

An essential resource that serves as both a guide and a map—offering clear direction, practical wisdom, and profound insight for Latinxs seeking to forge a path as a bilingual mental health professional, researcher, or educator. Drawing deeply from their own lived experiences, the contributors illuminate the journey with compassion and clarity, making the road ahead both accessible and inspiring. *Este libro es clave para la formación bilingüe en salud mental.*

—**Dr. Carlos P. Zalaquett, PhD, MA, Lic., LMHC**, Professor—Catedrático, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, United States

A timely and comprehensive resource authored by leading experts in the field! This book is essential reading for anyone working with bilingual Latine students, patients, and families. An invaluable guide for trainers, supervisors, and practitioners committed to culturally responsive care.

—**Milton A. Fuentes, PsyD**, Montclair State University, Montclair, NJ, United States

The authors offer a thoughtful developmental approach to becoming a bilingual mental health professional, from one's undergraduate experiences to those of postgraduate status. Individuals' personal language, bilingual competency, and cultural heritage are described as assets for engaging in bilingual mental health interventions. *Dichos* and other cultural resources are shared to enrich one's bilingual (mental health) practice.

—**Dr. Patricia Arredondo, EdD**, President, Arredondo Advisory Group; Faculty, Fielding Graduate University, Santa Barbara, CA, United States; and Founding President of the National Latinx Psychological Association

Finally! This much-needed guidebook is useful for bilingual Latine students pursuing careers in mental health, but also essential for the faculty, families, and institutions that support them. Chapters thoughtfully trace developmental milestones of bilingual students and early career professionals, all the while celebrating the richness of Latine language, culture, and identity. With practical advice and honest reflections, the authors (all experts in Latine psychology) affirm the experiences of those too often left out of dominant narratives.

—**Ana J. Bridges, PhD**, Distinguished Professor and Director of Clinical Training, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR, United States; and Past President of the National Latinx Psychological Association

In *Forging Caminos*, Doctores Campos Mejia y Consoli offer a deeply insightful and timely guide for mental health professionals seeking to expand their practice across linguistic and cultural lines. With clarity, compassion, and hard-earned experience, they illuminate the unique challenges—and profound rewards—of working bilingually in research, training, and the clinical setting. As a friend and fellow advocate for equitable mental health care, I've witnessed their dedication to building authentic, culturally attuned therapeutic relationships. This book is more than a manual—it's a call to action for clinicians to embrace language as both a tool and a bridge to underserved communities. Whether you're just beginning your journey or are a seasoned clinician looking to grow, *Forging Caminos* is an essential companion. It will inspire you, challenge you, and remind you why this work matters.

—**Alexandra Canetti, MD**, Program Medical Director of the Special Need Clinic, Cochair of the Diversity and Inclusion Alliance, and Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Columbia University Irving Medical Center, New York, NY, United States

As a graduate student, I struggled to find training, education, and supervision experiences to hone my Spanish language skills as a budding bilingual clinician. This is the book I wish I had! It is a comprehensive guide for mental health professionals at all stages of training or anywhere in their career journey. The book is full of reflections, advice, and concrete steps people can take to forge their unique bilingual and/or bicultural professional identity.

—**Timothy Stahl, PhD**, Licensed Clinical Psychologist

Contents

<i>Contributors</i>	vii
<i>Forewords</i>	
<i>Foreword: Compromisos and Visibility—Jessica Gomez</i>	xi
<i>Foreword: ¡Date Puesto!—Melanie M. Domenech Rodríguez</i>	xv
<i>¡Bienvenide! An Introduction to Forging Caminos</i>	3
Maciel Campos, Yessenia Mejia, and Andrés J. Consoli	
1. <i>Ha Llegado el Momento: The Intentional Becoming of a Bilingual Mental Health Professional in the United States</i>	11
Maciel Campos, Yessenia Mejia, and Andrés J. Consoli	
2. <i>Sueños y Logros: Maximizing the College Experience and Applying to Graduate School as Aspiring Bilingual Mental Health Scientists–Practitioners</i>	27
Jeanett Castellanos, Veronica Franco, Karen E. Godinez Gonzalez, and Erick Felix	
3. <i>¡Sí Se Pudo! Now What? Starting Graduate School as a Bilingual Student</i>	49
Cristalís Capielo Rosario, Génesis Ramos Rosado, and Candice N. Hargons	
4. <i>Construyendo a Decolonial Latinx Mental Health With Black and Indigenous Latinxs at the Center</i>	69
Hector Y. Adames and Nayeli Y. Chavez-Dueñas	

5. <i>El Entrenamiento: Training Necessities and Opportunities to Advance Bilingual Mental Health Competencies</i>	87
Andrés J. Consoli, Yvette Ramírez-Gutiérrez, Maira Anaya-López, Isabel López, and Evelyn A. Melendez	
6. <i>Enséñame a Volar: Supervisión y Mentoría of Bilingual Trainees</i>	109
Jacqueline Fuentes, Eckart Werther, Charmaine Mora-Ozuna, Geysa Flores, and Edward A. Delgado-Romero	
7. <i>La Investigación: Conducting and Publishing Bilingual Research</i>	133
Yesenia Uribe, Alberta M. Gloria, and Jeanett Castellanos	
8. <i>Advanced Caminos: Navegando Internship and Postdoctoral Programs as a Bilingual Trainee</i>	155
Maciel Campos and Yessenia Mejia	
9. <i>Deciding Your Camino in Bilingual Mental Health</i>	177
Jasmine A. Mena and Grevelin Ulerio	
10. <i>El Camino Clínico: Cultivating Your Clinical and Cultural Identity</i>	199
Kimberly Alba and Jorge Cienfuegos Szalay	
11. <i>El Camino Académico: Bilingual Professional Identity in Academia</i>	219
Vanesa Mora Ringle and Raquel Sosa	
12. <i>¡Ya Pues! Intentional, Comprehensive Bilingual Mental Health Training Now</i>	241
Maciel Campos, Yessenia Mejia, and Andrés J. Consoli	
<i>Index</i>	263
<i>About the Editors</i>	275

¡BIENVENIDE!

An Introduction to Forging Caminos

MACIEL CAMPOS, YESSANIA MEJIA, AND ANDRÉS J. CONSOLI

For decades now, the varied mental health fields that seek to understand and address the needs of Spanish speakers in the United States have required tenacious, resilient, and dedicated researchers and professionals *como tú*. We all have paved *caminos* in innovative and groundbreaking fashion for future bilingual (i.e., English–Spanish) professionals. Although bilingual mental health training, research, and therapeutic services continue to face formidable challenges, resource sharing and community building empower and promote the development of our academic and professional workforce. This book builds on these *tradiciones*, intentionally increasing access to guidance for competent bilingual mental health training, research, practice, and advocacy. It also provides advice on the recruitment, retention, graduation, and promotion of aspiring bilingual scientists and practitioners, emphasizing the nuances and unique skill sets necessary for success.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/0000481-001>

Forging Caminos: Pathways to Becoming a Bilingual Mental Health Professional,
M. Campos, Y. Mejia, and A. J. Consoli (Editors)

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FORGING CAMINOS

You can expect this book to offer much-needed parameters for effectively navigating the multiple and complex systems of higher education and the health care field, parameters that are relevant to bilingual mental health scientists, practitioners, and advocates. We take a developmental approach, one that celebrates and underscores the strengths and unique contributions made to communities and society by bilingual individuals and professionals. We embrace the intersectionality between bilingualism and the different stages of professional development and affirm *colores* in all their shades. We intentionally chose to use Spanish and English throughout this book to highlight the importance of operating in both languages and of feeling more comfortable as providers speaking, thinking, and using Spanish in a professional and educational setting.

“Unides jamás seremos vencidos” frames the purpose of creating a consolidated resource that centers the expertise, knowledge, innovation, and resilience of professionals and researchers; our collective, lived experiences in bilingual training, research, advocacy, and professional development are shaping bilingual mental health in the United States. This book is a proactive response to the call to action in the recruitment, training, and retention of competent bilingual mental health scientists and practitioners who currently accompany, or seek to accompany, Spanish-speaking communities.

If you identify as a bilingual graduate student and early-career professional in the mental health field, *este libro es para ti*. In it, you can expect a guide that addresses each stage of your professional development and does so sequentially. As a how-to guide, this book is infused with *consejos*, *reflexiones*, relatable stories, and action plans to inform and inspire your personal and professional trajectory throughout your professional life span.

The notable group of contributing authors to this book are leaders in the field; they embody the practice of equity and justice, with a focus on creating *caminos* for future generations of bilingual clinicians, supervisors, academics, and researchers. Through their contributions, the book underscores the numerous ways in which mentorship, community, solidarity, empowerment, knowledge, competency, humility, and structural justice can facilitate the affirmation of a proficient bilingual mental health workforce. Chapter authors, your *guías* on this journey, are experts in the unique intersection of bilingualism and different stages of your professional development. They share their *consejos y sabiduría* on important milestones.

Each chapter is designed to review a specific *camino* in readers' development as bilingual mental health scientist practitioners. Although the chapters

are anchored in a developmental framework that follows the process sequentially, they also serve as stand-alone chapters that readers can select according to their educational and professional needs. Two psychology experts in bilingual mental health care, academia, training, research, and leadership have ushered your arrival to these *caminos* with the wisdom they shared in the opening Forewords. The central themes of Chapter 1 are the current state of affairs and foundational matters that are relevant to bilingual mental health training, such as definitions, history, and the role of language. Chapter 2 sets the stage for your graduate school application process as a bilingual student, guiding you to maximize your bilingualism experiences for your successful acceptance to graduate programs. The unique adjustment for bilingual, racialized, and/or first-generation students is addressed in Chapter 3, whose authors provide examples of lived experiences and offer tips and encouragement. The initial stages of beginning your graduate program *camino* are complemented with Chapter 4, whose contributors anchor us all in a decolonized perspective that names anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity within Latinx culture and, by proxy, bilingual scientist-practitioners. This chapter questions White supremacy and *mestizaje* ideologies that often underlie approaches intended to shape bilingual mental health training and related services, and it centers the experiences of Afro and Indigenous Latinxs toward the goal of liberation.

Chapter 5 takes a closer look at bilingual students' graduate school experience as they engage in theory, research, and practice. You will find an overview of the invaluable roles of supervision and mentorship for bilingual students looking to further advance their bilingual skills in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 is designed to orient you to salient considerations of and nuances in bilingual research. The internship process is the focus of Chapter 8, which is meant to assist in maximizing your skills, experience, goals, and values as a developing bilingual professional.

As you round out your training and begin to make decisions about your postgraduation career, Chapter 9 provides guidance for choosing between *caminos* and how to go about this process in a way that honors your goals of growing as a bilingual early-career professional. Chapter 10 offers insights into a *camino* focused on clinical work, and Chapter 11 provides *una mirada* into the academic *camino*. Our developmental trajectory concludes with a discussion in Chapter 12 of anticipations for the near future, salient themes affecting bilingual populations within mental health, and a renewed invitation to engage in advocacy and leadership as a bilingual professional.

All of your *guías* have curated each of these *caminos* with the goals of supporting you on this increasingly traveled journey that is bilingual mental

health training and professional development. *¡Ahora que sabes* what lies ahead; allow us to introduce ourselves!

MEET THE COEDITORS

Always believe that the impossible is possible.

—Selena Quintanilla

We come from different walks of life, and *nuestros caminos se han encontrado* in this pivotal moment. We are *unidxs* in our desire to continuously enrich the existing foundation that has been paved, to ensure competent teaching, training, research, and care. As coeditors of this book, we have dedicated ourselves to providing a comprehensive guide for those interested in becoming bilingual mental health academics, researchers, and providers and to exploring all facets of this role, including leadership and advocacy. As a team, we embody a variety of intersecting identities, many of which we share with the Latinx communities we seek to accompany and of which we are a part. We aim to center our values and put theory into practice while evoking *conocimiento* for readers for the sake of our communities who are not only in need but are deserving of *apoyo*.

Maciel Campos, PsyD (She, Her, Ella)

“¿Qué? Háblame en español que aquí no se habla inglés” was how my immigrant Dominican mother and Salvadorian father responded to my younger sister and me, both bilingual and born in Brooklyn, New York, when we spoke English at home. Despite this early exposure, I grew up during a time when Latinx and Spanish representation was fairly limited. As a *primogénita* and a member of the first generation born in the United States, the awkward “*ni de aquí ni de allá*” tightrope walk felt thrilling yet overbearing. Deciding to correct mispronunciations of my name, translating, and navigating uncharted waters were some examples of this balance. Movies like *Stand and Deliver* were my early narratives and reference points as I navigated my working-class background and academic goals through higher education. At every *paso*, I directly experienced the need for and impact of bicultural and bilingual mentorship. *Cada cual pone un grano de arroz*, and mine is to self-locate within my privileges of proximity to Whiteness, a cisgender-heterosexual female identity, and English fluency to advocate for bilingual mental health. I identify as Latina.

Yessenia Esther Mejia Perez, PsyD (She, Her, Ella)

It took me a long time to love all my names. Today, I hold onto them with *orgullo* as a reminder not only of *quién soy* but also of who and where I came from. I am a White heterosexual cisgender Latina first-born *hija* to immigrant parents from Colombia. Being born and raised in a multigenerational household in one of the most ethnically diverse neighborhoods in the borough of Queens, New York, was paradise. I learned Spanish in my family home; over summers in Barranquilla, Colombia; and in school as my “second language,” making me a heritage speaker. I ethnically identify as Latina or *colombiana*, which encompasses my family origins. Code switching between “Colombian” and “*gringa*” identities helped me straddle two worlds and made me privy to the ways in which both were plagued by the same systemic oppression. As I found myself bridging a White- and English-dominant discipline and Latinx communities, I also confronted numerous challenges that evidenced a lack of intentional training for bilingual and bicultural students. As I finished my training, I vowed that I would help pave the way to a *nuevo amanecer* for our culture, community, and field.

Andrés J. Consoli (He/Him/Él)

I am an immigrant from Argentina, where I was raised monolingually in Spanish and earned a *licenciatura* in clinical psychology. Learning English as an adult was and continues to be a sizable challenge. The accent in my written and spoken English leads to the inevitable question, “Where are you from?” It has also been accompanied by many instances of discrimination, and with some people speaking louder and more slowly to me—their own version of “sheltered” English. I have sought to put my binational and bilingual identities to good use through a career characterized by international engagement and by bilingual teaching, mentoring, research, leadership, and service. I identify as a recovering prejudist; although my culture of origin fostered in me commitments of which I am proud, such as the power of the collective (e.g., *juntos somos más*), it also taught me to discriminate on the basis of matters such as phenotype. The road to recovery is a lifelong one.

The authors who have contributed chapters to this book, your *guías* on each of the *caminos* ahead, bring additional lived experiences and identities for a more comprehensive perspective. *Te invitamos* to bring your full authentic self on this journey to increase representation of views that might be missing.

DIME CON QUIÉN ANDAS, Y TE DIRÉ QUIÉN ERES

Settling on one singular term to collectively address a widely diverse population of bilingual Spanish-speakers *es todo un reto*. Although we acknowledge the ways many terms fall short of their intended goal, we have decided to use the terms “Latinx” and “Latine” interchangeably to refer to individuals living in the United States who have roots in Latin America, the latter understood here broadly and encompassing the Caribbean, México, Central America, South America, and their corresponding diasporas. Our decision to use “Latinx” and “Latine” are grounded in values of equity and justice and aims to promote inclusivity across intersecting identities.

From your personal and/or professional experience you may already understand that many terms have been used interchangeably to denote a people’s connections to the Spanish language and Latin America. A history of the evolution of these terms as used in the United States is presented in Chapter 1. The term you use for yourself and for the Spanish-speaking communities you accompany is important and requires an intentional, informed approach. The selection of this term is a fluid process that might generate a changing identification with different terms over time on the basis of additional perspectives that inform your worldview. Furthermore, clients, participants, and communities are likely to have their own ways to identify themselves; dialoguing to understand their views of themselves is paramount. Most importantly, our *camino* forward recognizes that multiple identities need to be honored in this process. We acknowledge the limitations of many of these terms that intend to unite yet perpetuate the exclusion and erasure of a range of experiences, identities, and heritage. Similarly, experiences with multilingualism are varied throughout Latinx communities and transcend the Spanish–English binary. Although the scope of this book is limited to Spanish–English bilingualism as the authors’ areas of expertise, *esperamos* that the tips and themes reviewed in the chapters are relevant to and helpful across multilingual Latinx communities.

EL CAMINO HACIA ADELANTE

Social responsibility, justice, equity, and intentionality serve as foundations for this book as we identify salient issues that truly competent bilingual scientists–practitioners need to keep in mind when working with Spanish-speaking populations in the United States within the context of oppressive and colonized–colonizing systems (e.g., academia, research, health care).

In this vein, the contributing authors identify concrete avenues for advocacy in recognition of these issues in all settings that are bound to thrive from the participation of Spanish-speaking communities. To achieve radical comprehensiveness, this discourse must include colorism, racism, and anti-Blackness in Latin American cultures; liberation psychology; and centering U.S. Latinx and bilingual Spanish-speaking *comunidades*, including bilingual Spanish-speaking mental health scientists and practitioners. In this capacity, we invite you to consider the relevance and importance of affirming spirituality and decolonizing curricula and practice, exploring borderlands and *Latinidad*, and centering Afro descentance and Indigeneity. The chapter authors share from a lens of personal experiences and wisdom aimed at validating, affirming, and inspiring the reader while celebrating the power of a bilingual identity. Too often these central and critical themes, which can amount to *vida o muerte*, are relegated to add-on topics, as if though theory and practice exist in a vacuum, free of oppression. Accordingly, we bring attention to liberation and centering Blackness and Indigeneity early in this book, in Chapter 4, to contextualize the *caminos* that lie ahead.

We also include action plans, reflective exercises, and *consejos* to assist with your *caminos*. Be it through elders, *hermanes mayores*, *alebrijes*, or *ángeles*, these *guías* are important characters in our *historias*, especially in the United States. We hope to accompany you, our reader, on your journey, with the intent of offering *sabiduría*, *apoyo*, y *fortaleza*. *Reconocemos que este camino es difícil* and often is met with a multitude of barriers related to systemic oppression, racism, and prejudice. Therefore, we seek to empower and bestow on you the generational and collective knowledge that has been acquired over time. *Te invitamos a este proceso* of learning and unlearning, reflection and growth. *¡Pa'lante, pa'trás ni pa' tomar impulso!*

Our goals as editors, authors, and contributors have led to many nuanced discussions about you, our reader, and increasing access for bilingual English-Spanish-speaking communities and professionals. In meeting this goal and forging *caminos* we acknowledge the at-times erroneous overidentification between Spanish language and Latinx culture. Over time, Spanish, the colonizer's language, has become the *de facto* language in a particular region. However, we all know that the two can be mutually exclusive depending on the context. Speaking Spanish does not confirm *latinidad*, and vice versa. And yet it is our experience that for many people it remains fairly difficult to extricate these two from each other. You will notice on this *camino*, as outlined in the chapters ahead, as well as in your day-to-day life, that at times the conversation may veer from bilingualism and Spanish language to *latinidad*. Why is that? Although we do not have the answers, we note an intentional

effort to address bilingualism in these *caminos* while also sharing here a transparent challenge in separating language from culture. Our endeavor that lies ahead is one that actively welcomes non-Latinx bilingual English- and Spanish-speaking providers while also maintaining mindfulness of power and privilege and the underrepresentation of Latinx communities and their intersecting identities in higher education. It is our duty as mental health scientists–practitioners to pioneer efforts to increase and improve equitable mental health care and pertinent linguistic access for Latinxs. This includes buttressing training for all bilingual providers; identifying *caminos* through standards of training, care, and advocacy; and building upon existing foundations. So, *adelante—que aquí cabemos todes*.