

Critical guidelines for U.S.-based counselor educators when working transnationally: A Delphi study

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Abstract:

U.S.-based counselor education faculty increasingly are participating in transnational experiences, such as global research and study abroad. The purpose of this study was to develop guidelines for U.S.-based counselor educators when working transnationally. Using Delphi methodology, 69 consensus guidelines were developed from an expert panel. Implications for the counseling profession are discussed.

Keywords: International | Counselor education | Guidelines | United States

Article:

Introduction

Counseling is expanding and professionalizing in many countries around the globe (Lorelle et al. 2012; Leung et al. 2009). Concurrent with this global expansion, U.S.-based counselor educators (USCEs) increasingly are working with other helping professionals and faculty peers around the world for mutual learning and support. USCEs participate in these partnerships and experiences through diverse activities such as consultation, teaching, service, and research. Importantly, USCEs often are the individuals in the U.S. initiating and leading this global activity in the profession (Leung et al. 2009; Tang et al. 2012).

Despite this emerging transnational activity, guidelines or best practices for this distinct type of professional work are lacking for USCEs. As with any new type of professional experience, it remains important in our profession to have guidelines that help clarify effective or ethical practice, such as multicultural counseling competencies (Ratts et al. 2015) or counseling research best practices (Wester and Borders 2014). Due to the newness of transnational professional work for many USCEs, the varied practice of helping around the globe (Draguns 2013) and the

historical and global dominance of Western theories of helping (Staeuble 2006), it is imperative to define and describe guidelines for counselor educators when working transnationally. Without any framework for USCEs, the profession likely will continue historical patterns that are unhelpful and potentially harmful to global communities (Mills 2014; Tang et al. 2012).

In this article, the term “transnational” will be used to encompass global professional work that is often conducted across (or “trans”) many different countries or regions, rather than solely between two individual countries (per the term “inter” national).

Evolving Professional Work

Overwhelmingly, domestic professional trends in counseling indicate more global involvement of USCEs (Leung et al. 2009; Ng and Noonan 2012; Tang et al. 2012). Some primary examples of transnational work by USCEs include study abroad trips, teaching, consultation, and research. First, many USCEs are using study abroad or immersion experiences with U.S. students (Barden and Cashwell 2014; Santos 2014). Oftentimes, these educational trips necessitate cultivating extended partnerships with non-U.S. helping professionals. Additionally, many USCEs teach or present in non-U.S. settings for varied amounts of time, ranging from educational trips of just a few days at a conference to longer-term teaching at another institution. Some USCEs develop collaborative partnerships individually or departmentally, while others might be in conjunction with larger professional organizations, such as the National Board of Certified Counselors in regard to, say, educational trips (NBCC; Leung et al. 2009).

Consultation and research are other ways USCEs interact with counseling professionals around the globe (Leung et al. 2009; Lorelle et al. 2012). Consultation, in this context, involves sharing knowledge and expertise for organizational development. Although consultation is often conducted through larger counseling organizations, such as NBCC, individual USCEs continue to offer this professional support (Hinkle 2014; Tang et al. 2012). In addition, as professional counseling and counselor education expand in many countries, USCEs increasingly conduct transnational research. For example, USCEs are conducting comparative research on counselor education (e.g., Buyukgoze-Kavas et al. 2010) and research assessing the applicability of traditionally U.S. or Western counseling methods (Moodley et al. 2013). This important cross-cultural research is likely to continue and expand (Draguns 2013). Also, in many counseling-related academic journals, internationally-focused articles are increasing in number due to global expansion of the profession and increased transnational work by many U.S. practitioners and educators (Hohenshil and Amundson 2011; Lorelle et al. 2012; Pieterse et al. 2011). Through these various professional activities, USCEs increasingly are involved in diverse global partnerships and experiences.

Cultural and Historical Considerations

Although these transnational professional experiences are often encouraged within the profession (Leung et al. 2009; Hinkle 2014), it is important to note relevant differences in helping around the globe, as well as the impact of colonialism on higher education and counseling.

A fundamental tenet of multicultural counseling is that people enter the counseling relationship with a diverse set of assumptions about the nature of professional helping, based on their backgrounds and experiences (Ratts and Pedersen 2014). These differences often are more significant in a global context (e.g., languages, local concepts of mental health, history of professional helping). Expressions of helping and healing can be very different based on context (Danziger 2006; Draguns 2013). For example, in many places institutionalized helping is practiced from the perspective of religious and/or indigenous belief systems, not from a secular viewpoint (Draguns et al. 2004). These differences in helping must be considered and honored as USCEs continue to be involved in professional transnational work.

It also is important to understand how knowledge has been shared historically within higher education. In much of higher education, U.S. and Western knowledge has been imposed on other communities and cultures with little regard or respect for local knowledge (Andreotti et al. 2011; Staeuble 2006). Some authors refer to this process as “McDonaldization” (Gerstein et al. 2009) or “epistemic violence” (Andreotti et al. 2011), both grounded in the assumption that U.S. or Western knowledge is superior and should be spread globally. The professions of counseling and psychology historically have operated from this paradigm, whereby Western counseling knowledge is imparted with little regard for cultural context (Gerstein et al. 2009; Mills 2014). Unfettered, one-way sharing of knowledge can override local healing systems (Staeuble 2006) and prevent indigenous solutions to mental health challenges (Danziger 2006; Mills 2014).

Because of these notable cultural and historical differences regarding helping and the expansion of USCE’s transnational professional work, it is essential to develop guidelines for USCEs as they seek to engage with other professionals around the globe. Although conceptual guidance for USCEs has been developed (Gerstein and Ægisdóttir 2007; Leung et al. 2009; Tang et al. 2012), no empirical research in this regard exists. Guidelines or competencies are a common way to provide an outline of effective or ethical practices within a particular profession (Borders 2014). Without such guidelines, there are few points of reference for those engaging in a particular type of work or counseling-related practice.

The present study sought to develop critical guidelines for USCEs in their transnational professional work. It was expected that those USCEs with extensive transnational professional experiences would be able to offer direction for USCEs with less experience. Due to the expansion of professional roles of USCEs and the global growth of the counseling profession, these guidelines will be a significant contribution to the globalizing counseling profession.

Method

The Delphi method is a common way to develop critical guidelines or competencies when there is a lack of research in a certain area (Powell 2003). The methodology uses a panel of relevant experts and is structured in a way that maintains anonymity while providing an opportunity for participants to evaluate and rate other participants’ opinions (Powell 2003). Two primary steps in a Delphi study are soliciting opinions through open-ended questions and rating and editing the representative statements by the expert panel. The final result is a list of consensus guidelines. In this study, the group of participants included in the study will be described as the panel.

Panel

As numerous researchers have emphasized, the strength of a Delphi study depends on knowledge and experience of the expert panel (Clayton 1997; Powell 2003; Wester and Borders 2014). Therefore, it was essential to construct a panel with significant transnational experiences in counselor education. To create a list of potential participants, the researcher identified USCEs with extensive international research, professional service, teaching, consultation and/or other professionally-related experiences evidenced in curriculum vitae, departmental websites, or other professional association websites. The researcher intentionally sought to compose a heterogeneous panel with different types of global experiences that would add to the quality and depth of the results (Powell 2003).

The researcher only invited individuals employed as USCEs who had significant transnational experiences in two or more professional areas (e.g., research, consultation, teaching, or service). Very brief or singular transnational experiences (e.g., conference presentations) were not regarded as being sufficient for this study. This criterion was established to set a specific standard while allowing for a panel with diverse types of experiences.

In Delphi studies, the size of the panel is determined by the extent of the investigation and the availability of participants. Often, this decision is left up to the researcher (Powell 2003). For a Delphi study, the size of the panel can range from 5 to 30 participants (Clayton 1997; Powell 2003). The researcher here initially aimed to have 10–20 participants used to develop consensus. This range is consistent with other counseling studies (see Herlihy and Dufrene 2011; Wester and Borders 2014). Murphy et al. (1998) noted that there is very little evidence that increasing the number of participants has a positive effect on reliability or validity. In the current study, the researcher identified 30 individuals that met the determined criteria based on publically available professional information.

Potential participants who met criteria for participation in the study based on publically available information (from vitae, departmental websites, professional associations) were sent an email invitation to participate and encouraged to nominate eligible colleagues by forwarding the email invitation. A drawing for a gift certificate for those who participated in all rounds of the study was added to incentivize participation and reduce attrition. The researcher initially sought 20 participants for the study to allow for an expected variable attrition rate (18%–70%) with the Delphi method (see Doughty 2009; Powell 2003; Stone Fish and Busby 1996; Wester and Borders 2014) because of the time commitment required to complete the study's multiple rounds.

Participants

Thirty eligible faculty were sent email invitations to participate in the study, and 9 replied stating willingness to participate (for a 30% response rate). Although the target sample size was 20 participants, a total of 9 individuals actually participated in Rounds One and Two, with 7 of those continuing on through Round Three. This final participation rate was deemed adequate due to the limited amount of individuals in the field with extensive transnational experiences as defined in this study. A majority of the panel was male ($n = 5$). Eight of the 9 participants listed their ethnicity in the demographic data form. If multiple ethnicities were listed, only the first one

was reported to protect the anonymity of participants. The participant ethnicities were as follows: Asian, Chinese ($n = 2$), Italian, Indian, Latino/a, Turkish, and U.S. Southern. Also, the panel consisted of many foreign-born participants ($n = 5$). Eight of the 9 participants had published internationally-focused articles in peer-reviewed journals, and 6 of the 9 had held leadership positions in international counseling organizations. The mean age of participants was 46.3 ($SD = 12.0$) and the mean number of years as a counselor educator was 12.8 ($SD = 10.1$). The mean number of times the participants traveled outside the U.S. for professional work was 12.3 ($SD = 16.8$), and the mean number of years outside of the U.S. for the professional work was 2.5 years ($SD = 2.3$). Faculty rank ranged from adjunct professor to full professor (1 adjunct, 3 assistant, 2 associate, and 3 full). Diverse transnational experiences also were evident. Some examples were: teaching in a non-U.S. counselor education program, leading immersion experiences with U.S. counseling students, international research, and international consultation and presentations.

Procedures

Delphi studies typically have three to five rounds of data collection (Powell 2003). The first round is intended to collect general responses from open-ended questions about the topic. Within this round, a description of the term transnational (i.e., across nations) and examples of professional work (e.g., teaching, research, service) were provided. Questions for the panel were developed from a thorough review of relevant literature as well as a review of questions posed in comparable Delphi studies. Some examples of the 10 questions that were asked during this round were: “What makes a USCE well-qualified to engage in transnational professional work?” and “What do you believe is lacking within current transnational working relationships in counselor education?”

In Delphi studies, it is common to use content analysis to develop representative statements from the open-ended questionnaire (Powell 2003; Wester and Borders 2014). Therefore, the researcher, along with a co-researcher, used an inductive content analysis approach to analyze the participants’ responses (Krippendorff 2013). No a priori coding frame was used. Each researcher reviewed and analyzed the data individually and, subsequently, agreed upon representative statements that emerged from the data. The research team ensured that all ideas were represented and there was no duplication of ideas in the representative statements. Triangulation, frequency counting, and debriefing were used to ensure the consistency and accuracy of the analysis (Hays and Singh 2012). The resulting representative statements comprised all core ideas present in Round One responses.

For Round Two, the representative statements were sent back to the panel to be rated on a 1–7 Likert scale, with 1 indicating *Strongly Disagree* and 7 indicating *Strongly Agree*. Participants were instructed to rate each item based on the extent to which they agreed that a particular item should be a “critical guideline” in counselor education transnational work. Also, as suggested by Wester and Borders (2014), in Round Two participants were able to add new items, edit items, and provide rationales for scoring on each item. For purposes of analysis and rating, median and interquartile ranges (IQR) were used to understand the variability in responses. These calculations are common tools to determine consensus in Delphi methodology (Doughty 2009).

For purposes of this study, consensus was achieved when items met a minimum cutoff of a 6.0 median score on the 7-point Likert scale. If items met the consensus cutoff, they were retained as guidelines, provided that their IQR scores did not exceed 1.0. These cutoffs were chosen so that the consensus guidelines would represent both high agreement and low variability of responding. The resulting consensus items represent critical guidelines for counselor educators when working transnationally. Round Three involved rerating items that did not develop consensus in Round Two. Items that were considered non-consensus had an IQR of greater than 1.0. Because there were no non-consensus items after Round Three, another round was considered unnecessary.

Results

Round One Results

After the open-ended responding from Round One was complete, the research team conducted content analysis on the data. An example of an open-ended response was: "Counselor educators should be prepared for cultural and systemic differences; should be flexible and open to those differences." Another example was: "Work with colleagues or partners in other countries from the ground up - using counseling knowledge as a supportive tool but keeping with indigenous knowledge as the main driver." Seventy eight distinct items were developed from these open-ended responses using the content analysis process.

The researcher also developed categories in order to sort the items. The primary researcher used other lists of counseling-related guidelines, including the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MCSJCC; Ratts et al. 2015) and research competencies in counseling (Wester and Borders 2014), to aid in the categorization process. A total of 3 primary categories was developed with two subcategories for each primary category. To assess intercoder reliability of sorting the items into categories, Cohen's kappa statistic was used. A kappa value of 0.86 was achieved, indicating very high intercoder agreement (Landis and Koch 1977).

Rounds Two and Three Results

Round Two entailed having the panel rate the list of items from Round One. Of the 78 items, 68 items met the necessary cutoff for median and IQR (i.e., $Mdn \geq 6.00$, $IQR \leq 1.00$), displaying both high agreement and group consensus. Three non-consensus items from Round Two that were edited or added by a participant were resubmitted to the panel for rating in Round Three. One of those items was found to meet the necessary cutoffs for inclusion in the final consensus list.

Overall, the panel reached consensus on a total of 69 items from Rounds Two and Three (see Table 1). Many of the items that did not develop group consensus included ideas specific to a particular location (e.g., "Understands indigenous healing and counseling-related practices when working in a new context") or distinct USCEs' attitudes (e.g., "Values cross-cultural, comparative counseling research"). The only item that the panel agreed should not be included in the list (i.e., $Mdn < 6$, $IQR > 1$) was "Is aware that the developmental level of counselor education is different in different contexts." The next three subsections will outline the findings from the categories in the critical guidelines (see Table 1).

Table 1. Final results – median and IQR of critical guidelines

	Median	IQR
Category: Personal attributes and attitudes		
Subcategory: General		
Is committed to working transnationally, in general.	7	1
Is committed to developing longer-term relationships with individuals in a specific context.	7	1
Appreciates and respects cultural differences.	7	0
Is humble.	7	1
Is flexible.	7	0
Has a personal openness to share knowledge.	7	1
Has a personal openness to receive knowledge.	7	0
Has a personal openness to share resources.	7	1
Has a curiosity about learning others' worldviews.	7	0
Is aware of one's own power and privilege in transnational work.	7	0
Is cross-culturally competent.	7	1
Rejects the notion of transnational work as a vacation or tourist activity.	7	0
Rejects the urge or tendency to "work for" and, rather, intends to "work with" transnational partners.	7	0
Is aware that transnational work requires more than a multicultural approach.	7	1
Is aware of one's own personal and cultural worldview.	7	1
Is aware of one's own biases and cultural blindspots.	6	1
Is aware of one's reasons and intentions for working transnationally.	6	1
Is aware of one's own tendencies and preferences when working in a non-U.S. setting (e.g., food, sleeping, ways of communicating).	7	1
Is aware of others' perceptions of one's actions.	6	1
Is willing to learn local customs and language.	6	1
Recognizes the limits of one's own values and beliefs in another context.	7	1
Recognizes the potential of being exploitative when working transnationally.	7	0
Has experience working with diverse populations.	6	1
Considers personal readiness before engaging in specific transnational work.	6	1
Is willing to be influenced and affected by transnational experiences.	7	1
Has a high tolerance for ambiguity.	7	1
Has a desire to serve others.	7	1
Is patient in the process of transnational work.	7	1
Values immersion experiences as forms of learning.	7	1
Category: Personal attributes and attitudes		
Subcategory: Counseling-related		
Is aware that one's counseling knowledge and research is often based in U.S. contexts.	7	0
Recognizes that there are many sources of counseling knowledge and expertise, not only the U.S.	7	0
Recognizes the importance of indigenous knowledge in healing and counseling-related work.	7	1
Is aware that their expertise in U.S. counseling might not be relevant, depending on the context.	7	0
Does not view transnational work as solely a way of expanding/spreading U.S. counseling knowledge.	7	0
Has a strong professional identity as a counselor.	6	1
Has had quality training in doctoral-level counselor education.	7	1
Is aware that different educational systems require unique applications of counselor training.	7	1
Is aware of cross-cultural, comparative counseling research.	7	0.5
Category: Context-specific characteristics		
Subcategory: Knowledge		
Understands the specific context (e.g., history, social practices, beliefs) when working transnationally.	6	1
Has knowledge of local cultural norms related to foreigners (e.g., what are expectations in a certain social context).	7	1
Understands how best practices regarding one's work depend on context (e.g., location, community, culture).	7	0
Understands how best practices regarding one's work depend on the nature of the work (e.g., research, teaching).	7	1
Has knowledge of overall global issues.	6	1
Has knowledge of global counseling issues and trends.	6	1
Has knowledge of appropriate teaching strategies.	6	1

	Median	IQR
Category: Context-specific characteristics		
Subcategory: Skills		
Actively learns about relevant non-U.S. counseling theories and histories.	6	1
Is able to work effectively with a translator when necessary.	7	1
Is able to determine the limits of one's skills and knowledge within a specific context.	7	1
Ensures that transnational partners know that their knowledge is valuable.	7	0
Communicates clear expectations around collaborative activities (e.g., authorship on a manuscript).	7	1
Communicates relevant professional ethics and legal issues with clarity.	7	0
Communicates cultural differences and bias with others in transnational work.	7	1
Listens and understands the local needs or desires.	7	0
Can work collaboratively with transnational partners.	7	0
Proactively reaches out to others in the new context.	7	1
Can identify and define the specific nature and scope of one's transnational work.	6	1
Invites relevant critique to U.S.-based knowledge.	7	0
Models equity (i.e., fairness/justice) in interactions.	7	1
Engages in concrete efforts in work (e.g., projects, meetings, advocacy activities).	7	0
Consults with relevant professionals before working in a certain context.	7	0
Can integrate multicultural competencies into a transnational context.	7	1
Can engage in advocacy in context.	7	1
Can engage in social justice work in context.	7	1
Category: U.S. counseling expertise		
Subcategory: Knowledge		
Understands the history, scope and nature of counseling in the U.S.	6	1
Has knowledge of the issues present in academic/professional literature about transnational work and U.S. counselor education.	7	1
Understands U.S.-based cultural worldviews.	7	0
Understands cultural bias inherent in U.S. counseling and counselor education.	7	0
Category: U.S. counseling expertise		
Subcategory: Skills		
Can communicate the nature and scope of the U.S. counseling profession.	7	1

Personal Attributes and Attitudes

This category contained the largest number of total items compared to the other categories. Items in this category describe individual characteristics of USCEs that participants determined to be essential when working transnationally. Ideas included in these items relate to values, beliefs, qualities, and awareness. Some of these characteristics were denoted as “counseling-related,” because they related directly to counseling practice or education. The items in this portion of the critical guidelines generally describe how best to approach transnational work, rather than distinct skills or knowledge.

Context-Specific Characteristics

This category describes characteristics that a USCE should possess relative to a particular context or location. The two subcategories are knowledge and skills, and items in this overall category specify knowledge and skills needed to work transnationally. Although some of the items relate to knowledge and skills unique to the counseling profession (e.g., “communicates relevant professional ethical and legal issues with clarity”), others describe more general knowledge and skills (e.g., “listens and understands the local needs and desires”). Although some items seem to be context independent (e.g., “has knowledge of overall global issues”), the

research team determined that practical implications of transnational knowledge and skills would be context dependent (e.g., how particular global issues impact specific communities).

U.S. Counseling Expertise

The final category includes items that are specific to one's U.S. counseling knowledge and skills. An assumption in the items in this category is that it is important to know about the U.S. counseling profession so that it can be shared with transnational partners. These items are congruent with items in other categories that convey the importance of information sharing and collaboration (e.g., "has a personal openness to share knowledge").

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to develop critical guidelines for USCEs working transnationally through the consensus of a relevant expert panel. Beyond the aforementioned categories, numerous themes were present in the resulting critical guidelines.

One construct that seems to underlie many of the guidelines is cultural humility. In the counseling context, cultural humility has been referred to as holding an other-focused rather than a self-focused stance towards clients that emphasizes counselor openness (Hook et al. 2013). Numerous items developed by the panel are related to the construct of cultural humility (i.e., active openness towards learning and adapting based on the specific context and transnational partners). This concept seems especially important due to the diversity of helping practices globally and the desire to avoid dominant and one-way relationships. There are parallels with these ideas and the "self-awareness" items in the MCSJCCs, such as openness to learning about other cultural backgrounds (see Ratts et al. 2015). Due to the nature of cultural humility, USCEs who exhibit this attribute might be better suited initially for transnational work or might be more effective when working globally. More fully understanding the cultivation of cultural humility within transnational work would be an important area of future research in the field.

A second theme present in the guidelines is awareness of one's positionality when in a certain context. Positionality refers to the conditions of an interaction or social experience (Hays and Singh 2012). Various items indicate the significance of how USCEs should reflect and consider their social location in relation to their professional partners (e.g., biases, intentions, power and privilege in relationships). Without intentionally reflecting on one's positionality, there is a risk of imposing one's knowledge and worldview on others, especially for USCEs. Positionality seems particularly relevant for contexts where there is a significant difference in culture and professional understanding of counseling. Other educational scholars have outlined the importance of recognizing and responding to one's positionality in transnational interactions through intentional self-reflection, research about the collaborating community, and dialogue with a variety of community members (Andreotti 2011). By doing so, it is hoped that one can gain enhanced awareness and knowledge about a transnational interaction and context. This purposeful awareness aims to develop more effective and relevant transnational working relationships and prevent abuses of power or cultural encapsulation.

Another theme that emerged in the guidelines is the importance of being competent to work in a particular context. Many of the guidelines describe how appropriate knowledge and skills are relative to the specific location (e.g., knowledge of cultural norms). In particular, some items note the importance of being able to engage in social justice-related work in particular contexts (e.g., advocacy) and communicate in ways that are understandable to one's partners (e.g., about professional ethics). These findings highlight the importance of emphasizing in U.S. counselor education that transnational work in the profession is highly contextual. Moreover, knowledge and experience obtained in U.S. counselor education might not be globally relevant. Therefore, building one's competence to work in a particular context would be important for USCEs. This personal development could be done through activities such as consultation with transnational partners, mentorship with more experienced USCEs, research about a context, and intentional reflection on one's biases about a particular context (Andreotti 2011). Relationship cultivation with transnational partners seems to be fundamental to this type of work. Such partners can give USCEs helpful feedback about their development in this contextually-specific work (Tang et al. 2012).

The importance of working in context relates to the next theme in these guidelines: collaboration. As indicated by many of the guidelines, the panel agreed that collaboration is fundamental to transnational work for USCEs, rather than taking a one-way, information-sharing approach (e.g., expert to novice). Many counseling professionals have noted the personal positive impact, as well as the importance of collaborative relationships within transnational work (Ng and Noonan 2012; Tang et al. 2012; Wang and Heppner 2009). Although collaboration is a value that is deeply embedded in the practice of counseling, adapting the practice to transnational professional work seems to take additional development and intentionality as indicated by many of the guidelines. To assist in that particular development, there exist interviews about the nature of transnational collaborations in the profession that highlight the importance of relationships and collaboration (Tang et al. 2012; Wang and Heppner 2009). These interviews emphasize the need to collaborate with transnational partners while taking into account various socio-cultural factors (e.g., national history, local professional development). Utilizing the guidelines from this study in conjunction with more descriptive experiences of transnational work (e.g., interviews) would outline what effective collaborations can look like within transnational work.

A final theme in this list is the importance of USCEs' counseling expertise. Not only was one of the categories entitled "U.S. Counseling Expertise," but other items indicate the counseling experiences, knowledge, and skills needed to work globally (e.g., knowledge of global counseling issues; quality doctoral education). These items indicate some education and experiences that USCEs could gain in preparation for transnational work. Interestingly, the counseling expertise noted in these guidelines did not seem to indicate the importance of being an expert counseling practitioner, but, rather, indicated the importance of expertise in other professional areas, such as knowledge of the history of counseling in the U.S. Overall, the themes present in these critical guidelines confirm the unique nature of transnational work in counselor education. The guidelines offer preliminary recommendations for USCEs when working transnationally.

Implications

Results from this study provide important insight into how USCEs can best participate in transnational work – an emerging phenomenon and trend in counselor education (Tang et al. 2012). These findings can be used to assess current transnational work within the profession, inform counselor educators about important considerations when initiating new types of transnational professional work, as well as improve training of future counselor educators.

Although assessment is an important element of counselor education, an extensive literature review revealed no profession-specific tools to assess transnational work by USCEs. Guidelines from this study have the potential to be used to assess current programming and transnational efforts. Just as multicultural competencies have been used to assess counseling practice (Worthington et al. 2007), these guidelines could be used to assess both individual and collective transnational work.

Due to the increasing nature of transnational interactions in counselor education, it is anticipated that more and more USCEs will participate in transnational work (Ng and Noonan 2012). Planning for these programs and partnerships is often a new professional challenge due to differences in one's background, training, and language differences in relation to transnational partners (Tang et al. 2012). Using the guidelines from the current study in the construction of such programs could help in the development of counselor educators as leaders in generating a climate for productive and ethical transnational work. For USCEs that have teaching, research, and service expectations as a part of their employment, there are numerous examples in the literature that display how transnational work can involve all elements of these areas, sometimes all at once (see Barden and Cashwell 2014; Gerstein and Ægisdóttir 2007).

Finally, the guidelines from this study could be used for educational purposes, especially in doctoral education. The critical guidelines could help future counselor educators be more aware about what transnational professional work might look like, what education or development it might require, and the elements of this work that are different than U.S.-based work. Other professional guidelines have similar purposes and implications (see Ng et al. 2012; Wester and Borders 2014). When counselor educators develop these characteristics, modeling them will be beneficial to counseling students and peers. The guidelines, therefore, can be used for assessment, planning, and educational purposes.

Important future research in this topic area will be to understand the perspectives of non-U.S.-based counselors and helping professionals on counseling-related transnational work. Because transnational work requires partnerships and collaboration, gaining the opinions of the other “half” of the various partnerships is essential. Additionally, future research could focus on further understanding the lived experiences of USCEs in their transnational work. Gaining a better sense of how transnational work has impacted USCEs would clarify personal and professional development in this type of work.

Limitations

As with any research, there are limitations to this study. First, the size of the panel was smaller than some would recommend. Nevertheless, it is most important in a Delphi study to have expertise and representativeness on the panel, in contrast to panel size (Clayton 1997). This study

had a heterogeneous expert panel in regards to background, experiences, and social identities (e.g., ethnicity, gender). Also, excluded from this study were other types of mental health professionals (e.g., counseling psychology faculty) and counselor educators that were not living and working in the U.S. Not including these groups in this study potentially omitted alternative and additional perspectives on transnational work in the counseling field.

Conclusion

Transnational work in counselor education continues to expand, and, yet, there has been limited guidance for USBCs in this unique type of professional work. Due to the complexity and diversity of transnational professional work in counselor education (Tang et al. 2012), the guidelines from this study clarify and distill the most important elements to consider for ethical and culturally-competent practice when working transnationally.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest: The authors declared that they have no conflict of interest.

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