

Global Partnerships: Bringing the World to Your University

Douglas R. Tillman¹, David² D. Hof, Kiphany³ Hof, Kylie Surmeier⁴

Jason Dillard⁵, and Meghan Rockefeller⁶ Aistė Pranckevičienė⁷

Auksė Endriulaitienė⁸, Rasa Markšaitytė,⁹ Kristina Žardeckaitė-Matulaitienė

Abstract

Explored in this article is a model for the creation and maintenance of an international collaboration between universities in the area of mental health. A step-by-step process is described followed by its real life application to a joint research study currently underway. Finally, the implications of such a model are explored to minimize mistakes and enhance the positive effects of international collaboration for students, faculty, and university administration.

Keywords: International, mental health, partnerships, global

Global Mental Health Partnerships

As the field of mental health continues to grow and change, the boundaries of state and country are expanding to include international partnership to foster both the growth and development of students through collaborative learning opportunities. As we reviewed the literature to find guidance in the process of working with international partners, we discovered a lack of research in the area specific to mental health. It is our hope that by creating and presenting a GLOBAL model of Mental Health Partnerships, others may benefit from an established process and a dialog might begin to further develop guidance for future partnerships. While there are organizations that are currently promoting volunteerism and collaboration in international mental health such as The Movement for Global Mental Health, International Mental Health Collaborating Network and Partners for Mental Health (Movement for Global Mental Health, International Mental Health Collaborating Network, & Partners for Mental Health) the GLOBAL model is intended to promote and create international partnerships independent of outside organizations primarily for the purpose of creating student learning opportunities to include research, training and collaboration. Currently, groups such as the American Counseling Association, American Psychology Association and National Association for Social Workers voice a need for global partnerships (Interest Networks, Nastasi, 2012, 2014, Reardon, 2013, & Shallcross, 2013) however we could not find any articles outlining or presenting a process of global partnership from the fields of counseling, psychology or social work. Furthermore, we did not find a training model for students for global partnership in counseling, psychology or social work.

¹ faculty member in the Department of Counseling & School Psychology at the University of Nebraska Kearney

² professor at the University of Nebraska at Kearney in the Department of Counseling and School Psychology

³ licensed independent mental health practitioner currently working as the Associate Director at UNK Counseling

⁴ Graduate student in the Department of Counseling & School Psychology at the University of Nebraska Kearney.

⁵ Graduate student in the Department of Counseling & School Psychology at the University of Nebraska Kearney.

⁶ Graduate student in the Department of Counseling & School Psychology at the University of Nebraska Kearney.

⁷ Medical psychologist and researcher at Neuroscience Institute, Laboratory of Clinical Research, Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, Lithuania.

⁸ Professor of Organizational psychology at Vytautas Magnus University.

⁹ assistant professor of Psychology at Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania.

This article introduces GLOBAL (Generating Goals, Linking Partners, Organizing, Building Relationships, Acquire Resources, and Learning and Adapting) as a model to help others create international partnership. Additionally, the authors wish to share the history of their international connection and an example of the GLOBAL model in action. Lastly, implications are discussed based on the authors' experiences with international collaboration.

History

The International Collaborative Research Initiative (ICR) began 12 years ago and has evolved from a simple memorandum of understanding into a robust relationship between the University of Nebraska Kearney and Vytautas Magnus University, in Kaunas, Lithuania. During this time, a twice yearly symposium has been held sharing student and faculty research. At this symposium, an average of 7-8 student research presentations occur, along with a faculty research presentation. Additionally, a co-owned journal, *The International Journal of Psychology: A Biopsychosocial Approach*, was launched. This journal houses all abstracts presented at the international conference, as well as an average of five peer reviewed articles from authors around the globe. Over these 12 years, this partnership has included many visits to each country which allows for presentations, research and learning opportunities for both faculty and students. Most recently this partnership joined in a grant funded research project between the universities in the US and Lithuania focusing on the stigma of mental illness: "Stigma of mental illness: Attitudes and their importance for professional performance of psychologist and social workers in USA and Lithuania". This research is funded by a grant (No. MIP-005/2015) from the Research Council of Lithuania.

Global model

The GLOBAL model was formed to provide direction for individuals wishing to create international partnerships to promote shared research and learning opportunities for students and faculty in the mental health field. There are six stages represented in the global model including Generating Goals, Linking Partners, Organizing, Building Relationships, Acquire Resources, and Learning and Adapting. The following is a description of each area followed by specific examples from the authors' collaborative partnership.

Generate Goals

As an institution, carefully consider your student, faculty and employee population to determine what needs might be met through an international partnership. Based on the needs determined, generate a set of short-term and long-term goals that could enhance student, faculty and employee research and learning opportunities. It is these goals that will assist with the direction of the partnership and begin the formalized linking to take place. While creating your goals, be realistic, specific and measurable, especially if seeking outside funding for your project.

International Collaborative Research Project

The goals of the present collaborative research project were identified early on in the process to be ones with a research and presentation emphasis. Although the relationships that were built with the ICR served as the foundation for the present study, we veered from a general goal of supporting student research. We identified goals of securing a grant, conducting international simultaneous research, presenting, and publication. This focus on a shared vision for the partnership assisted greatly with its successful evolution. Looking back, it may have been beneficial to be far more specific with our goals, especially with the outcomes from the project.

Linking Partners

Begin linking partners together. Lay out a plan to begin exploring possible international partners. Take steps to reach out to these programs or organizations to determine if there is an interest to join in an international partnership and if there may be common goals that can be achieved through the partnership. Take time to explore the goals of each institution to ensure there is a shared vision for the future. Once a link has been formed, it may be helpful to create a document that describes the shared goals for the partnership.

International Collaborative Research Project

In determining who would be involved in this study, each side had their own individual process to arrive at who the contributors would be in each country. The team in the US was formed by those with an interest in furthering the study, which served as the foundation for the present partnership. Once the teams of researchers in the US and Lithuania had been formed it was time to begin linking and identify tasks to complete. Initially, email served well for this with the US contingent beginning the IRB process, while the Lithuanian contingent began researching

instruments to comprise the data gathering portion of the project once ready. Following this step, we began to utilize Skype for periodic check-ins on progress, however, with the number of researchers, and eight hour time difference, email continued to serve as a valuable tool. We found that it is also important to be alert to the potential that the University's email security and firewalls may pose. The US side of the study experienced difficulty at times, with university email system seeing attachments to emails from foreign senders as a security risk. When this happened, the messaging function of Skype served as a text messaging type communication tool.

Highlighting the value of conference attendance, in July of 2014 the International School Psychology Association conference was held at Vytautas Magnus University, in Kaunas Lithuania. At that time, the primary author first met members of the Lithuanian team and a discussion about research interests took place. Earlier that year, the primary author co-published a study on mental health stigma (Hof, Bishop, Hof, Dinsmore, Chasek, & Tillman 2013), and that peaked an interest. Following the initial linking at the International School Psychology Association conference, these individuals corresponded regularly, staying in touch. As grants became identified and the project moved from the idea to implementation phase, more and more researchers were brought into the project who had skills and abilities with the subject matter, grant writing skill, and/or a general interest in international research.

Organizing

Organizing times, meeting dates and methods of communication to further explore and establish common goals between partners is essential. Determine who will be leading the partnership at each site and what other roles will be necessary to fill to sustain the partnership. Set departmental, university, and organization meetings to secure any needed permission, which may also include formal written agreements. It will be these leaders at each site that have the responsibility to move the project forward. Lastly, establish and solidify methods of communication.

International Collaborative Research Project

The process of deciding which University would lead the project was an important one. Very early on, the Lithuanian research team identified a potential grant to complete the research under, which they led the application of. It was also apparent that, in order for the findings of the research to have the desired impact, it would be vital to have IRB approval from a US University. There were multitude issues that emerged in this phase, which will be discussed later. Suffice it to say, effort extended by both sides was nearly equal. In pursuing international research, it is also vitally important to be sure the goals of the partnership are supported at the department, university levels and organization levels. This work tends to be noticed in many ways and will be utilized as proof of progress on all levels in the University system, however, they must know about them first in order to support the accomplishments.

The current project was fortunate to have connections with the two universities and a Memoranda of Understanding. Others beginning this work may wish to complete this step as well, along side, the research taking place. In addition, the organizing phase of the project was conducted primarily via email, which served everyone well. The US institution began the dialog proposing a multitude of different items to consider such as grant writing, IRB approval, survey construction, data analysis, and finally authorship. The email format provided for clear expectations, access to previously agreed upon decisions, and ease of navigating language barriers as researchers whose second language was English could discuss in their first language then communicate in English. The barriers of attachments discussed earlier were encountered in this phase periodically. Securing IRB approval was a significant challenge for this study. A decision was made by all researchers to have the US University oversee the ethical implementation of the research. The first hurdle to overcome was the completion of CITI training. In order to gain IRB approval, all researchers (Lithuanian included) needed to complete the English based training. The Lithuanian researchers are skilled and proficient in English, but it is a second language for them, and the task was a significant one. In order to gain IRB approval, the next hurdles to overcome was the informed consent and instrument for data collection. Since the informed consent and data collection will take place in both English and Lithuanian, these forms needed translated (see appendix b and c). Finally, a certificate of translation needed completed verifying the credentials of the individual doing so (primary author from Lithuania) (see appendix d). The lessons learned during the IRB approval phase of the study were profound. The process was a cumbersome one spanning from March to June of 2015, and perhaps highlights why more international synchronous research does not take place.

Building Relationships

Build relationships both with the partnering organization, with financial supporters and decision makers at your organization or institution. It is also important to seek permission and/or support for international collaborations from administration at the department, university and organization levels. Funding sources often ebb and flow requiring different individuals, at different administrative levels, to make decisions. Since cultural differences can arise, regular contact with your partners is imperative, allowing opportunities to explore and understand differences. Additionally, building relationships with individuals that can help secure funding for your project can be very helpful.

International Collaborative Research Project

The partnership experienced times of great progress, especially when face-to-face conversations and ideas could be shared. The sharing of one another's culture can only be fully experienced by immersing within it. This said, the financial expense involved in international travel forced the partnership to examine ways to meet this need via technology. For the normal day-to-day conversations regarding minor communication, email sufficed. It also allowed the team on each side to read, process, meet, and respond to the needs at that particular point in time. Still for other times, email fell short. The authors found extreme utility in video conferencing for times of too much material to discuss, or everyone felt a need to see our friends and colleagues from the other side. Several platforms were attempted for this video conferencing. First, high-end distance learning equipment was attempted connecting University to University. With higher and higher levels of computer hacking protection, this form of video conferencing proved to be grossly unpredictable. The video conferencing tool that worked without fail was the free version of Skype.

Acquire Resources

Acquire funding through the department, university and organization to support travel, research and learning opportunities. This may include securing grant money to offset any short falls in funding needs. Also to be considered is technology needs, time requirements, and possibility support worker help.

International Collaborative Research Project

In November of 2014, the Lithuanian researchers identified a grant with potential to build on the previous study from the Lithuanian Research Council which would allow for travel for planning, data gathering, and presentation of the findings on a international scale. A formal proposal was constructed by the Lithuanian researchers, however before submission, and formal linking of the institutions was required (see appendix a). By early December 2014, the grant application had been submitted, and in March of 2015 the grant was awarded beginning July 2015 to March 2018. While awaiting the results of the grant application, the researchers began the construction of the instrument to be used for the study. Given the uncertainty associated with grant funding, it is important to diversify resource streams. All researchers have been watchful for any sources of support to accomplish the goals of the project previously discussed as securing a grant, conducting international simultaneous research, presenting, and publication. Some examples include university faculty research grants, departmental and college travel allowances, and personal researcher finances to meet shortfalls.

Learn and Adapting

Learn what worked and adapting to what did not work. Be willing to recognize differences and compromise when needed. Make sure, when goals have been achieved, to share updates with funding sources and decision makers. Do not be afraid to make changes that have the potential to benefit the project. Be sure the goals of the project are driving the decision making process and not individual agendas. At this point, reevaluate to determine if new participants or partners would benefit the project. People change, goals change and interests change. This is a natural part of any partnership.

International Collaborative Research Project

Presently, our study is in this phase. That said, projects such as this tend to create new opportunities. When visiting, face-to-face conversations moved to other ideas, potentials, and interests for future research. Also, this research connection led to a separate grant for travel and honorarium to present a workshop. All researchers have expressed interest in continuing the collaboration and accomplishing more together.

Implications

As our student populations continues to become more diverse and our expectation for our student's knowledge and skills continues to grow and develop having a global impact, there is a need to provide more direction in the process of creating global partnerships and international opportunities for counselors, students and educators. This GLOBAL model provides direction for individuals and training programs looking to provide more guidance. It is hoped that by providing a step-by-step process, an individual would feel more confident to engage in global partnership whether that be for research, advocacy initiatives or learning opportunities. Since there is little literature published in the area counseling, psychology and social work specific to global training models, the authors understand that this may be just a starting point. However, the authors do feel this model is open to adaptation to both the specific needs of the individual and/or the program. It is our hope in writing this article that the conversation advances around the need for global partnerships and training in this area.

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Appendix A

Partner's AGREEMENT to participate in the project

.....
(Date)

.....
(Place)

I, name and surname, the psychology professor from University of Nebraska at Kearney (United States of America), agree to be collaborative researcher in the Researcher team's project "***Stigma of mental illness: Attitudes and their importance for professional performance of psychologist and social workers in USA and Lithuania***", if it will be funded by Research Council of Lithuania. The leader of the project will be Assist. Prof. Aistė Pranckevičienė (Vytautas Magnus University).

.....
(Signature)

.....
(Name, Surname)

Appendix B

**Informed Consent**

Doug Tillman, Ph.D.

David Hof, Ed.D.

Aiste Pranckeviciene, Ph.D.

Kristina Žardeckaitė-Matulaitienė, Ph.D.

Title of the Study: Attitudes towards mental illness and their importance for professional performance of psychologist and social workers in USA and Lithuania. You are invited to participate in a research study. The information below is provided to assist you in your decision to participate. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the investigators.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to have a cross-sectional students sample (psychology, counseling, social work and general for comparison) to show the dynamics of attitudes towards mental illness from the beginning of the studies to the graduation. We also want to gather a sample of professionals (psychologist, counselors, and social workers) to evaluate mental illness attitudes in the "real life" environment. We hypothesize that attitudes towards mental illness might be related to professional performance, job satisfaction as well as negative job related feelings. Lastly, participants will be from the United States and Lithuania.
Time to complete study: approximately 20 minutes

Research Participants: We are seeking responses from practicing psychologists, counselors, and social workers, as well as, current students in psychology, counseling, social work, and various other programs in Nebraska (US) and Lithuania, ages 19-70.

Procedures: Should you agree to participate you will be asked questions about your comfort, perceived controllability, opinions, reactions toward seeking help from mental illness, and about professional performance, job satisfaction as well job related feelings. At the bottom of this page you can indicate your willingness to fill out this survey. All survey responses are anonymous, and the investigators will have no identifying information about you.

Confidentiality: Research data will be retained for a period of 5 years at the university in which it is obtained (UNK or VMU), at which time it will be destroyed. No identifying information will be gathered on any participant. During this time, all records will be double locked.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for their participation in this research project.

Risks and Discomforts: There are no more than minimal risks and discomforts associated with this project.

Benefits: *Potential Benefits to the Subject:* The participants may gain knowledge regarding attitudes towards mental illness and negative job related feelings that could benefit them in their personal and/or professional environments. *Potential Benefits to Society:* Participating in this research project may further the body of knowledge concerning attitudes towards mental illness and professional performance and satisfaction.

Opportunities to Ask Questions: If you have any questions about this research study please contact the primary investigator, Doug Tillman at 308-865-8360, the secondary investigator David Hof at 308-865-8320 or co-researchers in Lithuania Aiste Pranckeviciene and Kristina Zardeckaite-Matulaitiene at +370 37 32 78 24. The University of Nebraska at Kearney Intuition Review Board for the protection of human research participants reviews all non-medical research projects that involve human participants to ensure that participant's rights and welfare are protected. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study please contact the University of Nebraska at Kearney Intuition Review Board-For the Protection of Human Research Subjects at 308-865-8843. You may also write the University of Nebraska at Kearney Intuition Review Board at Founders Hall Suite 1000, Kearney, NE 68849.

Freedom to Withdrawal: Participation is voluntary, and individuals may choose not to participate at any time throughout the study. There will not be any consequences for participant's withdrawal from this study.

Agreement:

_____ I WISH TO PARTICIPATE. Clicking this box symbolize that you are willing to participate after reading and understanding the information presented in this form.

_____ I DO NOT WISH TO PARTICIPATE.

Appendix C



Informuotas sutikimas

Doug Tillman, Ph.D.

David Hof, Ed.D.

Aistė Pranckevičienė, Ph.D.

Kristina Žardeckaitė-Matulaitienė, Ph.D.

Tyrimo pavadinimas: Psichologų ir socialinių darbuotojų požiūris į psichikos ligomis sergančius asmenis ir jo reikšmė profesinei veiklai JAV ir Lietuvoje. Jūs esate kviečiami dalyvauti moksliniame tyrime. Žemiau pateikiama informacija, kuri turėtų padėti Jums apsispręsti, ar jame dalyvauti. Jei Jums kyla su tyrimu susijusių klausimų, galite kreiptis į tyrimą vykdančius tyrėjus.

Tyrimo tikslas: Šiame tyrime siekiama apklausti skerspjūvio principu sudarytą studentų imtį (studijuojančių psichologiją, konsultavimą, socialinį darbą ir kitas specialybes palyginimui), tam kad įvertinti, kaip keičiasi požiūris į psichikos ligas nuo studijų pradžios iki jų baigimo. Tyrime taip pat siekiama apklausti profesionalų imtį (psichologų, konsultantų ir socialinių darbuotojų), tam kad įvertinti požiūrį į psichikos ligas gyvenimiškoje aplinkoje.

Tyrėjai daro prielaidą, kad požiūris į psichikos ligas gali būti susijęs su profesine veikla, pasitenkinimu darbu ir negatyviais su darbu susijusiais jausmais. Tyrime dalyvaus respondentai iš JAV ir Lietuvos. Tikėtina, kad atsakinėjimas į anketos klausimus užtruks apie 20 minučių.

Tyrimo dalyviai: Tyrime kviečiami dalyvauti praktinį darbą dirbantys psichologai, konsultantai ir socialiniai darbuotojai, o taip pat psichologijos, konsultavimo, socialinio darbo ir kitų programų studentai Nebraskoje (JAV) ir Lietuvoje, amžius nuo 19-70 m.

Tyrimo eiga: Jei jūs sutiksite dalyvauti tyrime, jums bus užduodami klausimai apie tai, kaip patogiai jūs jaučiatės šalia psichikos liga sergančių žmonių, požiūrį ir nuomonę apie psichikos ligas ir jomis sergančius žmones, nuostatas į pagalbos siekimą susidūrus su psichikos sveikatos problemomis, o taip pat apie profesinę veiklą, pasitenkinimą darbu ir su darbu susijusius jausmus. Šio puslapio pabaigoje Jūs galėsite nurodyti savo sutikimą dalyvauti apklausoje. Visi tyrimo atsakymai yra anonimiški, tyrėjai neturės informacijos, kuri galėtų identifikuoti Jus kaip asmenį.

Konfidencialumas: Tyrimo duomenys bus 5 metus saugomi universitete, kuriame bus surinkti (UNK arba VDU), po to duomenys bus sunaikinti. Jokia asmens tapatybę galinti atskleisti informacija nebus renkama. Dokumentų saugojimo metu visi įrašai bus saugomi rakinamoje patalpoje.

Kompensacija: Už dalyvavimą šiame moksliniame projekte dalyviams jokios kompensacijos nebus suteikiamos.

Grėsmės ir nepatogumai: Dalyvavimas šiame projekte gali sukelti ne daugiau nei minimalų diskomfortą.

Nauda: *Potenciali nauda tyrimo dalyviams:* Tyrimo dalyviai gali įgyti daugiau žinių apie požiūrį į psichikos ligas ir negatyvius su darbu susijusius jausmus, kas gali būti naudinga jų asmeninei ir /ar profesinei aplinkai. *Potenciali nauda visuomenei:* Dalyvavimas šiame moksliniame projekte padeda kaupti žinias apie požiūrį į psichikos ligas, profesinę veiklą ir pasitenkinimą ja.

Galimybė klausti: Jei Jūs turite klausimų apie šį mokslinį tyrimą, galite kreiptis į tyrimo koordinatores JAV Doug Tillman, tel. 308-865-8360, antrąjį tyrėją David Hof, tel. 308-865-8320 arba tyrėjas Lietuvoje Aistė Pranckevičienė arba Kristina Žardeckaitė-Matulaitienė tel. 8 37 32 78 24. Nebraskos universiteto Kearnyje Institucijos priežiūros komisija, skirta tyrimuose dalyvaujančių žmonių teisių apsaugai, peržiūri visus nemediciniškus tyrimų projektus, kuriuose dalyviai yra žmonės, kad būtų užtikrintos dalyvių teisės ir gerovė. Jei jūs turite klausimų apie Jūsų, kaip šio tyrimo dalyvio teises, galite kreiptis į Nebraskos universiteto Kearnyje institucinės priežiūros komisiją moksliniuose tyrimuose dalyvaujančių žmonių apsaugai tel. 308-865-8843, arba rašyti University of Nebraska at Kearney Intuitional Review Board at Founders Hall Suite 1000, Kearney, NE 68849.

Galimybė atsisakyti dalyvauti tyrime: Dalyvavimas tyrime yra laisvanoriškas, tyrimo dalyvis gali bet kuriame tyrimo etape atsisakyti dalyvauti tyrime. Atsisakymas dalyvauti tyrime neturės jokių pasekmių.

Sutikimas dalyvauti tyrime:

_____ AŠ SUTINKU DALYVAUTI. Pažymėdami šį langelį Jūs nurodote, kad sutinkate dalyvauti tyrime po to kai perskaitėte ir supratote šioje sutikimo formoje pateikta informacija.

_____ AŠ NESUTINKU DALYVAUTI

Appendix D**Certificate of Translation****IRB#:****Principal Investigator:**

Doug Tillman, Ph.D.

Translator's Qualifications:

Aiste Pranckeviciene, Ph.D.

Field of Practice: Medical Psychologist, Neurosurgery Clinic, Hospital of Lithuanian University of Health Sciences.

Science and Teaching: Scientist, Neuroscience Institute, Laboratory of Clinical Research, Lithuanian University of Health Sciences; Lecturer at Vytautas Magnus University, Department of General Psychology

Statement of Translation:

I, Aiste Pranckeviciene declare that I am fluent in and understand the English language and the Lithuanian language. I am qualified to translate the study documents.

The Lithuanian document titled "Klausimynas_Stigma_LT_analogas_6_01" and dated 01 June 2015 is a true and accurate translation of the English document titled "Stigma Questions 5-11-15 Klausimynas_EN UNK Revisions" and dated 11 May 2015.

Translator's Name (Print): AISTE PRANCKEVICIENE

Signature

01 June 2015
Date