indicated by all participants suggest an intrinsic helping quality that leads individuals to choose counseling as a profession.

**Helping others.** Helping others was described by participants as a natural desire to help and concern for the welfare of others, and was consistently reported by nearly all participants. This finding was not surprising, as counseling is widely accepted as part of a group of “helping professions,” that may also include the service-oriented professions of medicine, nursing, social work, education, religious work, and church ministry.

The direct quotations in Table 5 were pulled from the coded data that related to the theme of helping others as a motivation for counselors for entering a counseling program. In some cases, direct quotes may be modified slightly to eliminate information that may lead to participant’s identity. Such instances are noted by using brackets to distinguish directly quoted material from language that, while not precisely the words of a participant, still captures their intended meaning while preserving anonymity. Each example illustrates participant’s strong natural desire to help or to be helpful as significant in their motivation to pursue counseling as a career. Listed below are data that support the findings.
### Table 5

*Helping Others as Influencing Counseling Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>“I felt that I was pretty much suited for this field. I thought of myself as a helping person. It comes just like second nature to me, very natural to be in helping situations.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>“I always felt my purpose was to help people. And even through my undergrad I had people stop me and say, you know, ‘you have this way of speaking to people that, you know, comes across very natural and genuine,’ and so that kind of propelled me to do something outside of, you know, a management kind of business environment.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>“I’ve always helped others, volunteered. I’d volunteer in high school, go on mission trips, so I knew I wanted to do something like that.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>“I don’t know if I really thought about it. Maybe when I was doing my undergraduate degree. We had to do a thesis and I think at that time I was like, I want to work with juveniles and help them get to a better place.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>“First I wanted to go into nursing as a way of helping people but I found out I wasn’t very good at chemistry at all because I’m not a very detailed oriented person. But then I took some psychology classes and I loved them. And the more abstract things worked better with my ideas so I decided on counseling. But it really came out of a motivation ultimately to just help people.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>“I just have a strong desire to be with people. I’ve always liked people. I’ve always wanted to help. I guess I have always wanted to be helpful.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gina</td>
<td>“I knew it was something that I always wanted to do, even when I was in high school. I guess part of me wanted to become a counselor so I could interact with the students, help them with problems, situations they may have, applications towards college, you know, anything, the broad spectrum.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>“I like to help people so it has been my dream. I mean, helping people, educating people, just really wanting to do good for folks was probably the main reasons why I went into counseling.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>“I went to a small school and a lot of my friends would come to me with their problems and their concerns and their issues and they joked around, and even my teachers joked around, and called me “doctor.” And so I think it was natural, it was just a natural thing, a part of who I was.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It was not surprising that participants described helping others as a major influence for entering their counseling program, as this seems to be a natural reason and motivation for choosing this line of work. A conclusion from this finding is that counselors, regardless of their background, perceive being motivated by selflessness and a desire to help others. While this finding may seem self-evident, it is important to recognize that counselors perceive themselves as helpers, and enter counseling programs in order to gain the tools that will enable them to become effective as professional helpers.

**Inspirational and affirmative experiences.** One of the interview questions posed to elicit participants’ reflections regarding their motivations to enter a counseling program was, “What led you to study counseling?” This broad, open-ended question was designed to allow participants an opportunity to reflect on how they arrived at counseling as their choice of profession. Some participants seemed quite at ease with this question and gladly took time to reflect on their experiences dating as far back as their childhood. Others seemed less reflective and offered limited responses. The researcher probed with similar follow-up questions in an effort to encourage further reflection in each area.

The quotations in Table 6 were pulled from the coded data and relate to interview questions regarding participants’ influences for entering their counseling programs. In each example, participants pointed to specific inspirational and affirmative experiences that were personally significant and influenced them to pursue counseling studies.
### Table 6

**Inspirational and Affirmative Experiences as Influencing Counseling Study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>“[I was in another profession, where the people that I was working with] needed a lot of help, and I felt that I was ill-equipped to help them. So I decided to pursue counseling studies.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>“My family always said that I should be a pastor. That was the label that was put on me as a child. Whenever I had plays and interactions and did things in a group setting, people said that I had a way of communicating information to people. I guess that stuck with me all the way through till I started my degree.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>“I took an intro psych class and I just found it so fascinating. I love hearing people’s stories, and to find out that there was a profession for this…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>“When I was eight years old my mom read me a book about a woman who helped rescue young girls who were being exploited, and it just really inspired me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>“My desire to be a counselor was born out of my own struggle to figure my own self out and to deal with my own hurt, my own pain, and what works and what doesn’t.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gina</td>
<td>“I knew it was something that I always wanted to do, even when I was in high school, because of the fact that we didn’t know our counselors in high school. They were a part of the school but did not interact with the students, even when it came time to applying to colleges. You did it on your own. You did everything on your own. I guess part of me wanted to become a counselor so I could interact with the students, help them with problems, situations they may have applications towards college, you know, anything, the broad spectrum. Something that I didn’t receive in high school.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>“I look at my mom, the unconditional love that she provided, just supporting me and saying, you’re okay, you’re loved. Some close high school friends got me involved in youth group activities and encouraged me to participate in those kinds of things.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>“I had a client that I was working with who overdosed, and that was really hard for me. When I went to my supervisor, the attitude was kind of like, ‘Well, you know, we knew she was a drug addict, so, that just happens.’ Shortly after that happened, I left that job and I said I’m never doing counseling again. I worked at a couple of different places, [doing non-counseling related jobs], and then I was like, ‘this doesn’t work for me either.’ And so I finally ended up going back into the counseling field, and I’ve been doing this ever since. This is who I am.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When asked what led them to study counseling, virtually all participants described a natural intrinsic quality in themselves that they felt like they always had. Eight of the 10 participants described their natural desire to help others as connected to their having been nurtured by significant people, events, and personal experiences. The role of nurturance was very significant for participants when describing their path toward becoming counselors. Participants pointed to inspirational and affirmative events that nurtured and shaped their personal and professional selves. This finding is significant as it points to the important role that key people and inspirational events played in participants’ lives and career decisions. As counselors enter and proceed through their training, their personal and professional development may well depend on continued inspirational and affirmative events.

**Vocational calling.** Vocational calling has traditionally been described as a summons or strong inclination to a particular state or course of action, or a divine call to the religious life (Hardy, 1990). More modern descriptions have broadened the term to include a sense of being drawn to an occupation in which an individual feels suited, as well as an individual’s development of talents and abilities in the choice and enjoyment of a career (Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 2013). While the term may have lost some of its original meaning, it still denotes a strong sense of pull to a particular career that may not be easily explained. Five of the 10 participants indicated this as an influence when describing what led them to study counseling.

Although other participants described feeling inspired and having a natural desire to be helpful, the theme of vocational calling emerged and wove through several
participants’ interviews. The quotations in Table 7 were pulled from the coded data found in responses to interview questions relating to vocational calling as an influence for entering a counseling program.

Table 7

Vocational Calling as Influencing Counseling Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>“I had been working in a completely different field for many years. So, this was for me, you know what I mean, this wasn’t to find a job where I made money, it was something for me, personal growth and helping people.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>“[The idea of doing counseling] really spoke to me. I felt like it was a really good fit. So that with helping people and then finding out about this profession really kinda led me to it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>“For me, counseling is like a lifestyle, not really a job.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>“I went into [religious training], and was wanting really to, just feeling led to, couple the education as well as I enjoy talking with people. So I kinda put those two together and it’s just been a wonderful experience.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>“I think [entering the counseling profession] was an innate thing. It’s part of who I am. I went to counseling because of who I am, not counseling made me who I am.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The finding of vocational calling as motivation for entering a counseling program was significant, as it indicates a pull or a leading that seems to not be fully understood by the participants. Participants who described their motivation as a vocational calling spoke about it in terms of being led, having purpose, and as more than a job. Interestingly, four of these five participants, who included both CWDNUI and CWUI, also shared a common theme of pastoral, missionary, ministry, or seminary experience in their
interviews. This is significant because those interests and careers are often connected to a vocational calling. Counseling programs and faculty should recognize this as an important asset for some students and find ways to encourage them to develop and receive specific nurturance in this area.

**Career advancement.** The theme of career advancement that emerged from the data is significant, as it seems to indicate an external motivation. While helping others, inspirational and affirmative experiences, and vocational calling seem to point to an internal motivation, as they describe participants’ inner drive to pursue counseling, career advancement as a motivation to enter a counseling program seems to reflect a more pragmatic and cognitive motivation. It is important to recognize that while participants consistently described their counseling ambitions as being highly influenced by helping others, nurturance, and vocational calling, the more pragmatic-leaning drive of career advancement is also important and should be noted when considering counseling students’ career motivations.

Alex, Dawn, and Irene described feelings of needing to continue in school in order to advance in their counseling careers or become better equipped to do their jobs. Dawn, who had already been through several undergraduate programs, specifically described her need to continue her studies in order to be more satisfied with her career in the long-term. Similarly, Irene described how she found that she was not going to be able to have a satisfying career in counseling unless she pursued a graduate counseling degree. It was interesting to note that these three participants were older than the mean age of the
whole group of participants. Perhaps their being older added to their ability to be more reflective regarding their career journey and development.

The quotations on Table 8 were pulled from the coded data found in responses to interview questions relating to career advancement as motivation for entering a counseling program.

Table 8

_Career Advancement as Influencing Counseling Study_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>“I noticed that I wasn’t trained to do counseling. I thought that entering a graduate program and being trained as a counselor would help me, give me some tools [for doing counseling work].”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>“I was thinking about my job and how long I was going to be doing it, and I was kind of tossing back and forth about even doing a graduate degree. I guess I was mostly thinking about my future.” “I graduated from college and got a job. When I moved I couldn’t find anything in my field unless I was going to start from the bottom again and work my way up again.” “I felt limited as to what I could do with my undergraduate degree.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>“I knew that I wanted to work with people in some sort of capacity. I had worked with a social services organization for two years after I had graduated from college and realized that there wasn’t much that someone could do in counseling [with a bachelor’s degree] so I started looking at graduate programs.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary Results for Research Question 1

Counselors are idealistically and pragmatically motivated to entering counseling training programs. Most participants indicated that they were motivated because of their natural desire to be helpers as well as inspirational and affirmative experiences, while
several also reported that they were motivated by vocational calling and career advancement. All participants in this study described their desire to help others as being very natural for them and many indicated that they did not know where this came from and they “always just kind of had it.” All participants also reflected on personal inspirational and affirmative experiences that grounded them and provided encouragement and nurturance as they decided to pursue counseling studies.

Findings for Research Question 2

How do counselors who provide services to Spanish-speaking clients gain their awareness, understanding, and skills to work with this population?

As previously mentioned, research questions 2 and 3 are notably different than research question 1 in that while research question 1 broadly asked participants about their motivations for entering a counseling program, questions 2 and 3 specifically addressed their relationships with their Spanish-speaking clients. The conceptual framework that guided this study from its inception called for the researcher to frame the research questions in such a manner. As a result, the themes that emerged from the data and underwent reduction were found to relate to research questions 2 and 3 in a different way than to research question 1. While the themes that emerged to address research question 1 brought to light the idealistic and pragmatic motivations of counselors to enter a counseling program, the themes that emerged to address research questions 2 and 3 highlighted counselors’ insights into relationships with their work with their Spanish-speaking clients, including the aspects of their preparation and work experiences.
Most counselors do not receive specialized or advanced training to work with Spanish-speaking clients. As counselors-in-training progress through their graduate programs and begin to counsel clients, they sometimes find themselves working with populations with which they were inadequately prepared to work, including Spanish-speaking clients. This study sought to address this dynamic that is becoming increasingly important, due to the growth in the Spanish-speaking population throughout the United States.

Table 9 indicates how counselors described gaining their awareness, knowledge, and skills to work with Spanish-speaking clients. Through rigorous data analysis and reduction, the following themes emerged: (1) cultural immersion experiences, (2) education-related experiences, (3) high cultural identification, and (4) low cultural identification.

As indicated in Table 9, Nearly all participants, including both CWDNUI and CWUI, described cultural immersion experiences as having a significant impact on their preparation for work with Spanish-speaking clients; the majority of participants, including both CWDNUI and CWUI, described education-related experiences as having a significant impact on their preparation for work with Spanish-speaking clients; all participants described cultural identification or the lack of it as having an impact on their preparation for work with Spanish-speaking clients.

Participants described what was helpful and not helpful in their training; how their personal experiences with family, language learning, and travel were useful; and how their own intercultural and immersion experiences were significant in their preparation.
for work with Spanish-speaking clients. The greatest distinction between CWDNUI and CWUI came in their description of their cultural identification with their Spanish-speaking clients and the way in which this was connected to their preparation experiences. These distinctions were coded as high cultural identification and low level of identification, as some participants described very closely identifying with this population while others described little to no cultural identification.

Table 9

*Variables Impacting Counselor Preparation for work with Spanish-Speaking Clients*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Cultural Immersion Experiences</th>
<th>Education-Related Experiences</th>
<th>High Cultural Identification</th>
<th>Low Cultural Identification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gina</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cultural immersion.** Cultural immersion can be broadly defined as the active process of becoming experientially involved in a cultural experience. It has been used in
a variety of disciplines as a means of absorbing intercultural awareness and sensitivity through active and intensive exposure with a culture for the purpose of better perception and insight into that culture. Many higher education departments have recognized the value of cultural immersion experiences and have implemented study abroad programs for increasing students’ cultural sensitivity, as well as promoting personal, professional, and intellectual development.

Participants described an array of cultural immersion experiences and related how these experiences were instrumental in their preparation for their work with Spanish-speaking clients. As participants reflected on their preparation experiences that influenced their awareness, knowledge, and skills to work with Spanish-speaking clients, they described the significance of their ethnic origin and heritage, Spanish-language acquisition, travel experiences, formative experiences, and past and current job experiences.

A significant finding was that both CWDNUI and CWUI, regardless of their demographic identification, described some sort of cultural immersion experience when asked about how they gained their awareness, knowledge, and skills to work with their Spanish-speaking clients. Only three participants referenced their graduate program when asked about how they were prepared to work with Spanish-speaking clients. Most participants began by describing their cultural immersion experiences, and portrayed these experiences as critical in relation to their work with their Spanish-speaking clients.

CWUI described their cultural immersion experiences somewhat differently than CWDNUI. While CWDNUI largely described their immersion experiences as very close
and personal, including affect, understanding, and emotion in their descriptions, CWUI descriptions were more tentative and guarded. A clear finding, however, was that across and between groups, counselors’ perceptions of their own cultural immersion is critical to the way that they view their preparation and competence to work with Spanish-speaking clients.

Table 10 offers direct quotations that were pulled from the coded data relating to participants’ descriptions of how cultural immersion influenced their preparation for work with Spanish-speaking clients. In each instance, cultural immersion is indicated as significantly influencing counselors’ preparation for their work with Spanish-speaking clients.

Participants identified cultural immersion experiences as important in their preparation for work with Spanish-speaking clients. It was noteworthy that both CWDNUI and CWUI described cultural immersion experiences as significant in their preparation for work with this population, albeit in different ways. CWDNUI descriptions of cultural immersion included the significance of their ethnic heritage and upbringing, language and culture acquisition, and travel experiences, and seemed to be richer and more detailed than their CWUI counterparts. CWUI cultural immersion descriptions focused on travel, childhood encounters, and past and present employment experiences.
Table 10

*Cultural Immersion Experiences as Impacting Counselor Preparation for Work with Spanish-Speaking Clients*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>“In [Latin America], where I had the opportunity to work in educational settings, I was able to build a good broad experience working with different people from different backgrounds. Here in America, in the agencies where I’ve worked, I found that Hispanics tend to be pretty much, although they are in a way diverse, they tend to have a lot in common, as migrants here in this country. They have common needs that I believe I fit in to be able to address.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>“I think the best thing that’s prepared me is the fact that I am Hispanic, so I understand the culture. I’m fluent in Spanish. I’ve been around the culture all my life.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>“My mom participated in a host teacher program so she took in teachers from Spanish-speaking countries a lot of times. They wouldn’t always stay with us, but they sometimes would. My mom wanted me to be around native Spanish-speakers.” “Living in another country, and staying with a host family was really helpful.” “Studying Spanish for so long helped me to know the language.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>“Because of my upbringing [as a Hispanic-American], I always understood Spanish. I didn’t speak it a whole lot when I was younger. I just knew it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>“I’d studied Spanish through high school but wasn’t very good at learning it in class. I learned it a lot faster by talking to people.” “When I was in middle school, I got a chance to travel to [Latin America]. My mom really pushed Spanish on us. She doesn’t speak Spanish, and she’s not from Latin America at all, but she wanted my sister and I to be bilingual, so she bought us videos and stuff. Once I was on the track of learning Spanish, it made sense to follow up and travel to Spanish-speaking countries. I loved it and I found I love Latin America and I like being there, and that’s how I learned Spanish.” “My sister and I got a chance through our school to go to Latin America and do some volunteer work. And then as soon as I graduated from high school I went back and that’s when I really learned Spanish because nobody there spoke English.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gina</td>
<td>“We were farmers and had Spanish-speaking families coming to work on our farm in the Fall. The families would join us every year in August and stay at our farmhouses. I looked forward to my friends coming back in August and staying until November. I would go down and visit them, and they’d come up to the house and we’d play and hang out and go to school together.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>“When I first got out of school I got a job as a teacher down in [a border state]. It probably was, I don’t know, 95 percent Hispanic. I was in an English-speaking classroom, although many of the parents of the students were only Spanish-speaking.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>“I have a couple of friends who are Spanish-speaking. We talk and that has helped.” “I’m not sure if I’m fully prepared to work with them, because I don’t speak Spanish. I think part of what has prepared me is just being with Spanish-speaking clients and hearing their stories and experiences.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Education-related experiences.** The theme of education-related experiences emerged from the data and related to research question 2 as participants reported its influence on their awareness, knowledge, and skills to work with their Spanish-speaking clients. Seven participants talked about their education experiences, although not necessarily their graduate college experiences, and their relevance to their preparation for work with their Spanish-speaking clients. Three participants indicated some positive influence from their graduate programs in preparing them to work with Spanish-speaking clients. However, only two provided a strong endorsement that either through their practicum experiences or the openness of professors did their graduate program significantly train them for work with this population.
Carol, Emily, and Holly described their elementary school and undergraduate college experiences as significant. Carol described her elementary Spanish-immersion school experience as instilling something in her at an early age that continued to develop until it also became useful in her work as a counselor with Spanish-speaking clients. Emily and Holly identified their undergraduate college studies as extremely significant and described this education-related experience as meaningful in their preparation for counseling work with Spanish-speaking clients.

Alex, Carol, Gina, Irene, and Jennifer described their graduate training as significant in their preparation for work with Spanish-speaking clients. While Alex and Gina described their graduate training as positive and helpful in their preparation, Carol, Irene, and Jennifer described their graduate training experience as being somewhat limited in preparing them to work with Spanish-speaking clients. Alex also described his previous professional training as influential and significant.

Table 11 presents direct quotations that were pulled from the coded data relating to participants’ descriptions of how their school related experiences influenced their preparation for work with Spanish-speaking clients. In each instance, education-related experiences significantly influenced counselors with regard to preparation for work with Spanish-speaking clients.
Table 11

*Education-Related Experiences as Impacting Counselor Preparation for Work with Spanish-Speaking Clients*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>“My first training in religious studies was very helpful. That area also is very centered in working helping people and understanding their problems. My spiritual values and my training were an asset.”&lt;br&gt;“I took some courses that included working with minorities during my graduate studies, and I had an opportunity to do my practicum where I also gained experience with Spanish-speaking clients.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>“I studied Spanish in school since [very early on]. My school had a Spanish immersion program so everything was in Spanish, the whole curriculum was in Spanish.”&lt;br&gt;“I don’t feel like I was prepared [for work with Spanish-speaking clients] at all. Like definitely not even in grad school at all.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>“I minored in Spanish and I was also really interested in it, but my Latin American literature classes were really helpful and gave me a window into cultural things that I hadn’t understood before. Latin American Literature, Latin American History, and even just learning the language was helpful.”&lt;br&gt;“Latin American history, learning about the history of [particular countries] was extremely helpful. As well as learning about the United States’ role in how those countries developed into the way they are. Latin American history, good professors that were from strong Latino backgrounds, or had lots of experience, really instilled in me a more non-judgmental standpoint of other cultures and better understanding.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gina</td>
<td>“Studying for my master’s in counseling, prepared me for working with different cultures. My graduate program definitely helped prepare me for that because they were very open. My professors were very open in saying, don’t always take what you’ve learned in your own culture and expect that all cultures are the same.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>“I took Spanish in undergraduate college. Probably my favorite class ever. So I had a little bit of knowledge of the dialect.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>“My graduate program had a multicultural class. We talked about the Hispanic population and cultural nuances like families, or individuals, they don’t have a lot of eye contact was what I remember. I don’t necessarily think that that’s true. But I remember being taught that. I know that it’s a patriarchal type of family structure, so I was prepared, I think, limitedly, through my graduate studies.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>“I know we had a cultural competency class. But I don’t remember really understanding the different cultural differences in the Spanish-speaking population. I don’t think that they really prepared us for the Spanish-speaking population.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seven of the 10 participants described education-related experiences as significant; however, three explicitly reported that their graduate training did not do enough to prepare them for their work with Spanish-speaking clients. Some participants cited other school related experiences, such as elementary school, undergraduate studies, and related graduate studies, as equally or more significant in their preparation for work with Spanish-speaking clients. Four participants, including one CWDNUI and three CWUI, credited their graduate counseling program as being at least somewhat influential in their preparation to work with Spanish-speaking clients. A key finding was that while CWDNUI and CWUI both indicated education-related experiences as significant in their preparation for work with Spanish-speaking clients, most participants described their graduate training as insufficient and agreed that there needs to be more training to work with this population.

**High cultural identification.** When participants were asked about their experiences about how they came to work with Spanish-speaking clients and what
prepared them, CWDNUI spoke directly of the significance of their ethnic and cultural identification with their Spanish-speaking clients. Alex, Bob, and Dawn described their connection and closeness to Spanish-speaking clients as coming from their own Hispanic ethnicity and life experiences associated with this identification. Carol and Emily described having close personal relationships with Spanish-speaking individuals and how having these relationships was significant in their preparation for work with Spanish-speaking clients.

Table 12 contains direct quotations that were pulled from the coded data relating to participants’ high cultural identification and its impact on their preparation for work with Spanish-speaking clients. In each instance, high cultural identification was a significant factor for these counselors with regard to their preparation for work with Spanish-speaking clients.

The contrast between CWDNUI and CWUI in the way that they described their familiarity and identification with their Spanish-speaking clients or lack of it was a significant finding. A key finding was that no CWUI reported high cultural identification with Spanish-speaking clients as significantly influencing his or her preparation for work with Spanish-speaking clients. In contrast, CWDNUI reported a strong sense of identification as significantly influencing their preparation for work with this population. Bob candidly described his *being Hispanic* as an important asset and significant in his preparation for work with Spanish-speaking clients. Alex described his close identification with his Spanish-speaking clients as being significant in his preparation to work with this population. Dawn similarly described her ethnicity as an asset, although in
Table 12

**High Cultural Identification as Impacting Counselor Preparation for Work with Spanish-Speaking Clients**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>“Every time that I have an opportunity to meet a client, that’s a great moment for me. But when I am with my Spanish-speaking people, I can definitely relate in a more intimate personal way. I believe I can relate in a broader way to their experiences.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Bob         | “Well, I think probably the best thing that’s prepared me is the fact that I am Hispanic, so I understand the culture. I’m fluent in Spanish. I’ve been around the culture all my life. I can reach out to individuals because I’m Hispanic.”  
“What I found in the individuals that I’ve come to work with is that they see me, and they recognize that there’s somebody that looks like me, who understands the culture, who understands the struggles of that culture, and yet he’s *there* in a position that you would normally not see a person. And so, it is, what I found in those individuals is that they’re suddenly motivated to do something different with their life.” |
| Carol       | “My family on my dad’s side is Latino, and many of my cousins are Latino. That really helped me learn more about food, traditions, quinceañeras, all of that kinda stuff.” |
| Dawn        | “If the Hispanic family was working with somebody that was not of Mexican descent, maybe they had a translator, I don’t think they’d share as much with them. I mean, because they would, maybe they’d feel well okay they’re not going to understand, and I think a lot of them are a little bit more open with me cuz I *am* Mexican and I *do* understand our culture.” |
| Emily       | “It’s been more my personal life, I think, church, my husband’s from Latin America, friends, family, so it’s part of my personal life, Latino culture, and Spanish language. We speak Spanish at home, my two-year-old speaks Spanish, so it’s who I am, you know, it’s more than just my professional identity. It’s my life.”  
“I have friends and family members who are undocumented. Walking with them through their struggles on a personal level totally opened my eyes up to what it’s like.”  
“So being a part, that’s the biggest thing. Latino culture is part of my life, and so I can understand my clients much better.” |
less certain terms, as she was quick to point out that while her heritage was significant in her work with Spanish-speaking clients, she was not *Mexican-Mexican*. Dawn felt that even though her ethnicity was an asset, there was a part of her that could not relate as closely to her Spanish-speaking clients, because of her lack of cultural and language fluency.

Interestingly, Carol and Emily seemed to have deeper insight into their preparation and work experiences than Dawn. These participants described their close Hispanic family affiliation as being significant in their preparation. Carol indicated that her family on her dad’s side is Mexican and described learning about Mexican culture and traditions and values through social interactions with these family members. Emily described marrying into Hispanic culture, adopting it as her own, and indicated the importance she places on raising her daughter in a bicultural and bilingual environment.

**Low cultural identification.** The theme of low cultural identification described by some participants emerged and wove throughout several of the interviews. Five participants described low cultural identification in their preparation experiences for work with Spanish-speaking client. These descriptions were in contrast to other participants, who described their preparation experiences in terms of high cultural identification.

Table 13 contains direct quotations that were pulled from the coded data relating to participants’ descriptions of how low cultural identification impacted their preparation for work with Spanish-speaking clients. In each instance, low cultural identification significantly impacted participants’ preparation for work with Spanish-speaking clients.
CWUI described low cultural identification as impacting their preparation for work with Spanish-speaking clients. Unlike their CWDNUl counterparts, these participants often seemed lost when describing their experiences that prepared them to work with this population. CWDNUI previously indicated that while they did not receive much training in their graduate programs, they felt like they had other experiences that

Table 13

Low Cultural Identification as Impacting Counselor Preparation for Work with Spanish-Speaking Clients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>“I did actually take Spanish in high school. I didn’t do very well. And, you know, I’ve had a desire to learn Spanish. It’s just not in the cards right now.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gina</td>
<td>“There were big barriers, especially with the language. When you’re kids, you just want to play and have fun. My friends’ parents were monolingual. No one spoke English, only Spanish. And some of my friends would speak a little bit of English, [because they would learn in school], but still there was that language barrier.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>“I really can’t think of anything that prepared me to work with Spanish-speaking clients... Just, maybe an attitude of being accepting of the differences.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>“I think that I had very limited preparation. My graduate program had a multicultural class. We talked about the Hispanic population and cultural nuances that I kind of remember, like families, or individuals, they don’t have a lot of eye contact was what I remember. I don’t necessarily think that that’s true. But I remember being taught that. I know that it’s a patriarchal type of family structure, so I was prepared, limitedly, through my graduate studies.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Being sensitive to other cultures in preparing to work with somebody from a different culture. There hasn’t really been anything specifically with working with Spanish-speaking clients or the Hispanic population.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>“I know that we had a cultural competency class. But I don’t remember really understanding the different cultural differences in the Spanish-speaking population. I don’t think they really prepared us for the Spanish-speaking population.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
compensated for this lack of formal training. CWUI, on the other hand, seemed at an extra loss, as it was at times difficult for them to describe any experiences, personal or professional, that prepared them for work with this population.

**Summary Results for Research Question 2**

Counselors’ preparation experiences for work with Spanish-speaking clients are important to understand. As the Spanish-speaking population in the United States continues to surge, counselors are increasingly finding themselves having to provide services to this group. Participants generally reported feeling underprepared to work with Spanish-speaking clients. CWDNUI described their own personal experiences, including ethnic and heritage identification, as well as cultural immersion as having been more beneficial than their graduate school training. CWUI reported that, while they did take a multicultural course in their graduate program, this did not adequately prepare them for work with this population.

**Findings for Research Question 3**

*What are the personal and professional experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients?*

In a similar way that the findings for research question 2 highlighted counselors’ insights into their relationships with Spanish-speaking clients regarding aspects of their preparation experiences, the findings for research question 3 highlighted counselors’ insights into their relationships with Spanish-speaking clients regarding aspects of their direct work experiences with these clients.
Table 14 indicates how counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients describe their personal and professional experiences. Through rigorous data analysis and reduction, three themes emerged from the interviews that came to relate to this research question. At times more than one related category was referenced and is indicated below.

Table 14

*Variables Impacting Counselors’ Work Experiences with Spanish-Speaking Clients*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>High Cultural Understanding</th>
<th>Anxiety, Uncertainty, and Skepticism</th>
<th>Low Cultural Understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gina</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings revealed in the above table are critical as they shed light on significant experiences described by counselors in their work with Spanish-speaking clients. Participants richly described high cultural understanding; anxiety, uncertainty,
and skepticism; and low cultural understanding as impacting their work with clients. A key finding was that CWDNUI generally reported greater cultural identification and understanding with their Spanish-speaking clients and described this identification and understanding as playing a significant role in both their preparation and work with this population. CWUI reported low cultural understanding and described the barriers and challenges of working with Spanish-speaking clients in terms of not being able to establish therapeutic rapport with their clients.

**High cultural understanding.** All participants reported the importance of cultural understanding as significantly impacting their work with Spanish-speaking clients. High cultural understanding was often implied by CWDNUI, as these participants seemed to have a more dynamic understanding of some of the challenges and issues faced by this population. When CWDNUI were asked what it was like for them to work with Spanish-speaking clients, many responded by talking about the various issues and struggles faced by the population, suggesting their closeness and familiarity with these issues and with this population. Conversely, CWUI responded to this question primarily by describing the actual challenges in the process of working with this population, such as language and cultural barriers with their clients.

Table 15 contains direct quotations that were pulled from the coded data relating to participants’ descriptions of how high cultural understanding impacted their work with Spanish-speaking clients.
### Table 15

*High Cultural Understanding as Impacting Counselors’ Work with Spanish-Speaking Clients*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Alex        | “Our people tend to be in denial of their mental health needs. There is a lot of stigma associated with mental health services and treatment. Some people have told me that some friends or families have told them, “you go to that agency?” “Oh, but you’re not crazy!” You know, that type of thing, and part of the work that I have to do with them is de-stigmatize the services that we provide, and educate them as to the holistic nature of the human person.”  

“Migration issues is something that has been a top issue lately, very significantly impacting families and people who are undocumented. One of the aspects that I found very important in my practice is that I need to be very sensitive to that. Instead of using words that can be stigmatizing, like illegal, you know, we don’t use that type of vocabulary. Undocumented instead, because we are not a law-enforcement agency to judge them as illegal.”  

“Because of that situation, many tend to stay underground. Sometimes they disappear from the scene because they may sense that immigration could be looking for them. Some of them sometime use fake names, and I remember once that I attempted to advocate on behalf of one of my clients who was undocumented. I wanted to talk to his boss, and request for flexible time for him to attend treatment. He quickly interrupted me and confided to me that he has another name, that he used a fake name, and he didn’t want that. I can understand that. So developing trust can be challenging. But once you make a good connection, clients develop trust and then you can work more effectively.” |
| Bob         | “What I found in the individuals that I’ve come to work with is that they see me and they recognize that there’s somebody that looks like me, who understands the culture, who understands the struggles of that culture, and yet he’s there in a position that you would normally not see a person. And so what I found in those individuals is that they’re suddenly motivated to do something different with their life. Even if it’s not verbally spoken, it’s visually understood.” |
| Carol       | “I think I feel a lot more confident now, I enjoy it more. Something I really like is when we have a graduation, like a successful termination, we have a big party, and they make tons of food, everybody comes over.” |
| Dawn        | “I am Hispanic and I understand our culture. So clients are going to be more comfortable talking to me.” |
Table 15—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>“It’s challenging because of the barriers and discrimination that clients face. That’s the hardest part for me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The barriers are tremendous. Even people that speak English or are learning English, there’s many things that are difficult for people to do, and they’re so easily taken advantage of. They often don’t know their rights in a situation. Americans, they’re in their own country, they usually have a pretty good idea what their rights are, and how to stand up for themselves, and foreigners don’t.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“They get confused and psychologically that makes people vulnerable. They can’t advocate for themselves so then they kind get a defeated attitude and other psychological issues.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Latino men have a lot of cultural pressure to be manly in a traditional way, and you know, vulnerability isn’t part of the traditional culture for men. For example, there was [an employer] around here where one of the supervisors would write racial slurs on the white board and grab this immigrant guy by the neck, and bring him over to the board and make him read the racial slurs out loud. The psychological impact of something like that on someone, making them feel that they are less than other people, they are less valuable, they’re more like an animal. So the psychological impact of that is really profound and it’s not something we can really deal with in the scope of what my work is, you know?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Parents have these traumas, and then the kids are, you know, often in a situation where they feel ashamed of their parents’ culture. Sometimes they don’t want to speak Spanish or say they don’t speak Spanish even when they do because they don’t like the stigma. Then parents feel even worse because their own children are sort of rejecting their traditional culture. Another problem is, like, compared to African Americans, who grow up here and have a chance to build up their defenses, a lot of immigrants come from places where they’re not being discriminated against, where they’re, they’re the mainstream person, and they’re used to just being the average guy, and they come here and all the sudden they’re nobody and they’re at the bottom of the totem pole, and it can be a really tough transition.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants who reported high cultural understanding seemed to have more empathy with their Spanish-speaking clients, which is not surprising, as they seemed to have closer ties with this population. No CWUI indicated high cultural understanding.
with their Spanish-speaking clients. CWDNUI, on the other hand, all indicated a high level of cultural understanding, which they identified as helpful for rapport building with clients and developing a good working relationship.

When participants were asked about what it is like for them to work with Spanish-speaking clients, CWDNUI described significantly different experiences than their CWUI counterparts. CWDNUI indicated high cultural understanding with their Spanish-speaking clients. For example, Alex described identifying very closely with his Spanish-speaking clients and even referred to them as “my Spanish-speaking people.” CWDNUI who identified as Hispanic spoke in no uncertain terms of the significance of their ethnic and cultural identification with their Spanish-speaking clients. Alex, Bob, and Dawn described their identification and closeness to Spanish-speaking clients as coming from their own Hispanic ethnicity and related life experiences. Carol and Emily described having close personal relationships with Spanish-speaking individuals and how having these relationships was significant for them.

CWDNUI indicated a deep connection with their Spanish-speaking clients and used more affective examples when describing their experiences. Alex described feeling more intimate with his Spanish-speaking clients and shared that he feels more comfortable with these clients than his other clients who are not Spanish-speaking. Bob described a high cultural understanding with his Spanish-speaking clients in a visceral way, unlike any of the other participants. His description of a “visual understanding” indicated an unspoken connection and understanding that he feels and believes has a significant impact on his work with clients.
CWDNUI described the challenges of work with Spanish-speaking clients and then specifically described how their high cultural understanding with clients impacted their ability to connect with and relate to their clients. These participants attributed their high cultural understanding with Spanish-speaking clients to their similar ethnicity or understanding and familiarity with this population, including their ability to speak Spanish. A significant finding was the noticeable absence of CWUI indicating high cultural understanding as impacting their work with Spanish-speaking clients.

**Anxiety, uncertainty, and skepticism.** Both CWUI and CWDNUI indicated a sense of anxiety, uncertainty, and skepticism at times as they described their work experiences with their Spanish-speaking clients. Only three participants did not report a sense of anxiety, uncertainty, and skepticism as significantly impacting their work with this population. Interestingly, these were the same participants who reported the highest degree of Spanish-language fluency.

Table 16 contains direct quotations that were pulled from the coded data relating to participants’ descriptions of the anxiety, uncertainty, and skepticism that impacted their work experiences with Spanish-speaking clients. In each instance, anxiety, uncertainty, and skepticism were described as having a significant impact for these counselors with regard to their work experiences with their Spanish-speaking clients.

The theme of anxiety, uncertainty, and skepticism as impacting counselors’ work with Spanish-speaking clients was a significant finding. This finding may well be central and at the heart of all of the findings because of the key significance and implications to this study. It is through counselors’ awareness of this anxiety, uncertainty, and skepticism
that they can begin to ask questions and do the work needed to become more confident and competent in their work with Spanish-speaking clients.

Table 16

Anxiety, Uncertainty, and Skepticism as Impacting Counselors’ Work with Spanish-Speaking Clients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>“I just applied [for this job] and I put it on my resume that I speak Spanish. I had no idea that it would turn into this. I thought, okay maybe I can help out interpreting a little bit. I hadn’t spoken Spanish in probably a year at that point. I was just so rusty and not used to speaking it all day.” “It was hard. I would come home every day with a massive headache. I was just exhausted at the end of the day. I think it would have been easier if I was dealing with one specific population, like the more formal Spanish that I learned. The population that I was working with was Guatemalan, Honduran, Venezuelan, Dominican, Puerto Rican. Sometimes it’s like, this is not even Spanish. For example some Dominicans cut off a lot of word endings, and it’s like sing-songy, and I was like I have no idea what this person is saying. And then if they’re lower income, I mean that’s a very different Spanish, too, so it was, it’s still a struggle for me now, but like starting out, I just don’t even know if I can do this. It was very defeating for me.” “I guess it’s harder as a gringa, too, because I’m not accepted coming into a house. I think I am much more now. I came in very timid, not very sure of myself, really tripping up. I wanted my Spanish to be perfect, like, I know how to conjugate things and use different verbs, and I was so tripped up on making it sound perfect and that I was confident that I forgot the whole purpose of why I was even there, for counseling.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>“I grew up understanding Spanish but not speaking it. I was born and raised here and I don’t know a lot of the Mexican Mexican tradition. I mean there’s stuff that I’ve heard that I’m kinda familiar with, but there are times where I’ll go home and ask my mom, “what does this or that mean?””</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>“I’m in the process of fleshing that out. Because of having to use an interpreter it’s a little, it’s different, and so I don’t exactly know what to do or where to go or how to proceed, because I can’t do it naturally.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 16—Continued

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gina</td>
<td>“I think the language piece is the most challenging. Especially when I have to bring in a translator to work with parents. I really want to know what the parent is saying, and I can pick up pieces of maybe inflections and how they’re saying it, but when you don’t understand the language, and I do not speak any Spanish, just hi, thank you, how are you, that’s it, but when I can’t really read the inflections or, you know, I can kind of sense what’s going on but it’s, it’s a little bit . . . I watch for the non-verbals, but, you know I really, I wish I knew the language.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>“That’s an interesting phenomenon, working with an interpreter. I’ve often wondered, are they really telling them what I’m saying? Are those interpreters telling them what I’m saying? And is the interpreter telling me what they’re saying?” “The most challenging thing is relying on someone else to do the interpreting because it dampens the therapeutic relationship. That’s really hard because, you know, like, am I really communicating the way that I think I’m communicating? Is that getting across to that person, having a third person there?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>“When working with Spanish-speaking clients, there is fear in not understanding, that I will do or say something wrong or offensive, something that I might not even realize was offensive. Not knowing the culture produces fears, not knowing how the culture is, not knowing if you’re doing or saying something wrong or offensive.” “It’s always in the back of my mind. Making sure that I’m not being offensive, because that’s not my intent.” “The whole therapeutic relationship is establishing a bond and a relationship with a person, and if you’re doing something inadvertently or you’re doing something without knowledge, it can put a wrench or something in the relationship if there is no trust.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>“If they are primarily Spanish-speaking and very little English, it’s very frustrating because there’s that desire to help, but I feel like I can’t.” “I think some kind of the underlying challenges might be the fear of “Where does this go? I think there’s a general mistrust about the whole counseling process.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 16—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>“I’m always trying to figure out, is it me? Is it them? Is it us? I think sometimes there’s just this feeling like they’re looking at me like, “can I really trust you?” “Can I really believe you?” “Is this genuine?” That always seems to come into play. I’m always just trying to be who I am, because that’s the easiest part for me. But to also recognize that there’s something else going on in the room, and I’m not sure if I can always pinpoint it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Just not knowing the language is challenging. I feel like it’s my responsibility to have some information about dealing with Spanish-speaking clients.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Carol described feeling uncertain when she started to work with Spanish-speaking clients, because she had not spoken Spanish in some time and was expected to do counseling with a widely diverse Spanish-speaking population. Carol described how she felt a certain pressure to perform and speak perfect Spanish, even though she was not used to speaking Spanish every day and “perfect Spanish” was not a realistic expectation. She also described how the fact that that she was a “gringa” (foreign, usually White, woman) was significant, and made her uncertain of her acceptance into client’s homes. Carol demonstrated her vulnerability through self-reflection that is critical for moving beyond anxiety, uncertainty, and skepticism, toward self-awareness and the possibility for higher cultural understanding.

Dawn described her uncertainty as stemming from her feelings about not being “Mexican enough” and not being fluent in Spanish. Her questioning and restrained confidence in her skills and ability to connect with clients perpetuates Dawn’s uncertainty. It appears that her “Mexican” identification is in contrast to what she
experiences in her work with her clients, many of whom are *Mexican* Mexican, or more authentically Mexican in her view.

Gina, Holly, and Irene described the impact of anxiety, uncertainty, and skepticism on their work with clients in a similar way to each other. These participants described wondering if their interpreter was doing a good job of interpreting. This was a significant finding that goes beyond the basic understanding of interpreters as likely impediments on the counseling dyad, and an encroachment on the very dynamic necessary for counseling to be helpful.

Jennifer described her uncertainty as it related to a lack of trust in the relationship. She wondered if and how differences between her and her Spanish-speaking clients might affect her counseling relationship this population. Jennifer described how, while she was comfortable with herself and her racial identity, she was not always sure if her clients were comfortable with it.

**Low cultural understanding.** The theme of low cultural understanding emerged to address CWUI work experiences with Spanish-speaking clients. Despite their best intentions, the language and cultural divide was a significant barrier in CWUI working relationships with their Spanish-speaking clients. These participants primarily described this low cultural understanding as it related to their inability to communicate directly with their Spanish-speaking clients. Gina suggested that even though there are great language and cultural barriers, maybe they can be overcome. Irene similarly initially minimized the language and cultural barriers that she had with her Spanish-speaking clients and only
later in the interview acknowledged the significance of this barrier on her work with Spanish-speaking clients.

Table 17 contains direct quotations that were pulled from the coded data relating to participants’ descriptions of how low cultural understanding influenced their work experiences with Spanish-speaking clients. In each instance, low cultural understanding was significant for these counselors with regard to their work experiences with clients.

Table 17

*Low Cultural Understanding as Impacting Counselors’ Work with Spanish-Speaking Clients*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>“I worked with a family three months ago, the mom was second-generation Mexican-American and her husband was from Mexico. When it came to certain things that we were doing in their counseling, he would always say, ‘Well, in our tradition, you know back home, this is what we did.’ There are differences in our culture from Mexico and here.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Frank       | “Counseling is more difficult with Spanish-speaking clients because I don’t have the direct connection.”
  “I can’t tell if my client is telling the truth or not telling the truth. Unless the client shows emotion, I’m not picking it up, because I don’t know what to even listen for.”
  “Cultural awareness, cultural understanding. What are the rules? What are the values, you know? What are their mores? How do they govern themselves? I don’t exactly know how I might want to approach something in this way. As a white male, I need to learn more cultural awareness.” |
| Gina        | “I’ve had situations with cultural differences where [I’m working with ESL students but they’re also in special education]. So we’re dealing with a couple different factors with counseling. For example I recently had a student who was very depressed. And when I wanted to seek some help for this student, the parents came in and the father was very closed to that idea. I ended up making a referral for the student, but later the student came in and said, my dad just wants me to bury it, I’m not supposed to talk about it, I’m fine.” |
Table 17—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gina</td>
<td>“The most difficult thing is when I have to bring a translator in to work with a parent of a student. I really want to know what the parent is saying, and I can pick up pieces of inflections and how they’re saying it. But when you don’t understand the language, and I do not speak any Spanish, just hi, thank you, how are you, that’s it, but because [I can’t really communicate with the parents], it’s challenging.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>“Just the fact that I don’t know the language is really hard.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The language barrier is hard. Cultural differences sometimes make it challenging.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>“I always wonder whether or not what I’m saying is going to be accurately interpreted and translated to the client. I wonder if I’m communicating clearly so they understand what I’m saying. And then also on the other side, when it’s translated from Spanish to English, I’m wondering if I’m understanding correctly. I kind of wonder if there’s missing pieces.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Communication is number one. If we can’t understand each other then therapy can’t happen. Communication and being clear. And just the way that people interpret can be different. And the way people hear what somebody is saying can be different than what they’re truly saying. So it’s an extra step in between that can cause miscommunication and misunderstandings.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>“If they are primarily Spanish-speaking with very little English, it is very frustrating for me because there’s that desire to help, but I kind of feel like I can’t, and so usually I have to refer.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The finding that CWUI reported low cultural understanding as impacting their work with their Spanish-speaking clients is significant. Perhaps most significant was Irene’s description of her lack of cultural understanding with her clients. This participant seemed to have a transformation even over the course of this interview. Irene’s shift from initially minimizing her disconnection to her eventual recognition of its impact on her work was striking. While at first she emphasized the human connection that she has with
all her clients, Irene went on to describe how her low cultural understanding and her lack of cultural knowledge makes it difficult to connect therapeutically with her Spanish-speaking clients. She described how her lack of rapport with clients made it nearly impossible to establish trust, which she indicated was necessary for counseling to be helpful.

Frank, Holly, Irene, and Jennifer described their lack of cultural understanding in terms of their frustration with not being able to communicate directly with their Spanish-speaking clients. Although these participants minimized the language and cultural barriers, couching them in tentative language, it remained clear that the communication barrier had a significant impact on their ability to establish rapport and trust with their clients.

Summary Results for Research Question 3

The lived experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients are important to acknowledge, as they further a more developed understanding of the current realities and challenges that are faced by counselors who work with this population. A major finding was that CWDNU and CWUI described their experiences with Spanish-speaking clients very differently and focused on different aspects when describing their experiences. CWDNU described their experiences as being influenced by a high level of cultural understanding with their clients. When CWDNU described what it is like for them to work with Spanish-speaking clients, they referenced many of the challenges faced by this population and how they are able to address these challenges through their counseling relationship. CWUI focused almost exclusively on the cultural barriers
between themselves and their clients and the challenges of establishing therapeutic rapport with these clients. CWUI described how important they believe it is to be prepared to work with Spanish-speaking clients, as although they were not expecting to work with this population, they found themselves doing it because of the demand from the Spanish-speaking population in the areas in which they work.

Findings for Research Question 4

How do counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients describe competence needed to work with this population?

Table 18 indicates how participants described competence needed to work with Spanish-speaking clients. Through data analysis and reduction, three themes emerged to relate to this research question. The themes of growing demand from the population to work with Spanish-speaking clients, meaningful immersion experiences, and humility emerged as significant for this research question. Table 18 indicates the themes that emerged in relation to research question 4.

Three significant themes emerged from the data regarding competence needed to work with Spanish-speaking clients. Participants described, first of all, how counselors should be aware of the growing demand from the Spanish-speaking population, and expect to have contact with this population in their work. Participants all described how they had not particularly set out to work with this population but were met with the demand at their counseling job. Participants also described the importance of meaningful cultural immersion experiences for new counselors and counselors in training. Lastly, counselor humility was described as being important for counselors and counseling
students as they are being trained to provide competent services for clients in their communities.

Table 18

*Competence Needed for Work with Spanish-Speaking Clients*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Knowledge of the growing demand from the population for counselors to work with Spanish-speaking clients</th>
<th>Meaningful immersion experiences</th>
<th>Humility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gina</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All participants described having awareness and knowledge of the growing demand for counselors to work with Spanish-speaking clients and spoke of the importance for new counselors and training programs to have this knowledge. Although participants were not explicitly prompted to discuss this issue, they virtually all indicated that they did not set out to work with Spanish-speaking clients. They instead described
being met with the demand from this population when they were hired in their counseling jobs and referred to work with Spanish-speaking clients. While it was not as surprising that CWDNUI were expected to work with this population, the fact that CWUI also described this experience is significant, as it confirms the need for all counselors to be prepared to work with Spanish-speaking clients. This finding also suggests that there are not enough CWDNUI to provide services to this population.

**Knowledge of the growing demand from the population for counselors to work with Spanish-speaking clients.** This theme that emerged from the interviews was connected to the notion that none of the participants, neither CWDNUI nor CWUI, indicated that they set out to work with Spanish-speaking clients. They all instead described how they found themselves working with this population because of the growing Spanish-speaking population in their respective communities. This finding is significant and carries important implications because many counselors work in community mental health settings at some point in their careers and will provide services to the growing diverse population across all regions of the United States.

The quotations found in Table 19 were pulled from the coded data relating to participants’ descriptions of competence needed for work with Spanish-speaking clients. In each instance, participants described how they found themselves working with Spanish-speaking clients, even though they did not seek out to work with this population.
Table 19

*Knowledge of the Growing Demand from the Population for Counselors to Work with Spanish-Speaking Clients*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>“My graduate school training was here in the United States. Here I learned English as my second language. And I found that there is a large population here needing services and felt that I could be useful here.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>“You know, at this point I think it’s kind of just happening, more than it is me pursuing individuals who speak Spanish.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>“When I came on this job, I put it on my resume as proficient in Spanish, just to try to give me a leg up, and then when I got this job, all of the clients were Spanish-speaking!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>“It kinda helped when I was going through my interview process: ‘By the way, I speak Spanish, too.’”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>“There weren’t enough Spanish-speaking clinicians and they were desperate. I already worked there in a different capacity, and they knew I spoke Spanish, so, that’s how I got that opportunity. So then I immediately took all the Spanish-speaking cases that came in.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>“A referral is made, and it gets referred to you . . . It’s not evaluated whether or not, you know, a therapist speaks Spanish or not.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gina</td>
<td>“Well, if I need a translator, which there have been numerous times that I’ve needed one, I call one of three of our Spanish-speaking people in the building.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It’s definitely a growing population. We’re seeing our numbers grow. And not just with our migrant population, but growing in the sense that they’re staying year round. They’re making home here in the region.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>“We get all sorts of clients, including Spanish-speaking.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>“Working with Spanish-speaking clients was not something that I sought out, it’s just something that happened.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>“I was working for a community mental health agency in a community-based program, and there were Spanish-speaking clients there. It’s not that I went out to seek Spanish-speaking clients, but when you do this kind of work, you have to be aware of the fact that there are Spanish-speaking clients around.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This study was conceived with the hope of bringing attention to the importance of increased training for counselors for work with the growing Spanish-speaking population in United States. The finding that participants indicated a need for new counselors to be prepared to work with this population was significant, as it seemed to be consistent with recent research in this area (Furman et al., 2009).

It may be tempting for some to believe that this topic and research area is not relevant for them as they are not Hispanic or fluent in Spanish, thus will never be in the CWDNUI group. The findings from this study, however, suggest the opposite to be true. All participants described the need for increased preparation for work with this population and acknowledged that the notion that counselors can pick and choose whom they will and will not work with is not viable.

**Meaningful immersion experiences.** Most participants indicated that meaningful immersion experiences were critical for counselors in order to be competent in their work with Spanish-speaking clients. CWDNUI and CWUI both described their preparation and work experiences as having been influenced by their cultural immersion experiences. Participants described relating to their Spanish-speaking clients as critical, and when they were not able to share direct communication, meaningful rapport could not be established. Several CWUI described feeling frustrated that they were not able to communicate directly to their Spanish-speaking clients and described the process of using an interpreter as an impediment to the counseling process.

Participants recommended that, somehow, extended cultural immersion opportunities be a more significant part of their graduate training experience. Study
abroad programs, greater classroom knowledge and exposure, and experiential learning 
through practicum or internship experiences, were recommended to increase competence 
and readiness for work with Spanish-speaking clients.

The quotations found in Table 20 were extracted from the coded data relating to 
participants’ descriptions of competence needed for work with Spanish-speaking clients. 
In each instance, meaningful immersion experiences were described as significant for 
 Improved understanding and competent work with Spanish-speaking clients.

Most participants described cultural immersion experiences as important for 
competence when working with Spanish-speaking clients. Several CWUI stated that they 
wished that they spoke Spanish and indicated that language was a major barrier. Alex 
stated that he does not believe that using interpreters with Spanish-speaking clients is 
effective. CWUI all described the use of interpreters as conflicting with the way that they 
were trained work with clients. These participants described struggling to establish 
meaningful rapport and trust with their Spanish-speaking clients.

**Humility.** All counselors hold personal values and assumptions, many which are 
deeply ingrained. The importance of self-critique and checking of long-held biases and 
assumptions is critical and impossible to overstate. Participants described characteristics 
that are important competencies for counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients. 
Participants described the importance of checking assumptions, asking questions, actively 
listening to clients, and being self-reflective. The participant descriptions characterize the 
virtue of humility and its relative importance in working with diverse populations.
Table 20

*Meaningful Immersion Experiences as Significant for Work with Spanish-Speaking Clients*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>“At least some more direct experience, intermingling with the population, or living in a Latino, Spanish-speaking country, or having a relationship with the community. Then that person, the professional, can observe some of those values and ways of thinking, and have a better perception of the culture they want to serve.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>“I think for an individual who’s not Hispanic or doesn’t understand the culture, or has not had the exposure to that individual or that type of culture, it’s important to gain some understanding of it, to try to find information, so they can be more understanding and effective. In allowing yourself to be exposed to that, that’s a big part. Working with this population, you have to have some understanding of it. You have to want to listen and be open to the ideas of that individual and where they are.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>“I wish I would have done more study abroad, or stayed longer somewhere. I think that would have probably helped my Spanish. Maybe visiting different parts to have more of a personal experience and understanding.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>“Maybe everyone should do an internship in a different country that speaks Spanish. I think one of our counselors did that. She went to a part of Mexico, I don’t know for how long, and learned the language. That probably would have helped even me!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>“I was fortunate enough to have a lot of schooling from undergrad, and travel experience and personal experience.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>“Learning Spanish would be helpful. Not to have to use an interpreter. I think that, you know, just, understanding the population more. Now how to do that, I don’t know, maybe spending time living within the population.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>“Maybe grad students need to work with Spanish-speaking populations. Maybe that should be a criteria to graduate. Maybe interviewing Spanish-speaking clients.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Hands-on experience. I think the education and the knowledge and the lectures are great and they’re fine. But you don’t know until you know; You don’t know until you do it. You can hear what the challenges are but having students actually work with Spanish-speaking populations might be a good idea.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>“Be willing to navigate through that. And not just give up and say, well they speak Spanish and I don’t, so that’s just, you know, that’s just the end of it.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The quotations found in Table 21 were pulled from the coded data relating to participants’ descriptions of competence needed for work with Spanish-speaking clients. In each instance, humility was indicated for improved understanding and competent work with Spanish-speaking clients.

Table 21

**Humility as Significant for Work with Spanish-Speaking Clients**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>“People need to be sensitive to the diversity and try to understand, if you’re helping someone, to understand their background, their culture, and more particularly, their values. It is good practice to get educated on diverse ethnic groups that come to America. That is a very important aspect of being able to be an effective helper.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>“It’s important for the individual counselor to really just listen to the client and not make any assumptions about them. Allow clients to share with them, you know, where they’re coming from, their life story.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>“You should never assume anything. What might be true for one population might be very different for another. I ask a lot of questions like: What does <em>your</em> family like to do? What kinds of things do you celebrate? What do you guys believe? What could I do that might be offensive? I just ask a ton of questions to kind of find out.” “I got this feeling like, who is this lady? She’s just not on our level, and she’s not even trying to be on our level. I don’t know if they were really thinking that or not, but I was not getting on their level to understand where they were coming from.” “Just reflecting on some things definitely helped. I do a lot of journaling so I think by doing that I was able to process it, too.” “I think most White people that know Spanish learn it from a textbook, and I guess that foundation is helpful, but in counseling it’s also important to get to know the person. That’s really helped me to get in with people. Listening to their stories, letting them talk, just shutting up and hearing them, where they’re coming from, finding out what they like to do, what not just their culture is ethnically, but what their, their way of life is here.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 21—Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>“It has really changed my view on politics. My whole world view has really changed, and I feel like if you don’t work with this population, you don’t understand the struggles and the hardship.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>“What we need to know is that we don’t know anything, and that that matters.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Not knowing someone’s culture makes a difference in counseling, so you have to have an open mind and seek understanding.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“If you haven’t really experienced it, you don’t know, and that matters. You need to learn and find out, but also we’re enriched by knowing and learning about other cultures.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I had a desire to learn, and then I was open and ready.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Maybe like an advocacy class, in, in letting, informing, informing us on vulnerable populations, what their rights are, and how we can go about effectively advocating for them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>“The word that comes to mind for me is openness, being open to experience it. I think you have to have a desire to be open. You have to have a desire and a willingness to engage, even if it’s uncomfortable, even if it’s awkward.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>“It’s really important to know and accept the cultural differences. To look at every situation as unique. And you might not only help them but they can help you too, because you can grow yourself.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>“I’m passionate about learning from somebody else’s culture. I feel humbled by that. It needs to be a compassionate way of being, to bridge the gap when you don’t speak the same language. It comes down to being human and honest and genuine, even if I don’t understand the culture.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>“I think part of some of what has prepared me is being with Spanish-speaking clients and hearing their stories and experiences. And allowing them to teach me about their cultural experiences.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Being willing to listen and get the information. Understanding a different culture and also being willing to sit down and listen and be a support. There’s a wealth of information to know.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants described characteristics consist with the virtue of humility as important for competent work with Spanish-speaking clients. When asked what was critical for new counselors and training programs to know about working with Spanish-speaking clients, most participants described the importance of asking questions and listening to client’s stories. Participants’ descriptions of the need for self-awareness and self-reflection indicated their understanding of humility and its significance in work with Spanish-speaking clients. Carol’s description of humility and being open to learning about her clients perhaps best summarizes the significance of humility on work with Spanish-speaking clients. She stated:

You can just never assume anything. What might be true for one population could be very different for another. So walking into it, I ask a lot of questions about, like: What does your family like to do? What kinds of things do you celebrate? What do you guys believe? What could I do that might be offensive? I just ask a ton of questions to find out.

Carol’s further description of being affected and changed by her experiences with Spanish-speaking clients points to the significance of the role of humility in her work with this population: “It has really changed my view on politics. My whole world view has really changed, and I feel like if you don’t work with this population, you don’t understand the struggles and the hardship.”

Carol’s ability to self-critique and reflect on her awareness that she needed to “get uncomfortable” in order to facilitate a therapeutic relationship with her clients was significant to her growth and development as a counselor, as well as to her emerging understanding of competence needed to work with Spanish-speaking clients.
Carol went on to describe how her experiences with her Spanish-speaking clients were challenging because of how they impacted her worldview and political opinions, even to the point where she indicated that it was difficult to maintain friendships because of it. Carol’s humility seems to be connected to her ability for self-reflection and openness to discuss difficult and personal issues.

Carol’s and Emily’s Spanish-as-a-second-language acquisition is perhaps the greatest indicator of their humble approach in their work with their clients, as learning a second language as an adult requires a great deal of humility. Although their language acquisition experiences were not detailed in this study, the process involves a commitment to courage, self-critique, and perseverance, much like they described their commitment to humility in their work with Spanish-speaking clients.

Emily’s familiarity with the issues of Spanish-speaking clients was significant. Her assertion that “What they need to know is that they don’t know anything, and that matters” is significant, as it demonstrates her conceptual understanding of humility to be below surface level.

The finding that several CWDNUI described the importance of advocacy and having a high cultural understanding of their Spanish-speaking clients was significant. Self-awareness is a critical step toward humility. Carol described herself as an insightful person. Her self-awareness and desire to be reflective is significant in her work with her Spanish-speaking clients:

Just reflecting on some things, I think that definitely helped. I consider myself a pretty insightful person so I think just really reflecting on that really helped. I also do a lot of journaling and things like that, so I think just doing that, I kind of, was able to process it too.
Summary Results for Research Question 4

Participants’ recommendations for counselor preparation and work with Spanish-speaking clients are important to understand, as they come from counselors who have experience working with this population. A major significant finding was that there was virtually no difference between CWDNU and CWUI as they described their recommendations for counselor education programs and work with Spanish-speaking clients. Both groups described the need for counseling services from the general population and the notion of finding themselves working with Spanish-speaking clients, as opposed to setting out to work with this population, meaningful immersion experiences, and humility as significant for work with this population.
CHAPTER V
IMPLICATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The intent of this study was to reveal helpful information that could inform counselor education in the area of preparing students for work with Spanish-speaking clients. Using phenomenological methodology, the researcher asked participants about, their demographic background; their motivations for entering the counseling profession; their personal and professional experiences, including preparation and work with Spanish-speaking clients; and recommendations based on their experiences with this population. The study gives voice to 10 diverse practitioners who, at different points in their counseling careers, found themselves working with Spanish-speaking clients.

There have been few studies that focus on the experiences of counselors who provide services to Spanish-speaking clients. While numerous studies have addressed the needs of the Spanish-speaking population, little is known about the experiences of counselors themselves who work with this population. This study sought to shed light on the experiences of counseling practitioners in order to have a discussion on their experiences and to inform counselor education on how to better prepare counselors for work with Spanish-speaking clients.

The participants in this study were a diverse group, whose inclusion required only that they were graduates or near graduates of counseling or counseling psychology
master’s programs, and that they had experience working with Spanish-speaking clients. Also, because it was important to select a diverse sample that resembled the practitioners described in the literature, participants who used interpreters in their work with Spanish-speaking clients, as well as those who did not, were purposely selected for participation in this study. While this variable became significant during data analysis, the interview questions were exactly the same for all 10 participants. What follows is a summary of the themes that emerged from the interviews and analysis.

Through inductive data analysis and reduction, the following 14 themes emerged to address the four research questions in this study. For research question 1, the themes of helping others, inspirational and affirmative experiences, vocational calling, and career advancement emerged. For research question 2, the themes of cultural immersion experiences, education-related experiences, high cultural identification, and low cultural identification emerged. For research question 3, the themes of high cultural understanding; anxiety, uncertainty, and skepticism; and low cultural understanding emerged. For research question 4, the themes of finding oneself working with the population, meaningful immersion experiences, and humility emerged. All of these themes became evident through data analysis and reduction and contributed to understanding and making meaning of the experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients. A summary of these findings will be discussed, followed by implications for counselor training and practice. Finally, limitations of the study and recommendations for future research are also presented.
Summary of Findings

Idealistic and Pragmatic Motivations for Entering Counseling Program

It is important to recognize that counselors perceive themselves as helpers and enter counseling programs in order to gain the tools that will enable them to become effective as professional helpers. The first significant finding to be derived from this study was that counselors have idealistic and pragmatic motivations for deciding to pursue graduate level counseling studies. That participants reported wanting to help others as their primary and most instinctive motivation for entering the profession seems obvious and rather benign at first. However, this finding should not be overlooked. Individuals entering counseling programs may not have a completely developed understanding of what professional counseling entails, but nevertheless believe that it is a profession where they can help others. It is therefore the job of counselor educators to nurture new counselors’ professional development and help them forge their professional identities. This may mean a careful balance of challenging and confronting students’ long-held beliefs, as well as nurturing and affirming their desire to become professional helpers.

Participants also described inspirational and affirmative experiences as motivation for entering the counseling profession. As counselors enter and proceed through their training, their personal and professional development may well depend on continued inspirational and affirmative events. This motivating influence should be identified and deliberately nurtured, as counseling students may in a parallel way benefit from inspirational and affirmative experiences both during and throughout their graduate
studies. Like many students, those studying counseling may become disillusioned or disconnected from their studies if they lose sight of what motivated them for their career choice. For this reason it is important for counselor educators to be aware of this motivation and to use their role as counselor educator to further inspire and affirm their students.

Several participants described vocational calling as motivation for studying counseling. While some participants did not fully grasp this aspect of their motivation, they described their wanting to be counselors as a way of life or as something that was beyond them, something metaphysical. Counselors’ description of vocational calling as motivation for entering the profession should be further understood and reflected on by counselor educators, as the profession relies on highly trained professionals to accept relatively low-paying, yet often demanding and stressful, employment. Vocational calling intimates a “higher purpose” and being driven by something other than extrinsic rewards, as a central tenet. The implications for counselor education are significant, as this finding suggests a special quality in many counselors who are drawn to the counseling profession. While counselor education programs may not be equipped to nurture students through their personal “calling” to the profession, this finding implicates a need to better understand the importance of what leads individuals to pursue counseling studies.

**Cultural Understanding as Impacting Work with Spanish-Speaking Clients**

While the themes of high cultural understanding; anxiety, uncertainty, and skepticism; and low cultural understanding were recognized distinctly in the previous chapter, their interrelatedness should be noted. Participants described their experiences
with Spanish-speaking clients in terms of being impacted by at least one of these three interrelated themes. It was significant to note that low cultural understanding was reported exclusively by CWUI, while high cultural understanding was reported exclusively by CWDNUI. The theme of anxiety, uncertainty, and skepticism, however, was reported by both CWUI and CWDNUI. This finding points to the multifaceted and complex process of preparation for work with and work with Spanish-speaking clients (Biever et al., 2011; Castaño et al., 2007). It cannot be assumed that CWDNUI do not also share similar feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, and skepticism and questions regarding their competence for work with this population. It is likely that many CWDNUI are paired with Spanish-speaking clients solely on the merit of their degree of Spanish fluency. Counselor education faculty should continue to develop curricula with the expectation that students will eventually be called on to work with Spanish-speaking clients.

Students who enter counseling programs with a degree of Spanish-language fluency have an asset that must be recognized and tapped by counselor educators and training programs. While Spanish comprehension and fluency is not sufficient for competent work with Spanish-speaking clients (Biever et al., 2011), CWDNUI in this study reported a higher degree of cultural identification and understanding with their Spanish-speaking clients, a finding consistent with the literature (Biever et al., 2002; Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002). Counselor educators should recognize the increasing demand for counseling Spanish-speaking clients and follow the lead of programs that have developed training curricula for this purpose.
While this study’s intention was not to contrast the experiences of CWDNUI with CWUI, a significant contrast emerged. While both CWDNUI and CWUI were well-intentioned and sought to provide the best possible services to their clients, CWUI sometimes seemed to minimize the cultural differences with their Spanish-speaking clients and the impact that it may have on their work with these clients. There may be multiple explanations for this phenomenon. One potential explanation could be that these counselors feel that it is their responsibility to work with all populations and are simply doing their best with the training that they have had. As several participants pointed out during their interviews, counselors do not get to choose their clients; As referrals are made, they get assigned cases and provide services to clients, some of who may not speak good English, if any at all. One of the challenges in the counseling profession, therefore, is determining the line at which a counselor must use an interpreter or when a client is better served by a bilingual counselor. All of these scenarios have their own ethical dilemmas, which the profession must continue to grapple with if we are to improve service delivery to Spanish-speaking clients and produce counselors who are competent to work with this growing population.

Training programs specifically designed to prepare counselors for work with Spanish-speaking clients have been established. However, the need for increased attention among counselor educators at more traditional programs is also evident. This study was conducted in the Midwest region of the United States, where until recently the need for training counselors to work with this population has not been as great. Counseling programs across the country must respond by providing training that will
meet the needs of the general client population, which more and more includes Spanish-speaking clients.

Individuals enter counseling programs to make a difference and are generally well-intentioned and desire to help others. It is up to counselor educators and supervisors to mentor and nurture students so that they achieve competence for work with diverse populations, including Spanish-speaking clients. If students’ perspectives and preconceptions are not identified and challenged during their graduate training, they may be at best be ineffectual in their work and at worst, practice unethically. Modeling humility, facilitating and promoting safe and nurturing learning environments, and modeling and teaching students the importance of lifelong self-reflection and self-critique are some ways that counselor educators, supervisors, and training programs can more actively prepare students for work with Spanish-speaking clients. This seems consistent with Heppner (2006), and others (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998) who espouse the notion of humility as a lifelong journey, based on constant self-critique and self-reflection.

Humility

The theme of humility emerged from the data as a necessary competency for work with Spanish-speaking clients. Humility can be described as the act of setting aside one’s power in the service of another or for a greater purpose (Dickson, 2011). Although Dickson himself suggested that aspiring for humility might at first sound contradictory and even absurd, many participants in this study described the significance of humility when working with Spanish-speaking clients.
Counselors must be prepared to work with diverse populations, including many from lower socioeconomic groups. While counselors may not always think of themselves as being in a position of power, they often hold the position of influence in a counseling dynamic, as they are seen as the competent professional who is there to help the client. This dynamic may be especially magnified when working with people from other cultures and languages, such as Spanish-speaking clients, and must be understood by the counselor if it is to be offset. A counselor or helping professional who fails to recognize this dynamic may unknowingly perpetuate a dominant groups worldview, while diminishing the perspective of clients from different cultures. Counselor educators could benefit from not only recruiting and retaining students with bilingual capacity, there may also be ways of promoting and encouraging Spanish-speaking fluency throughout a student’s program.

Tervalon and Murray-Garcia (1998) describe cultural humility as a lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique. They assert that while it is nearly impossible to learn or know everything about a client’s culture, the key is learning and knowing about our own assumptions and beliefs that are embedded in our own understandings and goals with our clients. As this approach is a lifelong process, the most effective and ethically mindful counselors are those who are consistently self-reflecting and critiquing their attitudes and internal processes in their work with their clients. While participants did not explicitly cite the practice of cultural humility in their interviews, many indicated similar ideals as they reflected on their work with Spanish-speaking clients and especially
what they thought was important for counselor educators to know for work with this population.

**Knowledge of the Growing Demand for Counselors to Work with Spanish-Speaking Clients**

The importance and significance of preparing counseling students to work with Spanish-speaking clients cannot be overstated. Participants in this study described the need for new counselors to have knowledge of the growing demand to work with Spanish-speaking clients. Participants talked of the need for awareness and to be prepared to work with this population based on their own experiences. None of the participants stated that they originally setting out to work with Spanish-speaking clients, but instead described how they were “met with this population” when they began their work as counselors. This finding is consistent with the recent literature in this area, which references the significant increase in the Spanish-speaking and Latino population across all regions of the United States over the past several decades. The growth of the Spanish-speaking population has impacted many industries and professions, including counseling, and has made it necessary to address best practices for providing services to this interconnected yet diverse population.

The theme of *knowledge of the growing demand for counselors to work with Spanish-speaking clients* that emerged made it clear that counseling training programs need to be providing better and more systematic training for work with Spanish-speaking clients. As evidenced by participants’ experiences in this study, counseling students can no longer keep the illusion that they can choose the populations with whom they will
work and not work. All participants indicated that while they did not intentionally set out to work with this population, they *found themselves* providing services to Spanish-speaking clients because of the demand in their communities. Participants were in a sense confronted with this reality when they began to practice in their communities. This finding is consistent with the literature and U.S. census demographic reports that suggest a tremendous growth of the Spanish-speaking population in areas, such as the Midwest, that have not historically accommodated this population. For this reason, it is critical that counselor educators acknowledge this growing need and develop improved training for students for work with Spanish-speaking clients.

Many new counselors find themselves working in community mental health settings, where they provide services to diverse clientele from the community. While the Spanish-speaking population may not, in overwhelming numbers, seek out counseling on their own, they are often overrepresented in community mental health referrals and services and will likely become increasingly so, especially in light of impending passage of comprehensive immigration reform in the United States. Comprehensive immigration reform could put millions of Spanish-speaking individuals on a path toward legal status and citizenship and could have a significant impact on the work of counselors and other mental health professionals. Counselor educators need to prepare counseling students for work with this growing population who will undoubtedly require services.

**Education-Related Experiences**

One of the most significant findings from this study was that, despite specific interview questions explicitly requesting information on preparation and training
experience, very few participants identified graduate training experience as particularly influential, and instead cited their own personal cultural and language immersion experiences as having prepared them. This is consistent with other research findings, such as Furman’s (2002) study that found that, while 90% of social work faculty agreed or strongly agreed that it is important to train students to work with the Spanish-speaking population, only 42% agreed that students were being adequately prepared to work with this population. Although this finding should not be seen as an indictment on training programs, it suggests that what we do and require of our students as counselor educators must go beyond the classroom if we want to have a more meaningful impact on students and their preparation for work with Spanish-speaking clients.

While it is sometimes assumed that bilingual counselors can provide more competent services with this population, there is very little research that confirms this (Biever et al., 2011, Lebrón-Striker, 2012). None of the participants in this study reported adequate training to work with their Spanish-speaking clients, in fact many pointed to deficiencies in their training programs as far as preparation for working with this population. As the Spanish-speaking population continues to rise in all regions of the United States, it is critical that counselor educators across the country recognize the impact that this has on our profession, and respond accordingly.
Implications for the Counseling Profession

Implications for Counselor Training and Supervision

The dramatic rise in the Spanish-speaking population in virtually every region of the United States in recent years has made it increasingly important to extend training for work with this population beyond the historically concentrated Southwest and southern border region. Training programs for work with Spanish-speaking clients are sprouting up in various regions around the United States with the aim of preparing counselors to work with the unique and dynamic needs of this population. An example of this is a new collaborative community-counseling program at the University of Scranton, Pennsylvania, that purports to prepare bilingual, culturally sensitive counselors, for work with Spanish-speaking individuals, families, and communities, including a study abroad experience in Mexico City.

It has been established that there are not enough bilingual counselors to provide services to Spanish-speaking clients (U.S. Surgeon General, 2001). Even counselors who are bilingual commonly lack specific training for work with this population (Biever et al., 2011). As the demand from the Spanish-speaking population grows, counselor educators will need to pay attention to the way that they recruit students and faculty for their programs. Although Spanish-language fluency coupled with counseling training does not necessarily make one competent to work with Spanish-speaking clients, counselor educators may choose to consider recruiting bilingual students for their programs, as their linguistic abilities may add value to their training and future work with Spanish-speaking clients.
What has become abundantly clear from this study is the critical demand for counselor educators to take a more active role in training counselors for work with Spanish-speaking clients. When this researcher conducted a search of programs across the country, he discovered a number of training programs, some new and some well established, that have been designed and developed for preparing mental health professionals for work with this population. However, there needs to be more discussion about this population and increased student exposure to their unique needs, as well as specific linguistic and cultural training for students in their preparation experience. While training programs of this nature do exist as previously indicated, there needs to be continued focus and active efforts by counselor educators toward this end.

Individuals who derive personal meaning and intrinsic satisfaction from being with people and helping others are often drawn to a helping profession. Participants’ natural desire to help was the most frequently reported reason for entering a counseling program. Based on this finding, counselor education programs and faculty within them should be sure to recognize this quality as important among students, and seek to nurture students to better understand this quality in themselves as it relates to their professional identity and competence.

Anxiety, uncertainty, and skepticism emerged from the data as a theme that related to work experiences of CWDNUI and CWUI. Participants described feeling anxiety, uncertainty, and skepticism in their work with clients in terms of cultural and linguistic insecurities, unchecked assumptions and biases, challenges with establishing working alliance and rapport with clients, the use of interpreters, and the impact of their
race with Latino clients. The good news about the theme of anxiety, uncertainty, and skepticism is that its acknowledgement suggests awareness, which is critical for development and change. It is through counselors’ awareness of their anxiety, uncertainty, and skepticism that they can begin to do the work needed to become more competent in their work with Spanish-speaking clients.

The implications for counselor training and supervision are significant. As evidenced by the theme of anxiety, uncertainty, and skepticism that emerged from the interview data, counselors are eager to talk about challenges and barriers with their Spanish-speaking clients. Counselor educators and supervisors need to be continually mindful that students and supervisee’s generally do not raise uncomfortable issues, especially regarding race or culture, in their training or supervision (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009). Therefore, it is incumbent upon educators and supervisors to prepare themselves to model development and nurture growth in their students and supervisees. A further outgrowth of this is the reciprocal process paralleled in the supervisee–client relationship. If left unchallenged, supervisees and practitioners may remain un-self-aware and ultimately be at risk of practicing unethically and ultimately failing to offer responsive and competent services to clients.

**Implications for Counseling Practice**

None of the participants in this study initially set out to work with Spanish-speaking clients, yet all found themselves working with this population due to the need and demand from the population. Although there is an assumption that bilingual counselors can effectively work with Spanish-speaking clients, the reality is that
CWDNUI are often “thrown” into work settings for which they have not been trained or prepared. Carol, from this study, confirmed this when she described her experience in the following way: “I just applied here and I put it on my resume with no idea that it would turn into this.”

Training programs should continue to value the preparation of bilingual counselors. As the Spanish-speaking population grows, so should the amount of competently trained bilingual counselors. For this purpose, counseling programs need to be actively recruiting and training bilingual students for the counseling profession. Bilingual faculty members should also be recruited and retained by counseling programs, to provide improved training and supervision for students.

While counselors will undoubtedly continue to use interpreters in their work with Spanish-speaking clients, it is not a solution, and often creates additional problems for both counselors and clients. At the very least, monolingual counselors should receive graduate-level training in the area of using interpreters in their work with clients, as they are at risk for ethical violations if they do not understand the risks and dilemmas posed by use of interpreters.

**Limitations of the Study**

The researcher used phenomenological methodology to explore the experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients. Ten counselor practitioners were interviewed and provided detailed descriptions of their preparation and work experiences. The investigator used several strategies to ensure accuracy of the data. First, the investigator transcribed all of the audio-recorded interviews. This transcription process
allowed the investigator to stay close to the data throughout the analysis. Second, the researcher bracketed his assumptions about his participants and the study in order to remain objective and not allow his own values and proclivities to seep through.

Throughout the interview process, the investigator reviewed his assumptions and expectations of the study and set those assumptions aside. Third, the investigator immersed himself in the data by listening to the interviews repeatedly and reading and re-reading the transcriptions. This investigator then listened to the audio-recorded interviews while following along with the transcribed data several times for added accuracy. Finally, the investigator used member checking with participants to ensure that the data were accurate. After the researcher was confident in the data’s accuracy, he proceeded with data analysis.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations to this study. First, the 10 counselors who participated in this study all practiced in the Midwest region of the United States. While the researcher recruited a diverse sample of participants for this study, the sample was limited to counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients in this region. Because of this, it is not possible to generalize the findings to other regions, as counselors’ experiences may be drastically different. Similar studies in other regions are necessary in order to more fully understand counselors’ experiences with this population. Second, counselor effectiveness was not measured, thus there is no way of knowing if the counselors who were interviewed were effective in their work with their Spanish-speaking clients. While the purpose of the study was not to examine effective counselors, a study that explores the preparation and work experiences of effective
counselors could benefit counselor education and training programs as they seek to prepare counselors to work effectively with Spanish-speaking clients. Finally, the sample in this study was limited to counselors who do primarily home-based work. While many counselors at some point in their careers find themselves doing home-based work, counselors provide services to Spanish-speaking clients in other settings, such as private practice, schools, and colleges, as well. A future study could set out to recruit a more diverse participant sample in order to address other issues and dynamics that may present themselves in different counseling settings.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

There is so much unknown and therefore much to be discovered in the area of counseling Spanish-speaking clients. This study explored the motivations, preparation and practice experiences, as well as recommendations of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients. Related areas could benefit from future research. For instance, a similar study to this one could be conducted in other regions of the country. Further knowledge about the experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients could provide deeper insights into counselors’ preparation and work experiences, as well as inform the counselor education profession on ways to better prepare students for work with this population.

A study that utilizes a standardized measuring instrument to assess the effectiveness of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking counselors could be useful. Little is known about the practice and experiences of counselors who have successful outcomes with Spanish-speaking clients. While it is helpful to know about the current
realities of counselors and their work with Spanish-speaking clients, it would also serve the counseling profession to know about the experiences of effective counselors and specifically to know more about their training experiences. This study might be conducted in a region that has a high Spanish-speaking population, or it could also be conducted in an area that has recently experienced significant growth in their Spanish-speaking population. A study such as this could be important, particularly as the Spanish-speaking population of some states and regions are projected to continue growing over the next several decades.

Another area deserving of attention would be a study on Spanish-speaking clients and their experiences with their counselors. Researchers conducting a study of this nature could seek to understand the reasons that Spanish-speaking clients were referred or sought out counseling, and their experiences as they received counseling services from either Spanish-speaking or non-Spanish-speaking counselors. A further developed understanding into the counseling relationships between practitioners and Spanish-speaking clients could benefit practitioners and training programs in their continuing efforts to prepare counselors for competent services for all clients.

Research on the therapeutic alliance and the role that interpreters play could be another critical research area that would enhance counselor preparation and practice. There is every indication that there will continue to be a shortage of bilingual counselors and that interpreters will continue to be used for counseling Spanish-speaking clients. Counselor education programs should be aware of the issues that go along with counseling Spanish-speaking clients and adapt their training programs to offer advanced
training for bilingual counselors. A study that explores how counselors build therapeutic rapport with Spanish-speaking clients could be useful for the development of advanced training. Counselors who do not speak Spanish and use interpreters to work with this population could be studied as well as those who are bilingual and work without the use of interpreters. The research in this area is scant and any study that would add to the literature base would be a benefit to the profession.

Finally, a study on the construct validation of counselor humility would be a welcomed contribution to the profession and could have a tremendous impact on training, supervision, and practice of counselors who serve an increasingly diverse population in the United States. Participants in this study described counselor humility as important for work with Spanish-speaking clients. When counselors work with groups for whom they have not received proper training to work with, they may rely on what they already know or on their often-faulty assumptions of the particular group. Several participants in this study stated that it was essential to ask a lot of questions when working with Spanish-speaking clients and to be reflective and open to being lifelong learners. This is a skill that must somehow be acquired by counselors at some point in their training or practice. In order to better understand counselor humility and where it comes from, it is important to study counselors who indicate its importance in their work and to study its impact on their practice with Spanish-speaking clients. A study of this nature could perhaps utilize quantitative measures to identify how counselors use humility in their work with Spanish-speaking clients and where they learned about the virtue of humility and its relative importance.
More research in the area of training counselors for work with Spanish-speaking clients is needed. While one might assume that counselors who speak Spanish or who are bilingual are a good fit for working with Spanish-speaking clients, there is little research that confirms this assumption (Biever et al., 2011). Counselors who work with unchecked biases, assumptions, and attitudes could risk practicing unethically. All participants in this study talked about the need to be prepared for work with Spanish-speaking clients. Because many in the Spanish-speaking population are underserved and undervalued, their voices and needs often go unrecognized. If the counseling profession is to be effective in serving and meeting the needs of this population, more attention needs to be paid to ongoing research in this area.

**Conclusion**

An increasing demand for competence among counselors to provide services to Spanish-speaking clients has necessitated a better understanding of the current realities of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the experiences of 10 counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients in order to inform counselor education and make training recommendations for work with this population. It is the researcher’s hope that a deeper understanding of counselors’ experiences may help to facilitate a more informed discussion on the training and supervision needs and further development of counseling training programs around the country.

A review of the literature on multicultural counseling considerations, counseling Hispanic and Spanish-speaking clients, training needs of bilingual counselors, and use of
interpreters in counseling settings revealed the relevance and need for this study. Given the paucity of research in this area, together with the cited demand from the population, semistructured, in-depth qualitative research methodology seemed to lend itself to the research questions that were developed by the researcher to investigate the experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients. Participants were recruited and selected for participation in this study based on their training and licensure as counselors and counseling psychologists, and their work with Spanish-speaking clients. Semistructured, in-depth interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher, who then analyzed the data using inductive methods. The themes that emerged from the data during the data analysis were included in Chapter IV, along with participants’ narrative descriptions of their experiences.

Challenges described by participants, including the unique and dynamic issues faced by many Spanish-speaking clients, communication barriers, use of interpreters, and lack of counselor training, were consistent with the realities and challenges discussed in the related literature. Implications for counselor training, research, and practice were provided. Finally, recommendations for future research were discussed.

A Scholar-Practitioner’s Reflection

I have worked as a school and community counselor for nine years, always closely with Spanish-speaking students and families. From this study, I have learned three things about the training needs of counselors to work with Spanish-speaking clients. The first is that students entering counseling training programs have rich and diverse backgrounds and experiences that should be explored and nurtured to enhance their
preparation and training experience. The second is that the Spanish-speaking population in the United States, while having a degree of linguistic and cultural cohesion, is a tremendously diverse group. It is important to recognize that much of the cohesion is likely a result of being a minority group in the United States. The Spanish-speaking population in the United States originates from more than 20 countries, primarily in Central and South America, the Caribbean, and the vast majority from Mexico. Many do not identify as being *Hispanic* or *Latino*, but rather Mexican, Honduran, Bolivian, etc., and it is only on arrival to the United States that the term *Hispanic* or *Latino* becomes an identifier.

It is important, especially for White American trainers and practitioners, to recognize the diversity among this population and to understand the importance of each immigrant family’s history and immigration story. For example, much of the Spanish-speaking population that traces ancestry to Mexico has a different relationship to those who trace ancestry to Puerto Rico, Cuba, and other countries. My own immigrant story and experience is significant to me, but I cannot assume that it is like that of another Peruvian immigrant or much less of a person from a variety of other countries. The third thing I have learned from this study is the importance of humility as a virtue that needs to be constantly developed. As a scholar and educator, the contrast between cultural competence and cultural humility is important to understand. Although teaching humility sounds like a misnomer or a contradiction, it can be modeled to students. The reason it may be difficult to teach is because it represents a shift in the way of being. Unlike cultural competence, where one strives for knowledge and competencies of
understanding of others, in cultural humility one constantly is self-reflecting and self-critiquing. If we can understand ourselves better and not feel like we will be judged or seen as incompetent, and if we can help our students to feel the same way, this can lead to a deeper self-understanding and the ability to have a lifelong commitment to its development. Perhaps the best way for counseling students to grasp this notion is to live it ourselves and to reflect this in our supervision and mentoring with supervisees and colleagues.
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Appendix A

Introductory Phone Calls to Agencies
Introductory Phone Calls to Agencies

Call #1 to Agency:

SCRIPT:

Hello, this is Dan Romero and I am a counseling doctoral student working on my dissertation at Western Michigan University. I am calling to speak with someone in your [mention specific program] counseling program about counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients. Who would be the contact person and telephone number for that program?

Thank you very much for your assistance and have a nice day.

Call #2 to specific program director or supervisor:

SCRIPT:

Hi, this is Dan Romero and I am a counseling doctoral student working on my dissertation at Western Michigan University. I am calling to see if you have any counselors in your program who work with Spanish-speaking clients.

If they answer that there are no counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients in their program, then say:

Thank you very much for your time. Can you please contact me if you discover any counselors at your program or agency who provide services to Spanish-speaking clients? Here is my contact information: email: daniel.r.romero@wmich.edu. Thank you again for your help with this. Have a nice day.

If they answer that there are counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients in their program, then say:

I am conducting a dissertation research project about the experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients. My project has been approved by the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board. I would like to contact potential participants to inform them of this study and possibly invite them to participate. Participation in this study should only take a total of approximately two hours. Is this something that you could help me with?

If they answer that this IS something that they could help me with, then say:

Thank you. What is the best way for me to contact these counselors?
The following responses A, B, C, and D, are the responses that I anticipate along with my subsequent response to their response:

A. Program director could immediately provide the names and numbers of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients. This researcher would then contact counselors to inform them of the inclusionary criteria and to arrange delivery of informed consent document to those that express interest (Appendix D).

B. Program director could ask this researcher to call back at a later date to be provided with names and numbers of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients. This researcher would then call back at the arranged time and retrieve the names and numbers of potential participants. This researcher would then contact counselors to inform them of the inclusionary criteria and to arrange delivery of informed consent document to those that express interest (Appendix D).

C. Program director could offer to email the names and numbers of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients. This researcher would then contact counselors to inform them of the inclusionary criteria and to arrange delivery of informed consent document to those that express interest (Appendix D).

D. Program director could ask for a written request from this researcher. This researcher would then email the program director an invitation letter (Appendix B) requesting assistance with recruitment of counselors who provide services to Spanish-speaking clients. Upon the response from this invitation letter and counselor contact information from program director, This researcher would then contact counselors to inform them of the inclusionary criteria and to arrange delivery of informed consent document to those that express interest (Appendix D).

If no to A, B, C, & D, then say:

Thank you for your time. Who is the person I could talk to about this? Could I have this person's number so that I could contact him or her? Thank you. I will contact this person.

Repeat call 2 to second specific program director or supervisor.

As the researcher receives names and contact information of potential participants, he will call potential participants to inform them of the inclusionary criteria for participation in this study. This researcher will then ask each potential participant if he or she is interested in knowing more about the study and will offer to hand deliver, email, or send through U.S. mail, an informed consent document so that they can know more about the study and decide if they would be interested in participating.
Appendix B

Initial Invitation Letter to Agencies
Initial Invitation Letter to Agencies

To: Program Director/Supervisor of social service/community mental health agency
Subject: Request for Research Participation

Dear [Program Director/Supervisor of social service/community mental health agency]

We recently spoke by phone regarding my doctoral dissertation research project on the experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients. I am writing to request your help in identifying counselors in your program or agency who provide services to Spanish-speaking clients. The voices of the practitioners who work within your agency will be very helpful, as the findings of this study should prove to be very informative to counselor education and could impact the future training of counselors. Participants will spend no more than 2.5 hours of their time on this research study.

I would be most appreciative if you could identify counselor practitioners within your program or agency who work with Spanish-speaking clients. Please email me a list of these counselors with their contact information so that I can call to inform them of this study.

This study has been approved by the WMU Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, which can be reached by contacting the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298.

Thank you.

Daniel Romero, M.A., L.L.P.C.
Dr. Stephen Craig (advisor)

Daniel Romero, M.A., L.L.P.C.,
Doctoral Candidate
Counselor Education & Supervision
Western Michigan University
daniel.r.romero@wmich.edu
Appendix C

Initial Phone Call to Potential Participants
Initial Phone Call to Potential Participants

SCRIPT:

Hi, my name is Dan Romero and I am a counselor education doctoral student at Western Michigan University who is working on his dissertation. I am calling to let you know of the inclusionary criteria for a study that I am conducting. The study has been approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at Western Michigan University.

There are two criteria necessary in order to be considered for participation in this study. One is that you provide counseling services to Spanish-speaking clients; and two is that you either hold a master's degree in counseling or counseling psychology and are licensed as an LLPC, LPC, TLLP, LLP, LP, OR presently be a graduate student in counseling or counseling psychology and completing practicum or internship requirements in that program.

Would you be interested in an informed consent document that explains the study in greater detail?

If potential participant indicates interest in this study, then say:

Great! Would you prefer that I hand deliver the informed consent document, email you the informed consent document, or would you like for me to send it through the U.S. mail?

If potential participant requests that I hand deliver the informed consent document, arrange a time and place for the hand delivery.

If potential participant requests that I email the informed consent document, request the email address and let him or her know that it will be sent with the subject "Informed Consent Document."

If potential participant requests that the informed consent document be sent through the U.S. mail, request the mailing address and let him or her know that I will include a self-addressed stamped envelope for the signed consent form to be returned.

If individual indicates no interest in the study, then say:

Do you know of anyone who may fit the criteria and be interested in knowing about this study?

If individual states that they do not know of anyone who may be interested, then say:
Okay. Thank you very much for your time. If you hear of anyone who may be interested in participating with this study, can you please have them call me at 616-745-5189?

If individual states that they do know someone who may be interested, then say:

Could you give me his or her name and number so that I could call him or her?

If they say yes, then say:

Thanks!

Write down the information and call new potential participant. Repeat the script from the top.
Appendix D

Informed Consent Document
Informed Consent Document

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Stephen Craig

**Student Investigator:** Daniel Romero

**Title of Study:** The Experiences of Counselors who Work with Spanish-Speaking Clients: A Phenomenological Study.

You have been invited to participate in a research project titled "The Experiences of Counselors who Work with Spanish-Speaking Clients: A Phenomenological Study." This project will serve as Daniel Romero's dissertation for the requirements of the Doctor of Philosophy. This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project and will go over all the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project. Please read this consent form carefully and completely. You may contact the student or principal investigator if you have any questions.

**What are we trying to find out in this study?**

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients in order to inform Counselor Education on how to better prepare students to provide services to this population. Very little is known about the experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients. This study will add to the literature base and specifically answer a call for more research in this area.

**Who can participate in this study?**

To participate in this study, you must (a) currently provide counseling services to Spanish-speaking clients, and either (2) hold a master's degree in counseling or counseling psychology and be licensed as a Limited-Licensed Professional Counselor (LLPC), Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), Temporary Limited-Licensed Psychologist (TLLP), Limited-Licensed Psychologist (LLP), or Licensed Psychologist (LP), or (3) presently be a graduate student in counseling or counseling psychology and completing practicum or internship requirements in the program.

**Where will this study take place?**

This study will take place in Kent and Ottawa Counties, Michigan. A 90-minute interview will be conducted at an agreed upon and convenient location for you, and will be followed up with one 10-minute telephone call to verify accuracy in your interview responses.
What is the time commitment for participating in this study?

The total time commitment is approximately two hours. The estimated total time commitment required to participate in this study includes (a) ten minutes to review informed consent, (b) three to five minutes to complete a screening and demographics questionnaire, (c) 90-minute in-depth audio-taped interview, and (d) ten minute follow-up telephone call to verify accuracy in your interview responses.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?

If you meet the inclusionary criteria and choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to (a) read and sign this consent form, (b) complete a screening and demographics questionnaire (c) participate in an in-person audio-taped interview with Dan Romero, the student investigator, and (d) participate in a follow-up telephone call.

Specifically, you will be asked to respond to 18 inclusionary and demographics screening questions, which will provide general information about you such as your gender, age, and information regarding your professional training. Following completion of the questionnaire, the researcher, Dan Romero, will select ten participants based on the research design and information from the questionnaire. Individuals who are not selected to participate in the study will be offered a copy of the summary of the research findings at the conclusion of the study.

Ten selected participants will be invited to continue with the 90-minute audiotaped interview. In the interview, you will be asked to describe several aspects of your personal and professional experiences, such as your motivations for becoming a counselor, how you learned to work with Spanish-speaking clients, what it is like for you to work with Spanish-speaking clients, and what recommendations you have that could help to prepare counselors in training for work with this population.

Several weeks following the interview, you will receive a telephone call from Dan Romero regarding your participation in the study. During this taped telephone call, the researcher will review the interview questions and a summary of your responses with you. You will be asked to verify whether or not the summary accurately reflects your responses to the questions regarding your experiences as a counselor who works with Spanish-speaking clients. This should take about 10-15 minutes. If the summary does not accurately reflect your responses, you will be asked to clarify your responses for the researcher at that time. Following this telephone call, your name will be entered into a drawing for a chance to win a $100 gift card to Schuler Books and Music.

What information is being measured during this study?

During this study we will explore several aspects of your personal and professional experiences, such as your motivations for becoming a counselor, how you learned to
work with Spanish-speaking clients, what it is like for you to work with Spanish-speaking clients, and what recommendations you have that could help to prepare counselors-in-training for work with this population.

**What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?**

Given the nature of an interview in which you are asked to describe your personal and professional experiences, you may experience some discomfort (e.g., feelings of stress or anxiety) that may come from discussing this topic. In the event of such a possibility, you may ask for the interview process to be suspended or terminated. This researcher does not expect such strong reactions; however, there remains a possibility that this may happen. No compensation or treatment will be made available to you should this unlikely reaction occur.

**What are the benefits of participating in this study?**

You may benefit personally from your participation by having an opportunity to reflect on your professional and academic experiences, as well as your work with your Spanish-speaking clients. The findings of this study may help counselor practitioners, counselor educators, and counselor education programs to become more aware of the personal and professional experiences of counselors who work with Spanish-speaking clients. If interested, the findings of this study will be made available to you upon the completion of this study.

**Are there costs associated with participating in this study?**

You may incur some costs as a result of participating in this study. These costs may include loss of time and the cost and effort of responding to telephone calls from this researcher, as well as the cost for travel to the agreed upon location, where the interview will take place.

**Is there any compensation for participating in this study?**

As an appreciation for participating in this study, you will receive a chance to win a $100 Schuler Books and Music gift card for your time and personal costs of participating in this study. Only those who complete the 90-minute interview and post interview phone call will be eligible for the gift card drawing.

**Who will have access to the information collected during this study?**

Once your interview is completed, it will be assigned a code before being transcribed by this researcher. Your responses will remain confidential. To protect your privacy and confidentiality, the following measures will be taken: (a) the student investigator agrees
not to make any disclosure of the audio recordings, (b) your interview will be given an
identification code and your name will not be included with your audio-taped responses,
(c) interview data will be stored on a USB drive that will be locked in a cabinet, along
with the audiotapes when not in use for transcription, (d) the USB drive and audiotapes
will have a pass/security code that will only be known to this investigator, and (e) only
Dan Romero and Dr. Stephen Craig will have access to the data.

**What if you want to stop participating in the study once you have already started?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can choose to stop participating in the study
at any time for any reason. You will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by your decision
to stop your participation. The investigator can also decide to stop your participation in
the study without your consent. Signing this document indicates your consent to
participate in this study and allows Dan Romero to use the information you will provide
in this study.

If you have questions or concerns regarding the study/research and/or your participa-
tion, you can ask me now or contact me, Dan Romero, at telephone #(616) 745-5189 or by e-
mail at daniel.r.romero@wmich.edu or the chair of the doctoral committee, Dr. Stephen
Craig, at (269) 387-5114 or at stephen.craig@wmich.edu. You may also contact the
chair, Human Subject Institutional Review Board at Western Michigan University at
(269) 387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at (269) 387-8289 if questions or
problems arise during this study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects
Institutional Review Board (HSRIB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of
the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped
date is older than one year.

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained
to me. I agree to participate in this study.

Please Print Your Name

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Participant’s signature
Appendix E

Follow-up Phone Call and Email to Potential Participants
Follow-up Phone Call to Potential Participants

SCRIPT:

Hi, this is Dan Romero. I am calling to follow up on the informed consent document that I recently sent you. Do you have any questions about the document or study?

Answer questions, if any.

Are you interested in participating in the study?

If potential participant answers that they are interested, say:

I will need to receive your signed consent form if you are interested in being a potential participant in this study. I can either meet you somewhere to pick up the document or if you would like to mail it to me in the provided self-addressed stamped envelope, that would also be fine.

If potential participant indicates that they would like for me to pick up the consent form, say:

Where is a convenient place where I can meet you to pick up the consent document and ask you a few demographic questions for screening purposes?

Meet with the potential participant and complete the demographics questionnaire (Appendix F).

If potential participant indicates that they would like to mail me the consent form, say:

I will wait to receive the consent document and then call you to complete a demographic questionnaire for screening purposes.

If potential participant answers that they are not interested, say:

Thanks very much for taking your time to review the consent form. If you decide that you would like to participate, please call, text, or email me as soon as possible to let me know.
Follow-up Email to Potential Participants

Dear (name of potential participant),

Thank you for taking your time to read the informed consent document that I recently sent you concerning your participation in my doctoral dissertation titled "The Experiences of Counselors who work with Spanish-Speaking Clients."

Please email or call me with any questions that you have regarding your potential participation in this study. If you believe that you meet the inclusionary criteria and you would like to participate, please sign the informed consent form and return it to me in the included self-addressed stamped envelope.

Thank you and hope to hear from you soon.

Dan

Daniel R. Romero, MA, LLPC
Western Michigan University
Counselor Education and Supervision
Doctoral Candidate
email: daniel.r.romero@wmich.edu
phone: (616) 745-5189
Appendix F

Demographics Questionnaire
Demographics Questionnaire

Name: ____________________________________  Date: ________________________

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research study. Before I formally
invite you to participate in this study, I would like to ask you some questions to determine
if you fit the criteria required for participation. This questionnaire should take about 3-5
minutes of your time. Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research study.

*1. Do you currently provide counseling services to Spanish-speaking clients?
   (Circle one)
   Yes            No

2. How long have you worked with Spanish-speaking clients? (Circle one)
   0-6 months       6 months-1 year     1-2 years      2-5 years      more than 5 years

3. Approximately what percentage of your clients is Spanish-speaking?
   10-25%         25-50%          50-75%         75-100%

4. Do you use interpreters when working with Spanish-speaking clients? (Circle one)
   Yes           No

5. Do you speak Spanish? (Circle one)
   Yes           No

6. How would you rate your Spanish-language fluency?
   Not fluent       Moderately fluent     Very fluent

7. If you answered yes to question 5, is Spanish your first language? (Circle one)
   Yes            No

8. If you answered yes to question 5, when did you learn to speak Spanish? (Circle one)
   As a young child at home       Preschool       Elementary School       Middle School
   High School       University       Other (Please specify): ________________________
9. Can you read and write in Spanish?

Yes  No

10. What other (if any) languages do you speak? ________________________________.

*11. Did you graduate from a counseling or counseling psychology master's program or
are you presently a graduate student in counseling or counseling psychology and
completing practicum or internship requirements in the program? (Check all that
apply)

Name of University or College Attended: _______________________________________

___ Yes, graduated from counselor education program (please check which program you
graduated from below)

   ___ Community counseling
   ___ Clinical mental health counseling
   ___ College counseling
   ___ School counseling
   ___ Marriage and family counseling

___ Yes, graduated from counseling psychology program

___ Yes, currently a graduate student in counseling or counseling psychology and
completing practicum or internship requirements in the program

(Check the program you are currently enrolled in)

   ___ Community counseling
   ___ Clinical mental health counseling
   ___ College counseling
   ___ School counseling
   ___ Marriage and family counseling
   ___ Other: ___________________________
No, did not graduate from counseling or counseling psychology master’s program and not currently a graduate student in counseling or counseling psychology and completing practicum or internship requirements in the program.

12. If you did not graduate from a master's in counseling program, what program did you graduate from or are you currently in? ____________________________

13. What year did you graduate from your master's program? ____________________

14. How many credit hours was your master's program of study? ________________

15. What professional licenses do you presently hold? (Please circle all that apply)

LLPC  LPC  TLLP  LLP  LP  LMSW  LMFT  None  Other: ____________________________

Please list: ________________________________

16. What is your gender? (Circle one)

Male  Female

17. What is your age? ________________

18. What is your race/ethnicity? (Circle one)

African-American  Alaskan Native  American Indian  Asian-American

Caucasian  Hispanic/Latino  International/Non-US Resident  Multiracial

Pacific Islander  Other
Appendix G

Interview Questions
Interview Questions

Before starting the interview, the researcher will review the purpose of the interview as follows:

*In this interview I will be asking you a series of open-ended questions about your experiences with providing counseling services to Spanish-speaking clients. The main purpose of this interview is for you to talk about your personal and professional experiences with regard to working with this population. During the interview I may ask prompting or follow-up questions as needed for clarification. Do you have any questions before we begin the interview?*

After the participant states that he or she is ready for the interview the researcher will say:

*I will now turn on the tape recorder. Do I have your permission to tape record this interview?* After the participant agrees to the recording while the tape is running, continue: *Let's begin our interview with the first question:*

1. What led you to study counseling? RQ1
2. How did you come to work with the Spanish-speaking population? RQ1
3. Describe the experiences that prepared you to work with Spanish-speaking clients? RQ2
4. Can you think of anything else that influenced your readiness to work with Spanish-speaking clients? RQ2
5. What is it like for you to work with Spanish-speaking clients? RQ3
6. What is the most challenging aspect of your work with Spanish-speaking clients? RQ3
7. What other challenges do you encounter/have you encountered in your work with Spanish-speaking clients? RQ3
8. What is important for counselors to know when working with Spanish-speaking clients? RQ4
9. Based on your experience working with Spanish-speaking clients, what could have better prepared you to work with this population? RQ4
10. What would you recommend to the counseling profession regarding preparing counselors to work with Spanish-speaking clients? RQ4
11. What is it like for you to:

   A. Participate in this interview today?
   B. Talk about your experiences of working with Spanish-speaking clients?

When the participant finishes sharing his or her experiences with working with Spanish-speaking clients I will say:

*We have come to the end of our interview. Now I would like to give you an opportunity to ask any question or add any comments you may have regarding this interview.*

[Participants are given time to ask questions.]

*In about three or four weeks, I will give you a follow-up phone call where I will review a summary of your interview with you. At that time you will have the opportunity to verify that your experiences as a counselor who works with Spanish-speaking clients were communicated correctly in the interview. Any corrections you provide at that time will help to improve my understanding of your experiences with working with Spanish-speaking clients and will be useful in data analysis.*

*Thank you once again for your participation.*
Appendix H

Post Interview Follow-up Phone Call
SCRIPT:

Hi, this is Dan Romero, WMU doctoral student with whom you recently completed an interview for a research study titled "The Experiences of Counselors who work with Spanish-Speaking Clients." I would like to record this telephone call for the purpose of transcription for my research study. Is it okay for me to record this conversation?

Start the recording

I am calling to follow up on your participation in my research study and to review the interview questions and your responses with you. This will be the final portion of your participation with this study.

I have summarized some of what I thought were the key elements of your responses and would like to verify the accuracy of my summary. If at any time the summary seems inaccurate, please stop me to make the necessary edits and/or corrections.

Do you have any questions before we continue?

Proceed with the interview questions and response summaries.

At the end, when the responses have been verified and member-checked, say:

Thank you once again for your participation with my study. Your contribution is meaningful and will help me to complete my research. I will now enter your name into the drawing for the $100 Schuler Books & Music gift card. When all names have been entered, I will draw a name and call the winner and then mail the card to him or her.

Any final questions or thoughts?

Thank you!
Appendix I

Added Statement of Consent
This form serves to clarify a statement in the informed consent document that you signed prior to being interviewed for my study, "The Experiences of Counselors who work with Spanish-Speaking Clients." In the form it was stated that, in order to protect your privacy and confidentiality, "the student investigator agrees not to make any disclosure of the audio recordings." What was meant by this statement was that the student investigator would be transcribing the interviews himself and that no one else would be listening to the audio recordings. However, it was not clear that the data collected would be used in the dissertation. The investigators are requesting to include direct quotes from your interview in a dissertation document. Your name and identifying information will not be included. Please sign below to give your consent. Thank you.

_______________________________    __________________________
Signature                                      Date

Consent Obtained by: ______________________  __________________________
Researchers' initials                               Date
Appendix J

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board
Letters of Approval
Date: May 9, 2012

To: Stephen Craig, Principal Investigator
   Daniel Romero, Student Investigator for Dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 12-04-23

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “The Experiences of Counselors who Work with Spanish-Speaking Clients” has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: May 9, 2013
Date: July 1, 2013

To: Stephen Craig, Principal Investigator
   Daniel Romero, Student Investigator for Dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 12-04-23

This letter will serve as confirmation that the change to your research project titled “The Experiences of Counselors who Work with Spanish-Speaking Clients” requested in your memo received July 1, 2013 (to obtain permission from participants to use direct quotes in dissertation document with name and identifying information removed) has been approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.

The conditions and the duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: May 9, 2014