

What does it mean to be

Bilingual Enough?

Recommendations for Providing Effective Bilingual Services

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# Trends in the Hispanic Population

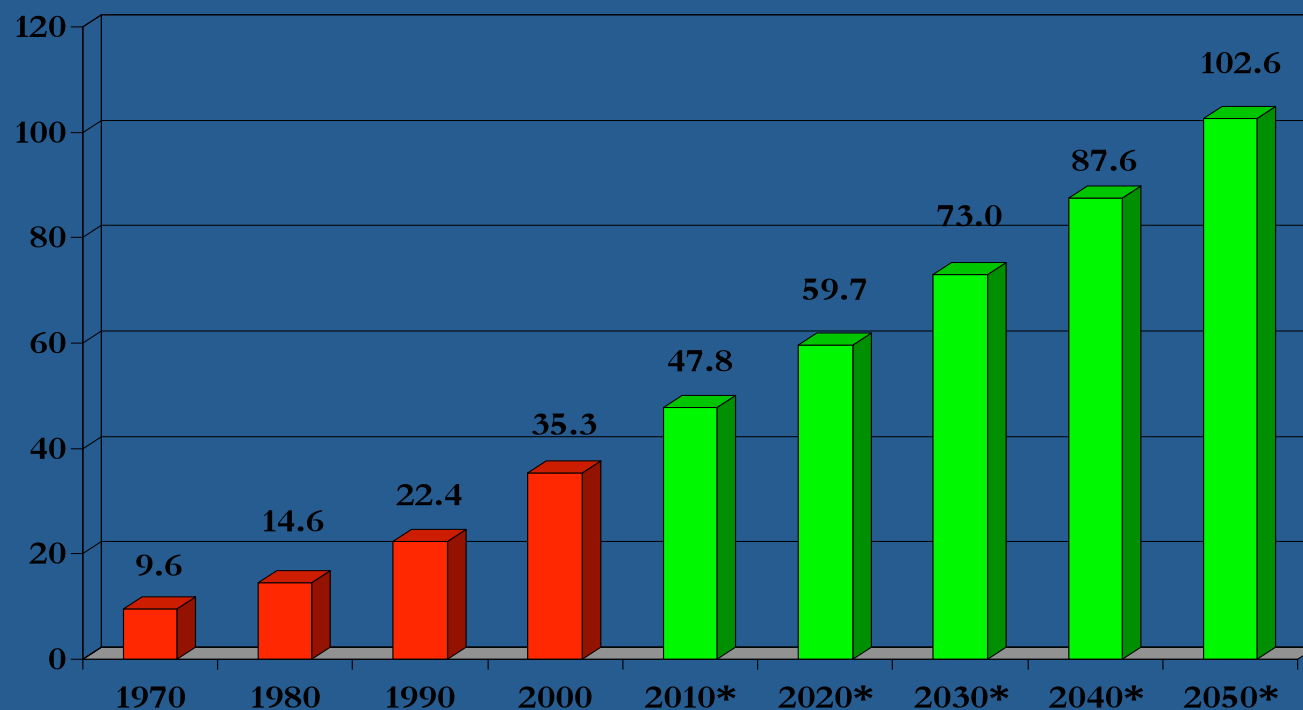
(Ethnicity and Ancestry Branch, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau,  
e-mail:anna.m.owens@census.gov)

As of July 1, 2006: 44.3 million Hispanics, 14.8% of total population of 299 million

- Between 2000 and 2006: Hispanics accounted for one-half of the nation's growth
- Hispanic growth rate ( 24.3%) was more than three times the growth rate of the total population (6.1%)

# Hispanic Population in the United States: 1970 to 2050

Population in Millions



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1997, 1980, 1990, and 2000 Decennial Censuses; Population Projections, July 1, 2010 to July 1, 2050

## Importance of Language in the Therapeutic Process

- Several clients of a Latino descent are encouraged to learn the English language as well as Spanish, therefore, has different life themes in different languages.
- Bilingual clients tend to switch from one language to another and should be used to explore the areas of the client's personality and self (Sciarra & Ponterotto, 1991).

# Importance of Language in the Therapeutic Process

- Language is an important vehicle by which knowledge, beliefs, and traditions are revealed and are closely related to an individual's history and culture (Santiago-Rivera, 1995).
- Clients, during the therapeutic process, carry narratives that are resources to be used through difficult times and are frequently connected to family, customs, traditions, and places, but always with an “image of self encoded in a language” (Martinez-Brawley & Zorita, 2006, p. 89).

# Language Challenges

- Therapists who only speak English or who are not culturally competent may miss important cultural cues and fail to accurately understand the client's situation.
- Inconsistent language (from Spanish to English) has an effect on diagnosis.
- The therapeutic relationship is often jeopardized due to miscommunication that creates misinterpretations of cultural cues causing clients distress and anxiety (Sciarra & Ponterotto, 1991).
- Bilingual staff are over worked

# Language Challenges

- Limited numbers and scope of services available in Spanish result in clients being turned away, referred out, or placed on wait lists due to the lack of qualified bilingual therapists available.
- written materials such as forms, community resources, and accurate clinical information may not be available in Spanish.

# Language Challenges

- Standardized tests or therapeutic practices may not be adequate to use with some Spanish speaking clients
- Individuals who have limited English proficiency are often excluded from participating in research or clinical trials

# Four key issues

- Defining what it means to be bilingual
- The ethical guidelines for a practicing bilingual therapist
- Hiring bilingual staff
- Being a bilingual therapist

# What does it mean to be bilingual?

*Bilingualism* may best be conceptualized as a skill on a continuum.

- At one end, are individuals who learn two languages one spoken in the home by family members and the other spoken in the larger community.
- At the other end of the continuum are individuals who learn one language but have only rudimentary skills in another (e.g. may know a few words)

# Competency: The term has complex meanings in a bilingual context

- *Language competence*: being able to say the right thing at the right time in the right manner (Cheng, 1996, p. 10)
- *Cultural competence in a bilingual context* requires an understanding of the meaning of words, word usage in context, and the meaning of complex concepts and nonverbal communication. (Acevedo et al., 2003)

# Variety of Language Skill Classification Systems

## Classification of Bilingualism (Marcos, 1976)

- *Proficient (native) vs. Subordinate Bilingual (non-native)*
  - *when during the lifetime Spanish is learned*
- *Compound (one thought system accessed by either language) vs. Coordinate Bilingual (separate and independent thought systems in each language)*
  - *thought systems*

# Continued

- *Specialized* (only able to express a memory in one language) vs. *Unspecialized Bilingual* (can express any thought or memory in either language—not dependent on the language that formed the memory)
- *Compatible* (easily translates multiple meanings of words) vs. *Incompatible* (restricted to a limited number of meanings for words and sayings)- difficulty with figurative speech

# *Spanish into English Verbatim Translation Exam*

*Developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)*

- *No Proficiency*
- *Memorized Proficiency*
- *Elementary Proficiency*
- *Limited Working Proficiency*
- *General Professional Proficiency*
- *Advanced Professional Proficiency*
- *Master Translator Proficiency*

# Case Study



## Ethically concerning issues with the agency and supervisor

- Applicant was not adequately assessed
- Supervisor encouraged applicant to take the position
- Using the receptionist as a translator
- Supervisor unable to judge if either the receptionist or applicant were fluent in Spanish
- Agency had included in its state contract that they were able to provide services in Spanish

## Ethically concerning issues with Jennifer the applicant in this vignette

- Resume stated that she was Bilingual
- Took the position without feeling confident or qualified for the job

# Guidelines for Hiring Bilingual Staff

- Employers must ensure that the practicing therapist is competent in both language and culture of the population served
- Assessing a staff's skills and cultural competence must use valid evaluation methods
- Applicants must be able to complete a reading, writing, comprehension, and oral exam.
- Provide adequate bilingual supervision and opportunities of growth
- Provide training in learning the psychotherapy vernacular, including wording, phrasing and non-verbal communication, which is not directly translatable from one language to another

# Guidelines for becoming an effective bilingual therapist

- Acquire self awareness of language and cultural competency
- Have knowledge of code of ethics regarding working with diverse populations
- Competent skills in current multicultural issues and treatment
- Seek continued support and education in providing cultural appropriate services.

# Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services to Ethnic, Linguistic, and Culturally Diverse Populations

- Providers need a framework to consider the diversity of a client's values, communication styles, and cultural expectations.
- Clinician must have knowledge and skills for multicultural assessment, interventions, and diagnosis of diverse populations
- clinicians must be able to recognize cultural diversity and roles that culture, ethnicity, and race play in the sociopsychological and development of diverse individuals

## Guidelines for clinics providing bilingual services and hiring bilingual therapist or interpreters

- Develop a Limited English Proficiency plan to include the cost of interpreters and translations in their grant applications or clinic budgets
- Consideration for adequate multicultural policies and procedures
- Knowledge of appropriate language testing information and required level of competence
- Measurements to assess for multicultural competence
- Knowledge of interpreting services, and costs of bilingual programs.

# Future Needs

- Baseline definition on what it means to be bilingual
- Assessing cultural competence
- Universities and Colleges providing more bilingual and certificate programs in the social service field
- Agencies providing more support for bilingual workers
- Recruiting more bilingual students into social service programs