THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS INHERENT WITH HIRING CAREER COUNSELORS WHO ADVISE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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Abstract

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore how career services administrators at U.S. institutions of higher education perceive and describe their experience of hiring career counselors who advise international students. The perceptions and experiences of eight administrators from a mix of private, non-profit and research-based universities were explored. The findings produced three themes. The Multicultural Competence of Candidates theme revealed the importance and interconnectivity of culturally-based competencies in international career counselors. The Interview Formats and Questions theme provided insight into the types of questions and sample questions preferred by practitioners as well as the use of consecutive interviews and involving others in the process. The Complexity of the Hiring Process theme explored the impact of the administrator's own multicultural competency level as well as environmental and emotional factors involved and practitioner-recommended best practices. The findings of this study suggest that administrators could benefit from a) developing a strong understanding of the multicultural competencies related to this position and how their own level of competency affects the hiring decision b) utilizing an interview plan that includes job descriptions based on job analysis and interview questions based on positions tasks using behavioral and scenario-based approaches, and c) using an interview rubric which integrates multicultural competencies such as the version developed from the results of this study in tandem with the multicultural competency-based theoretical framework which guided this research.

Keywords: career services administrators, international career counselors, international students, multicultural competencies, and multicultural counseling

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Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction to the Study and Theoretical Framework ........................................6
  Background and context........................................................................................................7
  Rationale..........................................................................................................................10
  Research Problem........................................................................................................13
  Theoretical Framework..................................................................................................14

Chapter Two: Literature Review .........................................................................................23
  Historical Perspective.......................................................................................................24
  International Student Needs and Expectations..............................................................32
  Cultural Counseling.......................................................................................................38

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology .........................................................49
  Participants....................................................................................................................57
  Procedures....................................................................................................................59

Chapter Four: Analysis .......................................................................................................68
  Multicultural Competence of Candidates........................................................................71
  Interview Format and Questions....................................................................................86
  Complexity of Hiring Process.........................................................................................99

Chapter Five: Discussion and Implications for Practice ................................................117
  Key Themes Situated in Literature................................................................................119
  Recommendations for Practice.....................................................................................138
  Recommendations for Future Research.......................................................................143

References..........................................................................................................................145
Acknowledgement Page

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Dedication Page

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Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

Over one million students from around the globe come to the U.S. to study at institutions of higher education, and this number continues to grow each year. In the 2015-2016 academic year, there were 1,043,839 international students in the U.S., a 7 percent increase over the year before. International students come from all 196 countries recognized by the U.S. Department of State and attend 2,500 colleges and universities across the country (“Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange,” 2016). As higher education institutions aggressively recruit and admit students from other countries, the pressure to deliver on the student experience has become an important topic amongst U.S. higher education administrators.

International students come with complexities and expectations that present a unique challenge for university administrators (Arthur, 2004; Tidwell & Hanassab, 2007; Yang, Wong, Hwang, & Heppner, 2002). One area directly impacted is university career services. The relationship between international students and the role of university career services is a growing point of interest in terms of acculturation factors, lack of awareness of the U.S. job search processes, and strong interest in gaining employment in the U.S. (Baruch, Budhwar, & Khatri, 2007; Crockett & Hays, 2011; Heggies & Jackson, 2003; Sangganjanavanich, Lenz, & Cavazos, 2011). The expectation of international students to secure long-term employment in the U.S. after graduation is not in line with current government policies on work authorization for foreign nationals (Tidwell & Hanassab, 2007). Per Crano and Crano, this creates tension between the students who are concerned about their “temporary and restrictive” status (Tidwell & Hanassab, 2007, p. 314) and the career counselors who serve them. It is essential for higher education career counselors who work with international students to be culturally competent and have multicultural skill sets, attitudes, and experiences that support their success in this role. This
presents a challenge for the leaders in career development who interview and hire counselors for this position in ensuring a high performing candidate is selected.

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the experiences and gain the perceptions of university administrative leaders who interview and hire career counselors who work with international students. This research is intended to provide leaders with insight and best practices that can impact hiring practices, which can lead to improved programs and services for these students (Bimrose & McNair, 2011; Crockett & Hay, 2011; Nunes & Arthur, 2013). An integral component of this study is based on Sue and Sue’s (1990) research recognizing counselors who are aware of their biases, proactively work to understand the worldviews of others, and apply this awareness to developing strategies to support those they are assisting.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the research related to multicultural competence in counseling, in general, while providing insight into its application to career counseling, providing context and background to the study. Next, the rationale and significance of the study is discussed including implications for practice and those who will benefit. A positionality statement is provided to identify the researcher’s own biases and acknowledge the importance of neutrality in the research. The research problem, research questions, and key terms are presented to focus and ground the study. Finally, the theoretical framework that serves as a lens for the study is introduced and explained.

**Context and Background**

While there is significant research on the needs and expectations of international students related to career development and career counseling, there is limited research on multiculturalism in career counseling (Arthur & Popadiuk, 2009; Tidwell & Hanassab; 2007; Yang et
al., 2002). No research was found on the viewpoints of the leaders in career development offices who interview and hire career counselors. To create context around this problem of practice, it is important to look at the non-immigration status of international students while in the U.S., the westernized approach on which career development practices have been based, and the role of cultural competency in the field of counseling, in general, as well as career counseling specifically.

Most international students come into the U.S. on a F-1 Student Visa, which offers very limited work authorization after graduation. For the purposes of this research, an international student is a full-time student in the U.S. on a F-1 Visa studying at an accredited college or university enrolled in a program that leads to a degree (“U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services,” 2016). Optional practical training provides these students with the ability to remain in the U.S. for one year after graduation if they are employed. Unless they have been offered employment by a company who has been successful in providing them with a H-1B visa, F-1 students must go back to their home country after the optional practical training period ends. In 2015, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services received 233,000 H-1B petitions for its allotment of 65,000 visas for 2016 within one week of opening the filling period (“USCIS Completes H-1B Visa Cap,” 2016). This disparity demonstrates how unlikely the long-term employment opportunities are for international students who want to stay in the U.S. to work.

While the growth of international students is prevalent in the U.S., research indicates a lack of progress on the part of career development theory and practices to go beyond the Westernized approach built over 100 years ago based on frameworks developed by white scholars (Arredondo, Toporek, Brown, Jones, Locke, Sanchez, & Stadler, 1996; Tomlison-Clarke, 2013; Vespia, Fitzpatrick, Fouad, Kantamneni, & Chen, 2010). Even as the flow of
immigrants poured into the U.S. over the decades, career development theory has not been adapted to meet the needs of specific cultures beyond the American or westernized models (Bimrose & McNair, 2011; Watson, Duarte, & Glavin, 2005). Career advisors equipped with an in-grained sense of theories built on individualized and secular frameworks, must recognize that there is no one culture. Rather, a multiculturalist approach (Arthur & McMahon, 2005) is needed for counselors to effectively meet the needs of the international students they serve.

Previous research indicates the strong role that cultural competence plays in counseling professions in general (Arredondo et al., 1996; Barden & Greene, 2015; Worthington, Soth-McNett, & Moreno, 2007) and more specifically in career counseling (Byars-Winston & Fouad, 2006; Lee, 2012; Ward & Bingham, 1993). The various studies reviewed describe terms related to empathy, advocacy, and cultural sensitivity (Arthur & McMahon, 2005; Mahadeven, 2010). The importance of multicultural experience and training cannot be overlooked. In fact, Vespia et al., (2010) report that “multicultural competencies have long been viewed as essential for effective career counseling” (p. 66). Understanding different cultures, different career needs and values, and the individual career story for each student are key components in delivering a positive experience for the student. Research shows that career advisors must be well versed in assessing the level of acculturation for each student to deliver an appropriate level of needed services (Sangganjanavanich et al., 2011).

Augmenting these challenges is the lack of research on how to assess these characteristics in the hiring process. While Repetto (2008) comes closest to this in her work with the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance to define guidelines for the necessary competencies and subsequent training, little to no research has surfaced that assists practitioners in implementing hiring practices around cultural competencies in a continuous and
assessable manner. In her study of 141 international career counselors, Repetto (2008) found that although cross-cultural sensitivity was highly relevant in vocational counseling, thirty percent of respondents received little to no training in multicultural training. Therefore, this study seeks to understand how career development leaders who hire career counselors who work with international students can best discern potential high-performing candidates during the interviewing process.

Rationale and Significance

As the international student population continues to grow in the U.S., these students will continue to be a key stakeholder on university campuses for years to come (Kim, 2012; Spencer-Rodgers, 2000; Sangganjanavanich et al., 2011). Leaders in career development offices must respond to the needs and expectations of this student population who are often paying full-tuition and fees with little to no financial aid (Crockett & Hays, 2011; Spencer-Rogers, 2000). This demands that higher education administrators and career development practitioners dedicate themselves to research to develop the policies and resources in support of international students and their needs while on campus. This includes identifying the competencies required to effectively work with students from other cultures as part of the student services model. Better understanding of the perceptions of leaders in career development who hire counselors who support international students has implications for a variety of stakeholders including the students, the career counselors who serve them, and the leaders themselves. For the hiring managers, this research will have significance in the areas of hiring policy and practice as well as applications for training.

The lack of research on this problem creates a need for career development practitioners to better understand and address hiring practices in line with effectively serving this population.
This problem is important at institutions of higher education in the U.S. due to the large number of international students on-campus and the difficulty in hiring career counselors with the skills, abilities, and experiences appropriate for this position. This problem of practice has been discussed with chairs of several international student-focused committees organized by the National Career Development Association (NCDA), National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), and NAFSA: Association of International Educators (NAFSA). Since these discussions support the existence of this problem of practice at other institutions of higher education, the results of this research will have applicability and implications for practice at a broader level.

This problem of practice exists at colleges and universities of all types across the U.S. The purpose of this study will be to provide best practices and tools to make hiring decisions that are more likely to lead to sustainable employment and effective support to international students on campus. Additionally, this research will assist career counselors as they will be hired through practices that are more likely to determine the proper fit for that position. Ultimately, this research will support improved career counseling and relevant programs and services to international students.

**Positionality Statement**

During the first eight years of my career, my work focused on the recruitment of international students, travelling to over 30 countries including many areas in Asia. I spent significant time in Europe and the Mediterranean region. For five years, I lived and worked in Istanbul, recruiting students from all over Turkey, Cyprus, Greece, and Israel. Thus, I have a deep affinity for international students, especially those from Turkey because of my extended
stay there. The experience of being deeply integrated into a community so far from my original home has left lasting impressions on who I am and how I perceive others.

I expect my life experiences, especially that of living in another country, to benefit me in understanding the experiences of international students. As a leader in career development who hires career counselors who advise international students, I expect my experiences to assist me in understanding how leaders may respond and react during the interview process. The way in which participants respond reflects how they perceive the person interviewing them. At the same time, having a connection with or being a part of the group being studied does not necessarily imply freedom from biases (Briscoe, 2005). Individuals from around the world bring widely differing cultures and historical perspectives. My views certainly do not encompass the entire world so I will to be sure to not overgeneralize based on my experiences.

Because of my global experiences and affinity for foreign students, I am a strong advocate of supporting the needs and nuances of these students. I believe if U.S. universities continue to enroll high numbers of international students, there is an obligation to serve these students during the career planning and job search processes. My critical viewpoint shapes my interpretation of what schools are doing well in support of the international students they actively recruit, or in my opinion, not doing well. As Jupp and Slattery (2006) caution, it is important not to blame individuals for their problems, and so, I will need to put aside my criticism of U.S. higher education institutions and work towards research and resources that can assist in developing customized programs and services for international students by culturally empathetic career advisors.
Research Problem and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to investigate and better understand the experiences and gain the perceptions of university administrative leaders who hire and manage high performing career counselors who work with international students. This study will seek to answer the research question - How do leaders in career development perceive and describe their experience of hiring career counselors who advise international students?

Analyzing the perspectives of industry leaders on the profile of a highly effective career counselor will assist in describing the elements that are important in hiring practices. Because of this analysis and a comparison to research on the expectations of international students as it relates to career services offices, gaps in the hiring process will be uncovered. By reviewing current practices and gaps, the researcher will be better equipped to propose best practices in hiring career advisors who work with international students in better serving and meeting the needs of this student population.

Definition of Key Terminology

This section provides definitions, drawing from other works when appropriate, to provide clarification and focus on the terms as they pertain to this study to avoid any potential confusion.

Career Services Administrator- An administrator at a U.S. university or college who manages the hiring process for his or her department including international career counselors; other terms used interchangeably for this role include career services practitioner, leader, and director.

Culture - There are numerous definitions of this term. In this research, culture will be defined as the as values, beliefs, and behaviors commonly found in a group of people, which shapes how individuals communicate and interact with others (Deardorff, 2006).
Cultural Competency- The ability to be self-aware of the impact of one’s culture in interactions with others, to overcome inherent biases, and actively seek knowledge to increase one’s ability to effectively support the needs of others regardless of cultural differences (Sue, Bernier, Durran, Feinberg, Pedersen, Smith, & Vasquez-Nuttall, 1982).

International Career Counselor- A counselor who advises international students within the U.S. higher education environment on the career development and job search processes.

International Student- A student studying at a university in the U.S on a F-1 Student Visa.

Multicultural Counseling- Arredondo et al., (1996) defines multicultural counseling as the “preparation and practices that integrate multicultural and culture-specific awareness, knowledge, and skills into counseling interactions” (p. 43).

Theoretical Framework

A Multicultural Counseling Competencies (MCC) theoretical framework will be applied to this research. This framework, initially introduced by Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992), has served as the foundation for numerous cultural competency assessment models and tools in the counseling industry as well as related areas of healthcare. The following section will provide an in-depth look at MCC and its origins, lay out the foundation for how it was used to frame the current study, offer critiques from scholars who do not support the need for this theory, and present its connectivity to the research problem, questions, and methodology chosen.

Historical and Contemporary Foundations of the Framework

The work of Sue et al., (1992) can be traced back to initial research by Sue and Sue from 1977, on cultural barriers that lead to communication issues in counseling. Sue (1981) was the first to publish a model capturing multicultural competencies, which has grown from its infancy in the 1980s to being a central core of counseling standards in the 1990s (Ponterotto, Gretchen,
Utsey, Rieger, & Austin, 2002; Pope-Davis, 2003) to the basis for numerous training, self-assessment, and client-assessment instruments today (Drinane, Owen, Adelson, and Rodolfa, 2016; Sue & Sue, 2013) Essential to understanding this framework is the concept that the world of counseling was originally developed with a white, westernized perspective. Counseling, in general, as well as career counseling practices were developed by white scholars and framed around masculine and Western European values including individuality, self-determination, and a linear career development process (Vespia et al., 2010). It is due to this disregard for cultural differences that has prompted the need for more culturally sensitive counseling practices (Tomlinson-Clarke, 2013).

The MCC provides a framework for counselors to use in understanding how their own culture impacts their ability to provide an adequate level of counseling for students, clients, or patients from different backgrounds. The cultural background of the client must be considered to ensure the counselor’s own biases do not impede on those of the client. This approach is structured into three areas including self-awareness of attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, and skills, which lead to credibility, expertness, and trustworthiness; the counselor is seen as culturally responsive and respectful (Ahmed, Wilson, Hendrickson, and Jones, 2011).

As a result of the seminal work of Sue (1981), Sue et al. (1992), and Arredondo et al., (1996), others have adapted more nuanced cultural competency models including Balcazar, Suarez-Balcazar, and Taylor-Ritzler (2009), who applied it to rehabilitation workers. Collins, Arthur, and Wong-Wylie (2010) designed a reflective process for counselors to audit and improve their multicultural counseling techniques. In a recent study by Chu, Leino, Plfum, and Sue (2016), MCC was explored beyond its application to seek answers on its impact and effectiveness in counseling. By evaluating the underlying theoretical principles, Chu et al.,
(2016) made the case for why MCC works. Their work resulted in the mechanisms of cultural competency framework, which outlines how counselors skilled in MCC build context, establish an environment conducive to two-way interactions, and demonstrate culturally empathy.

Another adaptation of MCC that provides a relevant visual representing the framework (Figure 1) was created by Papadopoulos, Tilki, and Taylor (1998). Compassion is added as an element to the theoretical framework and like Sue et al., (1992), Papadopoulos et al., (1998) considers the counselor’s personal biases and beliefs in the first stage. Also, similar in approach is the second stage, which focuses on building knowledge to gain understanding. Where the models deviate is in Papadopoulos et al.’s (1998) separate focus on cultural sensitivity, which is combined with Sue et al.’s (1992) theory under beliefs and attitudes. Papadopoulos et al., (1998) also focus on culture competence as a stage, while Sue et al., (1992) refer to this as skill sets. Regardless of these differences, both models advocate for specific stages or levels needed in assessing cultural competencies.

Figure 1. Model for Developing Cultural Competence

(Papadopoulos, Tilki & Taylor, 1998)
Contemporary research on MCC is still prevalent in discussions on cultural relativism and cultural universalism; these discussions are centralized in the question of what role, if any, culture plays in counseling (Sue & Sue, 2013). It has been used in research on personal identity development and led to the development of a multidimensional model of cultural competence (MDCC) in counseling/therapy. This model goes beyond worldviews and competencies and incorporates individual, professional, organizational, and societal foci (Sue & Sue, 2013).

While most research on the topic of MCC relates to the self-reported data of participants, some research has incorporated the perspective of the client as well. Drinane et al., (2016) conducted a multimethod study to evaluate a client-rated version of the Cross-Cultural Counseling Inventory-Revised (CCCI-R) for validity. On one hand, the results show the need for further research on the validity of multicultural assessment tools; on the other, they provide support for MCC’s as a distinct component of counseling competencies, a view opposed by critics.

MCC has been endorsed by the Association of Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) since 1991, used by the American Association for Counseling and Development (AACD) and the American Psychology Association (APA) since the late 90s, and adopted by American Counseling Association (ACA) in 2003 (Pope-Davis, 2003; Tomlinson-Clarke, 2013; Worthington et al., 2007). A similar model is followed by NAFSA: Association of International Educators and referred to as the Intercultural Competence Framework (NAFSA, “Theory Reflection: Intercultural Competence,” 2016). In terms of application to career counseling, the National Career Development Association (NCDA) first developed their own version in 1997, which was revised and approved by the board in 2009 to support “appropriate
practice” in the career counseling of students or clients from different backgrounds (“NCDA Minimum Competencies for Multicultural Career Counseling,” 2016).

**Application of MCC to Career Counseling**

Cultural competency is an essential foundation of career counseling (Byars-Winston & Fouad, 2006; Lee, 2012; Vespio et al., 2010; Ward & Bingham, 1993). As suggested in the original works of Sue (1981) and Arredondo et al., (1996), the counselor’s awareness of his or her own cultural context and that of the clients are equally important, which challenges the basis for career development theory in the U.S. and its focus on individualism (Byars-Winston & Fouad, 2006; Yang et al., 2002). Scholars such as Hartung (2002), Marsella & Leong (1995), and Ponterotto, Rivera, and Seuyoshi (2000) have built a case for “context-sensitive career counseling” (Byars-Winston & Fouad, 2006, p. 187). It is through this approach of understanding one’s own culture and that of others that cultural differences can be resolved in the exchange between the counselor and the client (Chu et al., 2016; Lee, 2012; Yang et al., 2002).

Lee (2012) applied the NCDA’s Career Counseling Competencies as a framework for the basis of multicultural competency in career advising. Eight themes were identified including a) self-awareness, b) global literacy, c) foundational knowledge of career development theory, d) ethical knowledge, e) knowledge of multicultural career development theory, f) acquisition of cross cultural experiences, g) development of cross cultural career counseling skills, and h) multicultural career counseling competency. While there is some overlap in Lee’s (2012) last two themes associated with developing cross-cultural career counseling competencies and the need for multicultural career counseling competency, the essence of this research emphasizes
that “career counselors who are cultural competent have heightened awareness, an expanded knowledge base, and use helping skills in a culturally responsive manner” (p. 11).

Other research conducted by Vespia et al., (2010) applied MCC-related concepts in a study of 230 career counselors, which investigated self-perceived levels of cultural competency. Two multicultural competency assessment tools were used: the California Brief Multicultural Competence Scale (CBMCS) and the Career Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale (CCSES). The CBMCS is an adapted version of four other self-reported assessments focused on concepts of sensitivity and awareness of cultural barriers and multicultural knowledge. Findings suggested the amount of multicultural training, the quality of training, overall years of counseling experience, level of multicultural experience, and career counseling self-efficacy all play a role in the self-reported cultural competence of career counselors. A strong correlation was found between a counselor’s perception of their cultural competency and their overall counseling competence. The results of this study included implications for practice in multicultural training career counselors and the need to incorporate active practical experiences which provide application of the concepts (Vespia et al., 2010). While these examples focus on implications for training, application to hiring practices are also possible.

**Critics of Theory**

While many have seen the value in using MCC as a theoretical lens, this framework is not without its critics. Scholars such as Weinrach and Thomas (2002) and Patterson (2004), question the need to cull out cultural competencies and challenge that such competencies are necessary in all counseling situations and not just when working with clients, patients, and students from other cultures. Arredondo, Sue, and other scholars are condemned for making race a central focus of counseling as opposed to approaching each person as an individual (Patterson,
2004). By focusing on client differences, the significance of universal commonality in humans is ignored. Arredondo and Toporek (2004) address this claim in a rebuttal that race is one aspect of an individual’s identity that provides context for effective counseling strategies and techniques, which cannot be ignored. Effective strategies include understanding how personal biases within context can impact the counseling relationship.

Patterson (2004) favors a client-centered approach to counseling focused on client respect, empathy, genuineness, communication, and education of the counseling process. Counselor characteristics and attitudes are central to this approach and Patterson (2004) asserts this is missing in MCC. Yet, Patterson’s stance on this seems to ignore MCC’s reference to self-awareness of attitudes and beliefs, which could factor into his point. Arredondo and Toporek (2004) counter this argument with their focus on the application of interpersonal skills and interactions with clients that demonstrate an appreciation of differences.

Another critique of MCC points to little empirical research (Atkinson & Israel, 2003; Ponterotto et al., 2002). While research has been increasing, it is typically conducted through content analysis including scholars such as Ponterotto (1988); Perez, Constantine, and Gerard (2000); and Pope-Davis, Ligiero, Liang, and Codrington (2001). Worthington et al. (2007) suggest that research on MCC needs to move from “intuitive appeal to making meaningful contributions to the profession” (p. 352). Within the existing empirical research only a small number of scholars are producing most of the research. This has led to methods that are narrow in scope and dominated by convenience samples (Worthington et al., 2007). A counter argument to this criticism is supported through research on client perspectives found to be in line with counselors who have had cultural sensitivity training. Counselors who possess strong
multicultural competencies tend to demonstrate more effective counseling techniques and have positive outcomes with diverse clients as perceived by the clients (Worthington et al., 2007).

Critics further argue that there is little to no evidence of the validity of multicultural competencies in defining effective counselors; a critique that is acknowledged by multicultural competency scholars such as Arredondo et al., (1996) and Worthington et al., (2007). “There is no evidence that those who masters these competencies are or will be better counselors than those who do not” (Weinrach & Thomas, 2002, p. 20). Sue and Sue (2013) point out that some contenders believe “good counseling is good counseling” (p. 29). They disagree and suggest that counselors who do not acknowledge the impact of different lifestyles, cultural values, and worldviews in the role of counseling only have half the context in mind. Instead the cause or need for the counseling is central and cultural context is not considered. Several studies cross-referencing the opinions of clients being served provide evidence that cultural competencies do play a significant role in the effectiveness of counselors (Constantine, 2001 & 2002; Kim, Li, & Liang, 2002; Pope-Davis, Toporek, Ortega-Villalobos, & Ligiero, 2002). Clients in these studies described effective counselors in line with elements of MCC including knowledge, empathy, and related characteristics in line with credibility (Worthington et al., 2007).

Rationale and Application to Study

While the predominant application of MCC relates to general counseling roles, scholars state that this model provides applicability across other areas of counseling including its use in evaluating relevant competencies for career counselors (Arthur & Collins, 2011; Lee, 2012; Watson, Duarte, & Galvin, 2005). MCC provides a relevant model in examining the importance of cultural skills, knowledge, and behaviors in the role of career counselors working with international students. In this study, the phenomenon of interviewing and hiring career
counselors who work with international students was examined through the perceptions and experiences of the leaders in career development who hire for this position. MCC was used as an interpretive lens in structuring and guiding interviews with the participants to gain insight into the characteristics often found in high-performing career counselors and uncover techniques and best practices that can assist other practitioners.

Because of the complexities that surround the international students’ job search and career development process while in the U.S., career counselors need to be evaluated for cultural sensitivity and awareness beyond their skill sets and knowledge. This researcher believes that components of MCC can be helpful in providing the construct used to interview international career counselors and in generating specific interview questions to guide the interviewee in sharing deep and reflective examples of their multicultural skill sets during the hiring process. Career development leaders need tools or guidelines to support hiring practices related to international career counselors for such factors.

Conclusion

While related MCC research predominantly involves the self-assessment of career counselor cultural competencies, this study will attempt to capture the perspectives of the hiring managers instead. This will add to the scholarly research that exists from the counselor and client’s perspective in support the value of multicultural competencies. As the need for cultural competent career counselors continues to grow in line with the increased enrollment of international students in the U.S., leaders in career development need to understand the attitudes, behaviors, knowledge and skill sets necessary when making hiring decisions for this position. This study focused on the use of MCC as a tool during the interviewing process and relevant implications for practice in the hiring career counselors who work with international students.
In Chapter Two, the literature review presents an expanded view of relevant MCC research with an emphasis on its applicability to career counseling international students. Chapter Three describes the research design used in generating implications for practice. A phenomenological approach was used to gather deep insight and perceptions of leaders in career development who hire career counselors who advise international students. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 leaders in career development offices at U.S. universities who have experience in hiring career counselors who work with specifically with international students.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter One provided preliminary literature introducing the area of study, research problem, and significance of the study. This second chapter presents an extensive review of the literature representing the past and current state of relevant information further supporting the need for this study. Context is provided regarding complexities involved in delivering career services to international students and the implications of this in hiring well-suited and properly prepared career counselors. Northeastern University’s Scholar OneSearch was used to identify relevant research by reviewing sources cited in relevant books, articles, and doctoral dissertations found in databases such as ProQuest, ERIC, and Sage Journals. Google Scholar was also used. Key words used for this research included career development, international students, career counseling, career counselors, multicultural competency, and multicultural counseling.

As the growth of international students studying at universities and colleges continues to increase in the U.S., there is an imperative on the part of institutions of higher education to provide culturally appropriate student services. As international students often pay full tuition and fees, as it relates to career services, administrators in this area must ensure they hire career
counselors who can demonstrate skills and experiences in line with this position (Arthur, 2007; Nunes & Arthur, 2013). While literature has revealed some research on the role multicultural competencies play in counseling, there is little on the role it plays in career counseling (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007). Further, research does not exist in examining this issue from the perspective of the career services administrators who hire career counselors who serve international students.

The following literature review provides a conceptual framework for this research study. It is organized in three sections in support of the intended research topic. First, it reviews the historical foundation of career development in the U.S. and the fundamental influence of Westernized culture. Second, it examines the experiences of international students who migrate to the U.S. for higher education and acculturation factors that influence those experiences. This section also considers the associated needs and expectations of international students in line with career counseling services as well as characteristics and best practices of career counselors. Lastly, models of multicultural counseling and the role of multicultural competencies in relation to career counselors and their exchange with international students are considered. In conclusion, the limitations of the existing literature and implications for practice are presented in support of the purpose of this phenomenological study: to understand the experiences and gain the perceptions of university administrative leaders who hire and manage high-performing career counselors who work with international students

**Historical Perspective**

To focus the purpose of the study, it is important to understand the basis for career development offerings at U.S. universities. A historical perspective on the birth of career development in the U.S. is provided, and attention is given to the criticism that career
development theories and processes are grounded in a Westernized approach. Examining such criticism will help to build an understanding of the unique challenges and contextual influences related to the career counseling of international students in the U.S. Insight into the impact on the current state and future of career development within U.S. universities as it relates to serving international students is also explored.

The Origins of Career Development

Vocational guidance, known today as career development, originated in the U.S. with Frank Parson’s work in the beginning of the 20th century. Parson is known as the father of vocational guidance and established the framework on which career development theory is based (Brewer, Cleary, Dunsmoor, Lake, Nichols, Smith, & Smith 1942; Herr, 2001; James & Gilliard, 2003; Pope, 2000). He founded the Vocational Bureau of Boston in 1908 and authored Choosing a Vocation in 1909, both of which focused on assisting young people in “planning and carrying out their working careers” (Brewer et al., 1942, p. 2). Many scholars agree that the emergence of vocational guidance was made possible through a timely combination of immigration, industrialization, and urbanization, which led to dramatic societal changes aimed at improving living conditions and combating poverty. It was through this social upheaval that pioneers such as Parsons gained the impetus for their direction (Brewer et al., 1942; Herr, 2001; Pope, 1997). Contemplating this time in history, Brewer et al., (1942) states “It was no accident that vocation guidance was started in the United States of America” (p. 7).

Parson’s approach to vocational counseling included three main steps in a one-on-one process of self-assessment, occupational research, and what he referred to as “true reasoning” or the decision-making process related to evaluating and synthesizing the information gathered (Herr, 2001, p. 201; Patton & McMahon, 2014). The focus was on a person’s choice and not on
direct placement within an occupation, which was a common practice at the time (Pope, 2000). Although the vocational education movement was already in place as early as 1895, and state-supported industrial schools opened in Massachusetts and Wisconsin in 1905, Parson’s way of thinking was unprecedented at a time when education and career preparation were not in line. For example, a 1914 study of 4,000 Wisconsin industrial school students found no connection between a student’s area of study and the occupation that was eventually secured, per the Wisconsin State Board of Industrial Education (1914). Parson’s efforts were focused on making a direct connection between the student’s interests or “calling” and the need to gain information to support personalized occupational choice (Brewer et al., 1942, p. 11).

Other leaders saw promise in the work of Parson and expanded the understanding of vocational guidance. Meyer Bloomfield continued Parson’s work at the Vocational Bureau of Boston and added the concept of counselor follow-up to the three-step model of vocational guidance. Bloomfield’s counselors were responsible not only for guiding students, but also for following up on their progress and assisting with transitional adjustments as the students entered the workforce (Savickas, 2009). Another known scholar in vocational education, E.G. Williamson, built upon Parson’s work and established the Trait and Factor Theory in the 1930s. This theory operationalized Parson’s work by training counselors to provide self-assessment testing for students to determine their traits and aptitudes. Students were guided to occupational categories by using the results in a cause and effect approach (James & Gilliland, 2003; Patton & McMahon, 2014). Equally important in advancing Parson’s work was Jesse Buttrick Davis, a founding member of the National Vocation Guidance Association in 1913, and the creator of the first systematic approach to guidance counseling in U.S. public schools in the early 1900s (Herr, 2001; Pope, 1997; Pope, 2009).
Although there have been numerous other advances in the development of vocational guidance in the U.S., the change in terminology that began in the 1950s with Super’s work is important to mention. The terms “career development” and “career counseling” emerged in Super’s (1957) research on career patterns as connected choices throughout a person’s working life and eventually replaced the terminology of “vocational education” and “vocational guidance.” In 1951, Super proposed a new definition of vocational guidance centered around the “characteristics of the chooser” instead of “what is to be chosen,” thus diminishing the matching aspect as well as the emphasis on the beginning of the vocation journey as seen in earlier concepts (Herr, 2001). This era launched the development of numerous career development theories, professional standards, counselor credentialing, and assessment tools aimed at identifying an individual’s relevant career interests (Pope, 2000). By 1985, the National Vocation Guidance Association was renamed as the National Career Development Association (Herr, 2001; Pope, 1997).

In terms of international students, the career development related literature was very limited until the 1990s. Scholars such as Heppner and Johnston (1993) Heppner and Duan (1995) brought attention to the growing diversity of students on U.S. college campuses and the need for career centers to become more welcoming and relevant for students of different cultural backgrounds. At that time, the concept of cultural biases, worldviews, and cultural lens were first introduced to career services practitioners, who were urged to seek out exposure to diversity (Heppner & Duan, 1995; Heppner & O’Brien, 1994; Marsella & Leong, 1995). Other identified strategies included the hiring of diverse staff and culturally-specific departmental training (Heppner & Duan, 1995).
An early empirical study examining the impact of culture in the career counseling process was conducted by Leong (1993), who provided a framework to evaluate types of career counselors and their approach and the impact on international students. Leong’s seminal work, albeit with Asian American college students, sets the stage for numerous other studies on the cultural appropriateness of counselors in the career development process for international students. More recently, scholars such as Patton and McMahon (2014) applied Leong’s original framework in a chapter on career counseling systems and the need to incorporate “culturally appropriate goals” in session with international students (p. 380).

Career Development Anchored in Westernized Context

As noted by scholars such as Heppner and Johnston (1993) and Leong (1993), a major criticism of career development in the U.S. is its founding through a white, male, English-speaking Westernized approach built on the characteristics and experiences of the seminal scholars (Leung & Yuen, 2012; Patton & McMahon, 2014; Patton & McMahon, 2006). Career development theories and practices were developed to reflect the needs and realities of Western countries, mostly on the U.S. cultural notion of “by a people for a people” (Arulmani, 2011, p. 81; Leung & Yuen, 2012). Therefore, it is no surprise that the views of scholars in the Western world and related career development issues are at the center, creating bias towards Western values. Focus on individual fulfillment, self-actualization, and job satisfaction are paramount in westernized, more individualistic cultures.

Freedom of choice and an abundance of “opportunities for decisions and re-decisions” are at the core and in contrast to the lower or limited levels of choice in many other countries (Leung & Yuen, 2012, p. 78). For example, when considering Chinese students, changing majors or occupations as easily as American students do is not an accepted option and would
result in parent disapproval (Leung, Hou, Gati, & Li, 2011). Advising students in the same way without recognizing their individual differences can lead to culturally inappropriate and culturally insensitive practices (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2007).

Another concern is that career development theory and practices have become increasingly middle-class focused creating conflict with origins in social justice and providing support to the “privileged end of the continuum” (Watson & McMahon, 2012, p.152). This is demonstrated through research based on a restricted range of white middle-class people, and on scholars following assumptions that do not allow for in-group differences such as the socio-economic realities of minorities (Guichard & Lenz, 2005). Common in Western thinking, career theory is not contextualized to practices within cultures. Instead, emphasis is on personal-level variables. While some of the current models acknowledge the importance of cultural aspects, they do not account for the effects on the counselor, counselee, or the specific advising taking place (Leung & Yuen, 2012).

A lack of attention to culture and the cross-cultural validity needed to deliver contextual advising, without cultural reflection and adaptation, has led to career advising practices and assessment tools not applicable to diverse non-Western populations (Leong & Pearce, 2011; Leung & Yuen, 2012). Scholars refer to Euro-American dominance, a monopoly and dominance of models “anchored in Western cultural context” (Leung & Yuen, 2012, p. 76) that provides a one-way flow of theory and practice mostly from the U.S. to other countries (Leong & Pearce, 2011). The adaptation of models beyond Western cultures remains uncertain because of disregard for the importance of culture-specific influences and focuses solely on the individual, not environment or cultural context (Leong & Pearce, 2011).
Leong and Pearce (2011) urge scholars to consider the cultural validity of career theories and models “across cultural groups in terms of the construct, concurrent, and predictive validity of these models for culturally different individuals” (p. 67). Arulmani (2011) agrees and emphasizes that current theory and practices do not cater well to women and minorities and points out the underlying assumption that counselor and counselee are from the same culture. He argues for an immediate review of theoretical accounts to determine their potential for contextual and cultural sensitivity to non-Western people. Leong (2002) suggests the need to avoid “simple importation” of Western models to other cultures (p. 277). This belief is shared by scholars who lobby for a move from ethnocentrism, the belief that one’s own culture is the standard for evaluating others, towards multiculturalism, the embracing of other cultures (Leung & Yuen, 2012).

Scholars suggest a cultural accommodation or adaptation approach to allow for the generalizable aspects of Western models to be supplemented with culture-specific information (Arulmani, 2011; Leong & Pearce, 2011). By adding culture-specific aspects to the Western models to accommodate for cultural context, a more effective and relevant approach to career counseling can be realized. To do so will also require models to be tested in a non-Western culture to understand the characteristics of culturally relevant approaches.

While Multicultural Counseling Competencies (MCC), the main theoretical framework for this dissertation, is often criticized for having a limited amount of empirical research, a study by Kim et al., (2002) of seventy-eight Asian American college students offers some validation of the positive role of culture in counseling. Aligning with the Asian cultural preference for immediate resolutions, rather than a process of gathering insight, the study found that counselors who were proactive in establishing an action plan with students received higher satisfaction
scores. An example lies with the Systems Theory Framework of Multicultural Counseling developed by Patton and McMahon, which has been tested through empirical research with Australian, Chinese, and South African participants (Arthur & McMahon, 2005; Patton & McMahon, 2015).

A study by Arulmani (2011) of 484 high school students in Bangalore focused on applying a career preparedness framework to the Indian concept of Jiva in the career counseling of Indian students. Jiva, which means “life” in most Indian languages, acknowledges that most paths are nonlinear, making decisions is an iterative process, sensitivity to others and coping with unpredictability are essential, and the adage that one must give to receive (pp. 84-86). Arulmani (2011) found that the students who received the Jiva culturally contextualized approach demonstrated higher career belief patterns than those with the standard Westernized approach, thus supporting the theory that cultural context plays a key role in addressing the needs of clients from different cultural backgrounds.

Conclusion

In review, this body of research summarizes the historical significance of career development in the U.S. as a Westernized concept based on an individualistic approach. Many critics of career counseling theories and practices proclaim a lack of progress on the part of career services efforts to go beyond the Westernized approach built over 100 years ago based on frameworks developed by white scholars (Vespia et al, 2010). With student populations at U.S. universities becoming more and more diverse, scholars argue for cultural validity and competencies to be deeply embedded in career counseling practices. They also call for the adaptation of existing career counseling models or the development of new ones in meeting the unique cultural needs of international students.
International Student Needs and Expectations

International students come to study in the U.S. with a unique set of needs and expectations that include stressors above and beyond the common challenges generally experienced by college students (Crockett & Hays, 2011; Leong & Sedlacek, 1989; Reynolds & Constantine, 2007; Tidwell & Hanassab, 2007). To better understand these needs and expectations, it is important to consider the acculturation factors that influence the experiences of international students. While there are numerous factors to consider including age, education, gender, travel experience, and length of stay in the U.S., acculturation, in general, will be examined as well as the impact of cultural values and language barriers. Research was reviewed on international student expectations of career counselors in addition to effective characteristics of career counselors who work with international students. A common theme in the literature is shared focusing on best practices in meeting the career needs and expectations of international students.

Acculturation Factors

When examining what is known about international student expectations, it is important to consider the acculturation factors that influence these students. Acculturation is “the process of adopting and assimilating cultural traits or social patterns of the dominant group” (Crockett & Hays, 2011, p. 69). While scholars agree that the level of acculturation impacts the experience international students have in navigating their career development in the U.S., a variety of approaches have been taken to explore the impact. Research shows that students who have reached a higher level of acculturation are better able to assess their career development needs than those who exhibit lower acculturation levels (Baruch, Budhwar, & Khatri, 2007; Crockett & Hays, 2011; Heggies & Jackson, 2003). This is supported by the research of Reynolds and
Constantine (2007) who studied 261 international college students from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and found that higher levels of acculturation stress lead to lower levels of career outcome expectations.

It is also important to highlight research showing that while high acculturation leads to fewer cultural barriers, it is also associated with increased stressors related to the lack of career-related resources, information, and assistance (Sangganjanavanich et al., 2011; Baruch et al., 2007). Students with lower acculturative levels tend to be confused about whether they will seek employment in the U.S., their home country, or another country upon graduation.

To understand a student’s level of acculturation as it relates to career development needs, Sangganjanavanich et al., (2011) stress that each student is going through an individualized process that involves “language barriers, immigration concerns, and cultural difference” (p. 22).

Cultural values also play a role in the dynamics between international students and the career counselors who advise them. Two dominant non-Western cultural values include collectivist societal perspectives and a general stigma towards counseling. Students from countries that honor collectivism place priority on family and community over individualistic needs (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007; Leung et al., 2011). This presents a challenge to career service providers whose goal it is to embrace the specific needs of a student when the student is not comfortable with the concept of self-actualization (Bimrose & McNair, 2011). A study by Lowe (2005) of 103 undergraduate Asian American and Pacific Islander students found that counselors who were perceived to follow a collective approach in career advising were rated higher than those who exhibited individualist values. Counselors who placed importance on family involvement, community impact, and group decision-making were seen as more effective by the students.
In general, there is a stigma towards the use of counseling with many cultures outside of the U.S., which is intensified by a reluctance to disclose information (Crockett & Hays, 2011; Reynolds & Constantine, 2007; Yang, Wong, Hwang & Heppner, 2002). While academic counseling is more accepted, career advising is viewed more in line with therapeutic counseling and thus is not widely accepted by international students (Crockett & Hays, 2011). In many cases, international students will seek support from their close social networks such as elders in their community, church groups, and student organizations (Heggins & Jackson, 2003). At the same time, Heggins and Jackson (2003) note the work of Atkinson and Gim that hypothesized a positive correlation between high acculturation and a student’s ability to recognize the value of and seek out counseling help.

Student reliance on social groups over career counselors is also related to on-going identity development. Students go through a transitional process as they move from the higher secondary school environment to a college environment. This becomes even more complicated for international students who must reflect on “who they were in their home country, who they are now, and who they desire to become” (Kim, 2012, p. 108). As students develop their new identity, they are better able to become more independent. A common best practice in the literature urges career services administrators to support international students by building connections to mentoring groups and peer advising within the social context of the students (Heggins & Jackson, 2003). Regardless of the differing approaches to the impact of acculturation, it is clearly a key factor in an international student’s career planning process.

Likewise, language plays a significant role in a student’s level of confidence while in the U.S.; the better the student’s language competence, the less discomfort experienced. Conversely, students with low language abilities experience more challenging adjustment periods (Heggins &
Jackson, 2003). Difficulties in speaking and understanding have a direct impact on student engagement within the college community and lead to discomfort in seeking the help of counselors on campus (Crockett & Hays, 2011). Language is often cited as a barrier for international students in adjusting to the U.S. culture (Pedersen, 1991). In relation to career advising, research shows that international students who lack confidence in their English language ability will avoid occupations in which they perceive the English language to be an essential component (Liu, 2013).

**International Student Expectations of Career Counselors**

There is little research on the perceived needs and expectations of international students at U.S. higher education institutions in general (Tidwell & Hanassab, 2007) and career needs and expectations, in particular. Of the limited literature available, Crockett & Hays (2011) cite an early study in which Lee, Abd-Ella, and Burks assert that the career needs of international students are different from American counterparts and that international students, in fact, have a greater need for career counseling. The literature on the type of career-related assistance foreign students need is limited (Spencer-Rogers, 2000). While students cite their primary reason for studying in U.S. universities to be academics and education, the second reason is to gain work experience (Leong & Sedlacek, 1989; Spencer-Rogers, 2000). In a study of 227 international students, Spencer-Rogers (2000) found that international students expect career advisors to advocate on their behalf with employers, be knowledgeable on U.S. work authorization policies, and to behave in an empathic and responsive manner. This finding is supported in research by Bikos & Furry (1999), who interviewed 24 international students from seven countries and found these students to be eager for job search information and guidance.
When questioned about specific expectations, international students speak to the need for career advisors to have knowledge of U.S. employment laws, immigration regulations, and visa requirements. Students expect advisors to have knowledge of pre-return preparation strategies for employment back home though this interest seems to be linked more to contingency planning (Spencer-Rodgers, 2000; Tidwell & Hanassab, 2007). This expectation is characteristic of the “push and pull” factors from McMahon’s theory (1992) affecting international students and their decisions to return home or seek employment in the U.S. Push factors are characterized by the perception that a U.S. degree is better than a local one and the hopes of immigration. The pull factors relate to influence of family members to return home and the restrictiveness of U.S. work authorization for foreigners (Azmat, Osborne, LeRossignol, Jogulu, Rentschler, Robottom, & Malathy, 2013).

Some students are seeking assistance with finding work experiences and others with developing long-term career-planning strategies. Research indicates the former is typically in line with international student expectations. The next complexity relates to whether the student is planning to stay in the U.S. for employment after graduation, explore employers in another country, or return to his or her home country for work. Several investigators have documented student interest in all three with a focus on connections with U.S. employers. Typically, this is supported with a contingency plan for employment back home (Bikos & Furry, 1999; Tidwell & Hanassab, 2007). This presents a challenge for career advisors in their ability to be knowledgeable and influential in an extremely broad context of worldwide employment opportunities and hiring practices.

A correlation can be found between international students’ motives to stay in the U.S. or to return home compared to their level of satisfaction with the service level they receive. A
study by Min, Khoon, and Tan (2012) found that the higher the level of motive to stay in the U.S., the higher the level of expectations for service quality. Service level gaps and dissatisfaction with service providers’ responsiveness, empathy, and reliability are common themes, which relate to discontinuance of the services. Research suggests that the perception of international students is that a problem exists; the service provider’s role is to solve it, and if that does not happen, the students are likely to stop seeking the service (Crockett & Hays, 2011).

**Conclusion**

To understand the needs and expectations of international students, attention must be given to the acculturation factors that affect their student experience. In a review of related literature, common acculturation influences researched aligned with career development topics include cultural values, language, and a stigma towards counseling. When these influencers create stress for the student, a lower acculturation level is found, which leads to less comfort in making career-planning decisions. For students minimally affected by these factors, a higher level of acculturation leads to stronger career-planning ability, but more frustration due to a lack of understanding of the US job search process, employment laws in the U.S., and access to employers willing to hire them.

From the perspective of those who provide career counseling to international students, in addition to acculturation’s role, the lack of research on the expectations of international students increases the complexity when serving this population. An effective career advisor must consider the unique needs of international students holistically and as individuals. For many international students, the needs of the group over their own individual needs is a deeply embedded aspect of their culture. The career counselor’s awareness and ability to provide culturally sensitive services is paramount. Additionally, students expect career counselors to
have both knowledge of U.S. employment laws and information on key pre-return preparation strategies for employment back home. Ironically, research shows that a combination of all these influences leads to satisfaction levels which may not align with the student’s ability to find employment and the career advisor’s ability to deliver on expectations.

**Cultural Counseling**

Studies specifically related to the cultural aspect of counseling in the U.S. can be traced back to Sue beginning in the mid-1970s. Sue (1981) explored counseling services and outcomes as it related to different ethnic groups on college campuses and identified three aspects necessary in multicultural counseling competencies - awareness, knowledge, and skills. Awareness relates to comparing and contrasting different viewpoints in a variety of cultural situations with a clear understanding of one’s own limitations. Knowledge provides documentation and the information necessary to move beyond awareness towards effective and appropriate changes in multicultural settings. Skill provides the ability to build on awareness, while applying knowledge and effectively assessing the needs of other cultures. People with cultural competence skills interact, advise, evaluate, and manage their tasks effectively in multicultural settings (Sue et al., 1992).

More recently, Sue’s work has extended the definition of multicultural competence to focus on the counseling process from the context of the personal culture of the client (Sue et al., 1992; Sue & Sue, 2003). Counselors must be culturally self-aware, which includes awareness of the client’s culture, and a willingness to bring culture into the discussion during interactions with clients (Sue et al., 1992). Sue’s work has laid the foundation for numerous models of multicultural counseling. The Multicultural Counseling Competencies (MCC) theoretical framework, which will be applied to this research study, was introduced in 1992 by Sue,
Arredondo, and McDavis. In this section, a foundation will be set regarding MCC and its applicability to the career counseling of international students at U.S. universities. Three multicultural competency models will be explored and several applications of MCC will be reviewed. In addition, the role of cultural competencies specifically in career counseling will be examined.

**Multicultural Counseling Models**

Bennett’s (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) provides a theoretical framework to explain the progression of an individual’s worldview towards intercultural competence. While this work began as a focus on cultural sensitivity, it grew to support the emergence of cultural competency, cultural proficiency, and cross-cultural efficacy models. Central to this model are six measurable stages of intercultural development that quantify an individual’s response to cultural difference: denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration (Bennett & Bennett, 2004).

In a study by Hernandez and Kose (2012), DMIS was used to evaluate hypothetical responses of principals to achievement gaps and situations of diversity in their schools using the progressive stages of DMIS. For principals at the beginning stage of denial, the achievement gap and cultural differences are not seen as related. When the final stage of integration is achieved, principals are equipped to not only understand cultural differences but also apply strategies and design curriculum to influence the learning environment for all students (Hernandez & Kose, 2012).

Cultural Proficiency Continuum (CPC) is like Bennett’s model in its developmental approach to cultural competencies. The context of the model focuses on behaviors rather than emotions, which is the case in Bennett’s model. CPC recognizes the importance of learning
cultural characteristics as well as being aware of one’s own role in how cultural identity is formed for self and others (Nuri-Robins, Lindsey, Terrell, & Lindsey, 2007). It is intended to enable practitioners to take an active role in breaking through cultural barriers and is supported though guiding principles, essential elements, practical tools, and a set of common barriers to avoid. Paramount to CPC is the concept that culture is a dominant force that shapes behaviors and values. It challenges counselors to recognize their position as part of the dominant or mainstream group and the need for them to place importance on the unique and individual needs of non-Western clients. Through this approach, multicultural enrichment occurs for both the counselor and those that they serve (Lindsey, Nuri-Robins, & Terrell, 2003).

Another model incorporating cross-cultural competencies developed by Toporek and Reza (2001) is the Multicultural Counseling Competency Assessment and Planning Model (MCCAP). This model is described as an advancement of Sue et al.’s (1992) focus on standards and competencies related to the counselor’s awareness, knowledge, and skills to include context, modes of change, and assessment processes (Mollen, Ridley, & Hill, 2003). Contexts provide a look at the counselor through personal, professional, and institutional lenses, which incorporate beliefs and attitude, roles, and participation in a specific setting (Pedersen, 1991; Sue et al., 1992). In terms of change, cognitive, affective, and behavioral modes are included, thereby incorporating the process of perceiving, feeling, and acting. Toporek and Reza (2001) contend that assessment is a key factor in determining a counselor’s multicultural competence. By assessing the counselor’s areas of awareness, knowledge, and skills, activities and goals can be established for professional development training.
Applications of MCC

The theoretical framework for this research study is Multicultural Counseling Competencies (MCC) developed by Sue et al., (1992). Beginning in 1990, this framework has served as the foundation for professional standards and training modules in the counseling industry. Standards and competencies have been written for the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD), in which competence has been defined in the areas of knowledge, awareness, and skills (Sue et al., 1992). According to these standards, competent counselors must have knowledge of the values and norms of different cultural groups, must be aware of their own culturally-based assumptions and biases, and must be able to demonstrate skills that are acceptable to clients from diverse populations (Sue et al., 1992).

Arredondo et al. (1996) offer numerous ways in which counselors can develop and maintain multicultural counseling competencies. Strategies include a commitment to reading relevant research to better understand different worldviews and applying culturally appropriate interventions as well as using multicultural competency self-assessment tools. Multicultural counselors are encouraged to attend relevant conferences and workshops, enroll in ethnic studies courses at a community college, learn a second or third language relevant to clients, and become members of the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development. The next section will explore several applications of MCC related to training programs and counselor professional development. In terms of applicability to this study, this research provides insight into skill sets needed for this position, making a candidate more attractive in the hiring process.

In terms of multicultural competence training programs, organizations such as the American Counseling Association (ACA) play a major role in providing a platform for dialogue and providing support for counselors striving to enhance their cultural competencies. The
association’s emphasis on multicultural training is in line with findings by Vespia et al., (2010) that shows that the amount of multicultural training has a direct correlation to self-reported and externally-rated cultural competence. The 2010 ACA Conference focused on dialogue in support of multicultural competency and social justice. Because of the conference, a unified statement was developed in support of revamping counselor multicultural education programs, the continued development of multicultural competencies as core standards, and the need for continuing education for practitioners (Ahmed et al., 2011).

Further discussions at the conference included qualities of multicultural counselors that should be incorporated into training programs, including the need for credibility, expertise, and trustworthiness. Counselors need to be taught how to convey these qualities in their interactions with students. Because of the conference, the ACA committed to developing a support system for counselors with diverse clients. In addition, a “bottom-up” approach to training was suggested with more interactive sessions to be offered at future conferences such as self-discovery activities, role playing, case studies, and mentoring programs (Ahmed et al., 2011; Vespia et al., 2010).

Lee (2014) calls for training programs that include focus on building self-awareness, global literacy, foundational knowledge of career development theory, ethical practices, and multicultural counseling theory and knowledge, as well as the development of cross-cultural career counseling skills. This is supported by Tomlinson-Clarke (2013) and Pernell-Arnold, Finley, Sands, Bourjolly, & Stanhope, 2012), who describe the need for training programs that expand personal worldviews of counselors to include those of their clients and thus, transform the way in which they see the world. This is a developmental process, which should be supported by continuous professional development and self-reflective thinking (Byars-Winston
& Fouad, 2006; Sue & Sue, 1990). According to these standards, competent counselors have knowledge of the values and norms of different cultural groups, must be aware of their own culturally based assumptions and biases, and must be able to demonstrate skills that are acceptable to clients from diverse populations (Sue et al., 1992).

As it related to counselor professional development, several researchers have studied the impact of mindfulness in enhancing multicultural competencies. Per Kabat-Zinn (2003), mindfulness is described as being intensely aware in the present moment and remaining nonjudgmental as moments are experienced. The concept of mindfulness places great emphasis on empathy, acceptance, and flexibility (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006; Ivers, Johnson, Clarke, Newsome, & Berry (2016). By applying mindfulness to a multicultural competence approach that includes cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills, counselors are better equipped to deliver culturally relevant support to students from diverse backgrounds (Ivers et al., 2016).

Studies by Gervais and Hoffman (2013) and Niemiec, Brown, Kashdan, Cozzolino, Breen, Levesque-Bristol, and Ryan (2010) found that higher levels of mindfulness correlate to higher acceptance of cultural differences. A research study by Ivers et al. (2016) of 199 counseling students builds upon the work of scholars such as Gervais and Niemiec, but goes deeper to investigate a direct connection between MCC and mindfulness. Results show that a counselor’s ability to minimize his or her reaction to past experiences or internal stimuli were more open to accepting cultural differences.

Another finding showed that counselors who acknowledged and discussed the presence of internal and external factors affecting their worldview had higher levels of cultural competency. This is supported by Sue et al. (1992), who stated that counselors willing and able
to bring culture into the discussion with clients are more successful in meeting the needs of clients. Career counselors who engage in mindfulness practices are more likely to enhance their ability to meet the needs and expectations of international students. Increased mindfulness in career counseling with diverse clients can be done through participation in counselor multicultural education courses, interactive experiential training, and cultural immersion activities (Dickson & Jepsen, 2007).

**Multicultural Competencies and Career Counselors**

As seen in multicultural counseling models, career counselors must possess multicultural competencies, including self-awareness, relevant career knowledge, and cross-cultural skills (Vespia et al., 2010; Lee, 2014). With a growing number of students from different countries and cultures, career counselors who advise international students must demonstrate empathy, advocacy, and cultural sensitivity (Arthur & McMahon, 2005; Mahadeven, 2010). They must understand different cultures, differing career needs and values, and the individual career story for each student to deliver a positive experience. Career counselors must apply appropriate communication styles, be aware of the challenges of applying the Westernized approach of career development to international students, and understand the importance and impact of worldviews, their own and their students, in the counseling exchange.

The ability to communicate effectively and act as a mediator are important skills. Career counselors should attempt to use an appropriate level of language in support of students’ comprehension abilities and share information with students whose primary language is not English through creative means such as language-specific brochures and content that can be used in advising or in a section of the international center website (Repetto, 2008; Yang et al., 2002). Repetto (2008) argues that the career advisor’s role in communicating effectively with
international students goes beyond an appropriate level of language and includes understanding student interest in finding work rather than simply focusing on delivering traditional career development planning. To do this, awareness of acculturation factors which influence the student’s level of understanding is crucial.

International students expect the career advisor to assist them in navigating the dynamics of building work experiences while in the U.S. as this is an unfamiliar area to them (Bimrose & McNair, 2011). When this is combined with attention to communication styles and cues related to the student’s understanding of the discussion, a career advisor can be more effective in reaching these students and building a strong level of trust. This is imperative in being able to assist foreign students in understanding the job search process in the U.S. and in their home country.

As noted in a previous section, career development theory and research is based predominately on work of white male scholars. Even as the flow of immigrants poured into the U.S. over the decades, career development theory has not been adapted to meet the needs of specific cultures beyond the American or westernized models (Watson, Duarte, & Glavin, 2005; Bimrose & McNair, 2011). Numerous studies challenge the established norms of original theories and argue that continued research needs to be done to improve the cultural sensitivity of career assessment tools and applicability to those seeking vocational guidance. By being aware of this, career counselors can go beyond techniques and assessments that are based on the Western career development approach and individualistic in nature (Crockett & Hays, 2011).

To be effective, a career advisor must understand the impact of worldviews on their own and each student’s engagement in the career dialogue. Worldviews are a culmination of norms, folklore, and acculturation specific to a culture and passed on through generations, which have
an impact on values, interests, personal preferences and experiences (Mahadevan, 2010). These components, in turn, have an impact on the student’s career decisions. Attending to personal biases enables the career counselor to understand the student’s worldview and provide counseling interventions in line with that view (Crockett & Hays, 2011).

The complexity of serving international students requires a unique combination of skills. It is important to recognize that “career counselors are also cultural beings and that their socialization is an important influence on their professional roles” (Arthur & McMahon, 2005, p. 215). The challenge is balancing this understanding while also recognizing that each student has his or her own career story to author (Sangganjanavanich et al., 2011; Mahadevan, 2010). This is further complicated by the acculturation levels of each student. The career advisor who works with international students has much to balance, including awareness that the traditional career counseling model does not work and an understanding of barriers to employment such as poor language skills.

Other barriers also include lack of work experience, information, resources; lack of awareness regarding services and networks, as well as a general lack of knowledge on how to make career choices (Nunes & Arthur, 2013; Leung et al., 2011). These barriers speak further to the need for customized services for international students, with their individual needs and expectations, that focus on personalized and proactive assistance on the part of career counselors. Several scholars suggest the utilization of peer and mentoring social groups such as job search clubs are an effective method of achieving the needed level of outreach (Azmat, et al., 2013; Collins, 2008).
Conclusion

In evaluating the literature on cultural counseling, the seminal research conducted by Sue (1981) is often cited as the foundation for numerous models over the past thirty-five years. These models, including DMIS, CPC, and MCCAP, demonstrate a similar set of principles in line with Sue’s earliest work. Principles include a development approach, focus on worldviews of self and others, and the development of assessment tools and practitioner guidelines. Professional organizations such as the ACA and AMCD have embraced MCC and incorporated relevant industry standards into their missions as well as supported practitioner resources and training programs. There is a collective theme in the research regarding the importance of counselor training and professional development.

While there is limited empirical research focused on the benefits of MCC specifically in the career counseling of international students, there is a group of scholars who have focused on and provided essential insight into its value. While international students as a collective group are not homogenous and in-group differences can be found with international students from the same country or culture, career counselors who apply appropriate communication styles are cognizant of the challenges of westernized career development practices. They understand the impact of their own worldviews and those of their students in the counseling exchange and are best equipped to assist the international populations that they serve.

Summary

There are three overarching conclusions based on the three dominant themes in this literature review. The first is that the mainstream practices of career development developed in the 1900s are still used today and do not adequately provide the cultural aspects needed to support international students. Of significance is the Americanized focus on individualism,
which does not apply when working with students from collectivist societies. Equally important is the effect of an array of acculturation factors and language proficiency that impact international students and their ability to engage in the career development process. The second conclusion relates to the unique and complex set of career needs and expectations that international students face, which often vary in line with their acculturation level. While higher acculturation levels in international students can lead to stronger career planning, frustration over limited employment information, resources, and options in the U.S may also be experienced. A final overarching conclusion is the potential applicability of MCC to the field of cultural counseling in building and maintaining self-awareness, cultural knowledge, and multicultural skills sets. MCC’s focus on worldviews offers career counselors a cultural lens to apply to existing practices, adapting counseling techniques to meet the unique needs of their international students.

As a result of this literature review, the rationale for this study is further supported. As the international student population continues to grow in the U.S., administrators in university career development offices must respond to the complexity of needs and expectations associated with the international student population. Lack of research focusing on multicultural counseling competencies related to career counselors impedes hiring procedures and limits the abilities of counselors to assist international students with their career needs and expectations in a culturally sensitive way (Arthur & McMahon, 2005; Byars-Winston & Fouad, 2006; Reynolds & Constantine, 2007; Vespia et al., 2010). Hiring career counselors with multicultural competencies who can utilize relevant techniques and resources in support of international students has become essential.
There is a need for research providing evidence that international students are more effectively served by career counselors who have been hired for cultural competencies in mind. This lack of research exposes a need for career development practitioners to better understand and address hiring practices in line with effectively serving this population. The purpose of this study is to provide best practices and tools to make hiring decisions that are more likely to lead to sustainable employment and effective support to international students on campus. This research has implications for a variety of stakeholders including international students, the career counselors who serve them, and the administrators who hire the career counselors. For the hiring managers, this research will have significance in the areas of hiring policy and practice as well as cultural competency training.

Chapter Three: Research Design

The aim of a research study at Northeastern University is to examine a complex problem of practice, generate knowledge from data gathered, and provide context and strategies to help resolve the problem of practice. The purpose of this study is to investigate and better understand the phenomenon of university administrators who hire career counselors who advise international students and the factors involved in making hiring decisions. The following chapter describes the study’s research design and provides support for the researcher’s methodological choices. In the first part of the chapter, the qualitative research approach and constructivist-interpretivist paradigm are explained as well as the selected research question and their purpose. The second part of the chapter focuses on the procedural elements of the project, offering a detailed account of how this study was conducted, including participant selection, ethical considerations, and the limitations uncovered.
Qualitative Research Approach

This study utilizes a qualitative approach to understanding the research problem. According to Butin (2010), “quantitative research is about numbers, the ‘what,’ ‘where,’ and ‘when’ questions and qualitative research is about words and stories, the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions” (p. 74). Qualitative research allows for exploration and a means of understanding the central phenomenon being studied through the views of the participants. In line with the intended purpose statement and the research question posed in this study, a qualitative research approach offers a means of collecting, analyzing, and reporting data with the goal of learning from the participants and with storytelling in mind (Butin, 2010; Creswell, 2012). The following sections include insights into the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm, phenomenological inquiry, and transcendental phenomenology as well as the applicability of each in framing this research study.

Research Question

This study seeks to answer the research question - How do U.S. university administrators in career development perceive and describe their experience in hiring career counselors who work with international students? Analyzing the perspectives of industry leaders regarding the type of interview questions asked, the characteristics and experiences they seek in candidates, and the exchange between the interviewer and interviewee during the hiring process assisted in capturing the essence of what is important to administrators during this phenomenon. This analysis, juxtaposed with the research on international students’ expectations of career services offices, illuminated gaps in meeting expectations and relevant characteristics of career counselors who serve this unique student population. An analysis of hiring interview questions asked by career services directors, the characteristics and experiences these leaders value in
prospective career services counselors, and the exchange between the interviewer and the interviewer assisted in illustrating essentially what administrators value in career counselors who work with international students. By gathering insight into the experiences of the hiring manager and reviewing current practices and gaps, the researcher was better equipped to propose best practices in hiring career advisors who work with international students with the goal of effectively serving and meeting the needs of this unique student population.

Constructivist-Interpretivist Paradigm

Paradigms offer researchers a belief system to follow when constructing the reality of a shared phenomenon, (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Ponterotto, 2005). As is the case with qualitative research, the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm relies on the viewpoints of participants and recognizes that “reality is socially constructed” (Mertens, 2005, p. 12) and that interpretation plays an essential role in understanding (Schwandt, 2000). Constructivist-interpretivists seek to learn from participant “views, values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions, and ideologies” rather than “gathering facts and describing acts” (Creswell, 2012, p. 429).

The interactive nature of this paradigm allows the researcher and participants to engage in a contextual dialogue, which leads to a jointly created, sophisticated description of the phenomenon being studied (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Ponterotto, 2005). It is understood that in addition to the participant, the researcher is also a part of the research process. While researchers can “bracket” personal experiences and biases, their influence cannot be eliminated. Instead, the values and beliefs of the researcher are considered as a “means of dialogue” (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 132). The constructivist-interpretivist paradigm supported the intention of this study in unfolding, interpreting, and understanding a deep level of meaning related to the lived
experiences of higher education administrators who hire career counselors who serve international students since this researcher shares this experience with the participants.

**Phenomenology**

The specific method of inquiry selected for this study is phenomenology. Most definitions of phenomenology cite a focus on the meaning or essence of an experience shared by a group of individuals (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990). Phenomenology is applicable to studies which require answers to the “what” and “how” something is experienced by a group. The “what” or *neoma* is the object being studied and the “how” or the *neosis* is the mode or context in which it is experienced (Moustakas, 1994). The perspectives of the group members provide the answers to the intended research questions through the reflective analysis of the researcher, and culminate in a description of universal essences of the experience (Creswell, 1998, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

A broad discipline, phenomenology is predominantly based on the historical work of two German philosophers, Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. Husserl, known as the “father of phenomenology,” built the foundation for phenomenology in the early 1900s. As his investigations continued, he eventually developed the concepts for transcendental phenomenology with its focus on descriptions. On the other hand, Heidegger, who began as Husserl’s assistant and later a successor to him, provided the basis for hermeneutic phenomenology focused on interpretation in the 1920s (New World Encyclopedia, 2015).

More contemporary scholars are known for their advancement of Husserl and Heidegger’s seminal works. Moustakas (1994) is responsible for providing transcendental phenomenology with a step-by-step systematic process of design elements that is “rigorous, yet accessible to qualitative researchers” (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004, p. 6). As for the
hermeneutic approach, van Manen (1990) places greater demand on the researcher to develop a “phenomenological eye” and a “phenomenological pen” without a set method of collecting and interpreting collected data. The researcher is expected to uncover the most relevant steps while the study is unfolding (Goble & Yin, 2014).

Whether a transcendental or hermeneutic approach is used, the intended outcome of phenomenology is to provide a deep invariant look at the underlying essentials of a shared experience (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). To get to this point, the researcher must go through an inquiry process. Creswell (1998) proposed procedures of phenomenological inquiry, which begin with the researcher understanding the philosophical foundation for this approach centered around how a phenomenon is experienced by a group of people. From this step, the researcher creates questions through which to explore the meaning of the experience being studied and asks individual participants to describe their experience. Typically, the data is collected through in-depth, one-on-one interviews.

Key shared statements are clustered by theme and are the basis for creating a description of what is experienced and how it is experienced. This results in the invariant or essential structure sought by the phenomenologist surrounding the experience being studied. Moustakas (1994) offers a similar perspective on the need for conducting lengthy interviews to gather data and the need to organize the data into meaningful descriptions, which capture the core of meanings and essences of the phenomenon. Both Creswell (1998) and Moustakas (1994) acknowledge that this is not an easy process.

**Transcendental Phenomenology**

For the novice researcher, transcendental phenomenology is a favorable option as it provides “‘logical, systematic, and coherent design elements that lead to an essential description
of the experience” (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004, p. 1). While originally developed by Husserl (1931) as “pure” phenomenology, this approach is often preferred as an alternative to hermeneutics, which is seen by some scholars as lacking rigor and methodological structure due to its reliance on interpretation (Giorgi, 2008; Finlay, 2009). Moustakas (1994) is credited with transcendental phenomenology’s systematic and detailed data analysis steps, which allow the researcher to balance the subjectivity and objectivity involved in the research process (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). To better understand the experiences of others, a researcher must first fully uncover his or her own perceptions of the phenomenon with a goal of setting aside prejudices (Moustakas, 1994). This is achieved through a process involving epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis.

Epoche provides a bracketing method, which requires the researcher to acknowledge and set aside biases and preconceived ideas so that the phenomenon is seen “as if for the first time” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). While this is a difficult task to achieve, epoche opens the researcher up to viewing the phenomenon being studied just as it is, in the “pure” state described by Husserl (1931). Moustakas (1994) urges researchers to “silence the directing voices” and acknowledges the difficulty of such a process (p. 86). He suggests meditative-reflection as a means of achieving epoche. As prejudices enter the mind, they are jotted down and labeled. By capturing them in this way, personal biases and preconceived ideas are dealt with openly and provide the researcher with an “internal sense of closure” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 87). While epoche is unlikely to be perfected, the exercise benefits the researcher by improving his or her ability to contain the impact of positionality during the research process and focus on the views of the participants (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004).
After epoche is the phenomenological reduction stage, which uses an iterative process of reflecting on and describing the phenomenon and one’s relationship with the phenomenon. Context and textural qualities are essential during this stage to expose the impact of one’s ego in altering the view of “the way things are” as stated by Schmitt (as cited in Moustakas, 1994, p. 88). Horizontalization is at the core of this stage and is essential to the concept of transcending or going beyond the initial meaning of something and discovering that each time a phenomenon is explored a new meaning will always be uncovered.

By applying reductive processing, themes surface as the researcher continues to explore the phenomenon through different angles in an unrestricted manner. This stage, referred to as imaginative variation, allows the researcher to search through the “infinite multiplicities” (Husserl, 1997, p. 63) of the phenomenon and “grasp the structural essences” of the experience (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). The researcher’s efforts during the reduction and imaginative phases are integrated and result in a textural-structural synthesis of the meanings and essences of the phenomenon being studied (Moustakas, 1994, p. 35). Ultimately, a “unified statement of the essences” is presented through a final stage of intuition integration (Moustakas, 1994, p. 101). This becomes the foundation for the study’s research question, the interviewing focus, and the way in which collected data is organized and evaluated.

As the chosen approach for this study, transcendental phenomenology provides both scientific investigation principles and a methodological process that assist the novice researcher in producing a rigorous and trustworthy research study. Transcendental phenomenology provided this researcher with support during the bracketing phase and when addressing meanings and perspectives of research participants. The researcher could see things for what they “really”
were by exposing and limiting personal prejudgments, thus making it an appropriate methodological approach for this study.

Moustakas’ (1994) transcendental phenomenology provides the guidance needed to develop a description of the essence of the experience of hiring career counselors who serve international students at U.S. universities. Through this method, the questions of “what” the career development administrators experience and “how” they experience it when interviewing and making hiring decisions for this position will be uncovered. Since the researcher conducting this study is also representative of the group of intended participants, Moustakas’ (1994) systematic and detailed data analysis steps provided a means of acknowledging preconceived judgements based on personal experiences and allowed the experiences of other career development administrators to be told.

This began with the development of the overarching research question, which transcendental phenomenologists believe should have “social meaning and personal significance” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 103), which is the case in this research study. The researcher has explored relevant literature and sought insight from current practitioners in support of the need for this study and the relevance of the research question. During this process, the researcher also used a reflective process of evaluating personal experiences in relation to the topic. Through the literature review, discussions with peer practitioners, and initial self-reflection, the main research question was formulated with key words in mind. This resulted in the following research question - How do U.S. university administrators in career development perceive and describe their experience in hiring career counselors who work with international students?
Interviewing is the most common form of data collection in phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). Per Patton (2002), the purpose of interviewing is to "to find out what is in and on someone else's mind" (p. 341). In this study, the questions asked were developed with the intent to build a textual and structured perception of the lived experience of the participants. While a general interview guide was developed in advance, the researcher allowed for flexibility and adapted questions in line with the direction of the conversation at hand. As suggested by Moustakas (1994), interviews were conducted in an informal, interactive manner with open-ended questions and with a goal of building trust and allowing for the epoche process to evolve.

The steps of data analysis provided by transcendental phenomenology provided the researcher with a systematic way in which to arrive at a culminating statement of meanings regarding the experiences of university administrators who hire career counselors who service international students. Horizontalization was used to review the data to give equal significance to the collected statements. Next, themes or clusters of overlapping statements were identified, reviewed, and refined in a continuous process of reflection. This led to textural descriptions that were transformed into structural descriptions representing a clear picture of the essence of the experience of the career development administrators.

**Participants**

Eight to ten adults who represent U.S. university administrators who hire career counselors who serve international students were interviewed. This sample size is commensurate with current studies that used transcendental phenomenology. An example of this include Green’s (2016) dissertation on decision-making processes with student affairs’ outcomes assessment, which included eight full-time professionals. In support of this, Martirano (2016)
states that the sample size must be statistically significant without being redundant or overwhelming.

Another important factor in evaluating the participant size in a phenomenological study is practicality. Since the nature of transcendental phenomenology is to conduct in-depth rich interviews, it is expected that each participant may be interviewed multiple times (Baker & Edwards, 2012). It would not be unusual for eight participants to result in up to twenty-four overall interviews. It is also expected that some of the recruited participants may drop out of the study. The researcher kept these factors in mind, which impacted the decision to select a minimum of eight universities administrators, to develop a deep, robust understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Martirano, 2016).

While factors such as age, gender, and ethnicity were not used as components in selecting participants, it was crucial to the success of this study that the university administrators interviewed have significant experience in hiring career advisors who work with international students. To define significant experience, potential participants will be screened for a minimum of two years of experience in hiring and supervising career counselors who advise international students. This is in line with the study’s purpose and its research question focused on understanding the experiences and gaining the perceptions of university administrative leaders who hire and manage high performing career counselors who work with international students. This research is intended to provide leaders with insight and best practices that can impact hiring and training practices for career counselors, which can lead to improved programs and services for these students. Per Moustakas (1994), it is also important that the participants are “intensely interested in understanding [the] nature and meanings” of the phenomenon and are willing to engage in an in-depth and iterative interviewing process.
In qualitative research, purposeful sampling is used based on the “places and people” that can best assist in describing the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012, p. 205). Participants are intentionally selected because of their experiences so that rich information can be collected (Patton, 1990). In this study, a homogenous group of U.S. university administrators were selected who possess the experience needed to evaluate the phenomenon of hiring a career counselor with skill sets and characteristics that support the career counseling of international students. A snowball sampling strategy was initiated. In line with Patton’s (1990) view of the snowball technique, several members of the researcher’s professional network were contacted who fit the needed participant profile. This sampling strategy was continued until a minimum of eight participants were successfully secured. The participants represented a variety of U.S. universities with no specific site in mind.

Procedures

The following section provides a step-by-step guide of how the study was conducted using a transcendental phenomenology approach in collecting data on the phenomenon of U.S. university administrators who hire career counselors who advise international students.

Data Collection

Once approval was secured from the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board (IRB), Moustakas’ (1994) methods of data collection were employed. Pre-interview emails to professionals in the researcher’s network were sent to determine the relevancy of potential candidates, and their willingness to participate and be recorded. In accordance with Moustakas’ (1994) account of Fraelich’s psychologist study of “presence” with clients, potential participants were asked to be “co-researchers” and join the researcher in the pursuit of meaning related to the hiring of career counselors who advise international students (p. 109). Once agreement was
obtained, a release form was provided to collect the participant’s consent to be a part of the
study.

Data was collected through a series of sixty to ninety-minute, in-depth interviews using
Skype and phone. In alignment with transcendental phenomenology and the constructivist-
interpretivist paradigm, the interviews were semi-structured in nature with open-ended questions
allowing for on-going dialogue between the researcher and the interviewee to clarify and seek
out central meanings. The researcher assumed the role of an active listener and asked follow-up
questions to engage the interviewee in uncovering a deep level of nuances and essences to
answer the “how” and “what” of the phenomenon. Following each interview, the data was
transcribed using Rev.com and shared with the participant to confirm the interpretation presented
by the researcher was an accurate depiction. The participant was asked to provide feedback and
concerns on the transcript as well as input on changing or rearranging the data collected. This
aided in the credibility of the study.

Data Analysis

To arrive at a textual and structured description of the research topic, the transcribed data
was analyzed following Moustakas’ (1994) modification of Stevich, Colaizzi, & Keen’s method
of phenomenological data analysis. During the first step, or epoche, the researcher began by
evaluating her own experience with the phenomenon. Invariant themes were identified,
reviewed, and refined in a continuous process of horizontalization, resulting in a description of
the textures and structures of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher’s textual-
structural description became the basis for comparisons with the transcriptions and analysis of
the research participant interviews. The same steps were followed for each transcript until a
universal description of the experience was achieved, representing the group holistically. During
each step, techniques such as memoing and the use of a reflective journal were used in exercising Moustakas’ (1994) method of bracketing the researcher’s personal experiences and biases to limit their impact. This aided in the trustworthiness and dependability of the study by providing evidence of bracketing and reduction through an audit trail (Finlay, 2009).

**Step One.** The researcher used the process of epoche as a bracketing method to acknowledge and set aside preconceived ideas so that the phenomenon was seen “freshly.” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). The researcher began by preparing a verbatim, full description of her own experience with the phenomenon. Each statement provided by the researcher was treated equally and considered for relevancy in describing the experience of U.S. university administrators who hire career counselors who advise international students. While this is a difficult task, if achieved, epoche exposes the researcher to the phenomenon being studied just as it is, in the “pure” state described by Husserl (1931). Moustakas (1994) urges researchers to “silence the directing voices” and acknowledges the difficulty of such a process (p. 86).

The researcher followed Moustakas’ (1994) advice in using meditative-reflection as a means of achieving epoche. During epoche, a quiet place was found by the researcher to allow thoughts and feelings on the phenomenon to flow. As prejudgments entered the mind, they were jotted down and labeled. By capturing them in this way, the researcher’s personal biases and preconceived ideas were dealt with openly. This exploratory exercise benefited the researcher by improving her ability to contain the impact of her positionality during the research process and focus on the views of the participants (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004; Creswell, 2012).

**Step Two.** Following epoche, the process of phenomenology reduction began. A set of nonrepetitive statements were organized through the process of horizontalization and clustered into invariant themes. This required significant reading and re-reading of the researcher’s
transcript, reviewing it line-by-line, and paying close attention to the details. The researcher used NVivo store, organize, and analyze the data. As noted earlier, the researcher used memoing to chronicle thoughts and comments on the relevant text. Codes were also used to identify information clusters or themes. Eventually, the codes were reviewed to search for patterns among the identified topics. Irrelevant and overlapping topics were eliminated (Creswell, 2012). From this step, verbatim examples or themes were used to provide a description in line with Moustakas’ (1994) “textures of the experience,” answering the question of “what” was experienced.

**Step Three.** Next, the researcher focused on the “how” of the experience by using her imagination to identify possible meanings of the textual descriptions. This is called the imaginative variation stage and its purpose is to investigate the question - “How did the experience of the phenomenon come to be what it is?” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 95). The researcher needs to remain entirely open to any possibilities so that the structures of the experience are revealed. The structures represent the conditions or necessary factors that must be present for the experience to exist (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004; Moustakas, 1994). In the study, factors such as time, space, causality, and relation to self and others were explored for their impact on the phenomenon. Through this process, the researcher created a description of the structures of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

**Step Four.** A textual-structural description of the researcher’s experience became the basis for comparisons of the participants’ transcriptions. Steps one through four were followed for each collected transcript. As the interviews were individually analyzed, the researcher looked for overarching themes, which presented a representative perspective of the group’s shared experience. Ultimately, a universal composite of the experience was achieved in line with
the research question of this study - How do U.S. university administrators in career
development perceive and describe their experience in hiring career counselors who work with
international students?

**Ethical Considerations**

Maintaining ethics is an essential step in any research study. The researcher followed the
guidelines set by the Northeastern IRB related to the protection of human subjects. While this
study offered a low-risk opportunity for participants and was not likely to cause harm, attention
was given to preserving participant anonymity and confidentiality. Each participant was given
the option to select a pseudonym to protect his or her identity. The release form signed by the
participant provided the option to decline answering any question and to discontinue
participation in the study at any time. In terms of data security, all related documents, including
an index of data sources, are stored electronically on the researcher’s personal computer using
OneDrive. These files are password-protected, and no physical files have been kept. Any print-
outs have been shredded to protect the identity of participants as needed.

**Trustworthiness**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the subjective experiences of U.S.
university administrators tasked with hiring career counselors who service international students.
When a study involves humans, it is imperative for the researcher to demonstrate the reliability
and validity of the study. Per Lincoln & Guba (1985), trustworthiness of a qualitative research
study must satisfy four criteria - credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.
One universal step the researcher took in support of all four criteria was the use of a reflective
journal throughout the research process to chronicle the specific steps taken and why they were
taken. This included insights into the weaknesses and possible implications of these decisions.
Another benefit of the reflective journal is referred to as “progressive subjectivity” by Guba and Lincoln (1989, p. 248). By documenting and monitoring developing thoughts and patterns, the researcher was better equipped to report on the reliability and validity of the study (Shenton, 2004). In addition to the reflective journal, the researcher took the following steps in ensuring the trustworthiness of the study.

**Credibility.** The first step was to build credibility; the confidence that the findings are true and the experience has been accurately described. One way to do this is by employing a known methodological approach such as Moustakas’ (1994) transcendental phenomenology (Yin, 1994). Another strategy used to ensure credibility was purposeful sampling and the option for participants to opt out of the research as any time. The researcher strived to build rapport with the participants, encourage frankness, and create an environment suitable for “co-construction” of meaning (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher’s past experiences in working with international students and hiring career counselors who advise international students assisted in building the needed trust. Patton (1990) states that the researcher’s background and experience with the phenomenon is crucial in building a credible study. According to Shenton (2004), researchers such as Alkin, Daillak, and White have gone as far as suggesting that the researcher’s expertise is just as important as the accuracy of the procedures taken.

As mentioned earlier, another technique used was member-checking to ensure the captured description was an accurate depiction of each participant’s perspective. This technique was utilized during the interviews as needed and after the themes from the interviews emerged. It is important to note that caution needs to be taken when using this technique. While member-checking is often conducted on participant transcripts, Creswell (2009) argues that it is better to wait until themes and patterns emerge. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that member-checking is
one of the most crucial techniques for establishing credibility, but share a strong concern about its lack of attention to the interpretative nature of qualitative research. This researcher’s goal of developing a “researcher/participant relationship” helped to ensure that the collected themes and patterns were reflective of “lenses of the participants” and not the “lone lens of the researcher” (Carlson, 2010). Also, by providing the participants with clear instructions, the researcher guided the participants to focus their review on whether the themes and patterns resonated with their experiences, rather than rethinking the specific language used (Shenton, 2004).

**Transferability.** Another factor in building trustworthiness can be accomplished by demonstrating that the findings have applicability in other contexts. External validity can be gained by creating rich, thick descriptions which provide in-depth details that allow findings to be compared within other relevant contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). This was accomplished in this study by including direct quotes from the interviews that enabled the reader to draw conclusions about if and how the findings can be related to other situations.

**Dependability.** A third aspect of building trustworthiness is dependability, or showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated. The researcher strived to achieve this by providing in-depth descriptions of the research strategy and operational details of data collection and analysis, as well as evaluating the effectiveness of both (Shenton, 2004). An internal audit was conducted to review the coded transcripts, memoing notes, the researcher’s reflective journal, an index of themes, draft reports, and the final report. Collectively, this review enabled the researcher to provide a step-by-step “detailed methodological description” of the decisions made and procedures followed, enabling the reader to “determine how far the data and constructs emerging from it may be accepted” (Shenton, 2004, p. 72). A data-oriented approach was taken
to show how these steps lead to the researcher’s recommendations and the implications for practice.

**Confirmability** - A degree of neutrality or objectivity was maintained by the researcher to ensure the findings of the study were shaped by the participants’ experiences and perspectives, and not by the researcher’s positionality and biases. While objectivity cannot be guaranteed, steps such as those already outlined were taken by the researcher to increase confirmability. The reflective journal allowed the researcher to admit her own prejudgments by documenting why one approach was chosen over another as well as to identify limitations of the techniques used (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The reflective journal served as a repository in collecting an audit trail of documents and insights into the specific methodological steps taken. In addition to reflectivity, a form of triangulation was used by reviewing resources and documents referred to by interview participants in support of the experiences they shared. These documents were considered as source material and included in the audit trail.

**Potential Research Bias**

As stated in Chapter One, the researcher expected her life experiences, especially those of living in another country and hiring career counselors who advise international students, to assist in understanding how university administrators may respond and react during the interview process. At the same time, having a connection with or being a part of the group being studied does not imply freedom from biases (Briscoe, 2005). Individuals from around the world bring widely differing cultures and historical perspectives. It is understood that the views of the researcher do not encompass the entire world, so she extended effort to avoid overgeneralization based on personal experiences (Machi and McEvoy, 2016). This was done by to listening and exploring the experiences presented by the participants and to keeping an open mind by
recognizing her biases and employing Moustakas’ (1994) transcendental phenomenology methods to bracket prejudgments.

Limitations

Creswell (2012) states that a clear account of limitations provides a “useful bridge for recommending future studies,” and guidance for other researchers who intend to conduct a similar study as well as assistance to readers on the generalizability of the study (p. 199). There are two central weaknesses or limitations to this study - subjectivity and transferability. First, there is the issue of subjectivity when using a qualitative research methodology. While rigorous data collection and analysis steps were taken to increase objectivity and trustworthiness, the researcher remained the central instrument for analysis. As such, her judgements impacted coding and the identification of themes. The use of transcendental phenomenology’s epoche was an important step in limiting the researcher’s prejudices (Moustakas, 1994).

In addition, a small sample size of participants was selected in line with transcendental phenomenology’s quest for in-depth accounts of a participant’s experience. This limited transferability. Eight participants were selected who fit the profile and experience level needed in this study and as such, their sense of the phenomenon is not an exhaustive representation of all U.S. university administrators who hire career counselors who serve international students. In other words, the findings could have been different if the researcher selected a different group of participants with differing levels of experience. The role of gender and the ethnicity of the participants was explored, although these factors may, in fact, play a role in the characteristics of an effective career counselor, limiting the transferability of the findings. To combat these limitations, the researcher maintained a reflective journal, conducted an audit trail and provided
rich, thick descriptions to enable readers to determine if the findings can be applied in other settings.

**Summary**

This study explored the experiences of U.S. university administrators who hire career counselors who advise international students. Moustakas’ (1994) approach of epoche, transcendental reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis were followed. The researcher used known qualitative research techniques in ensuring the trustworthiness of the study, including the use of a reflective journal, an audit trail, and member-checking. The limitations of subjectivity and transferability were considered throughout the data collection and analysis stages as well as during the reporting of findings.

Moustakas’ (1994) transcendental phenomenology is well suited for research when the researcher is personally invested in the problem, which was the case in this study. The researcher believes in the value that international students bring to the U.S. universities they attend and that the universities have a responsibility to provide culturally relevant career development counseling and services. She has personally experienced the problem of practice in hiring effective career advisors who advise international students. The researcher’s commitment to and experience with this problem of practice enabled her to better listen to, understand, and explore the experience of other U.S. career development administrators. Transcendental phenomenology provided the researcher with a rigorous qualitative methodology in bracketing positionality and giving voice to the experiences of the participants.

**Chapter Four: Findings and Analysis**

The purpose of this study was to explore the decision-making processes inherent in hiring career counselors who advise international students for eight university administrators using a
multicultural competency theoretical framework. Through qualitative inquiry and a transcendental phenomenological research design, the researcher sought to understand the experiences and gain the perceptions of career services administrators who manage these hiring decisions and the environmental factors that impact the process. This research was intended to provide insight and best practices that can improve interviewing practices and candidate selection decisions, which can ultimately lead to enhanced international student programs and services (Bimrose & McNair, 2011; Crockett & Hay, 2011; Nunes & Arthur, 2013).

Data was collected through in-depth, semi-formal 60-90 minute interviews, yielding rich descriptions of the participants’ experiences. Four male and four female full-time career services administrators with experience in hiring career counselors who advise international students were chosen to participate in this study. Pseudonyms were assigned participants to maintain their anonymity. After reviewing the first round of transcriptions, brief follow-up discussions with six of the eight participants were conducted to gain a deeper level of insight into the emotions and environmental factors that affect the administrators during the decision-making process.

It is essential for the researcher to embrace transparency as a guiding principle in phenomenological analysis so that as Smith states, ‘what steps were used in analysis’ are clearly stated (Smith, Flowers, & Lardin, 2009 p. 182) and, later, ‘so the reader can see what was done’ (Smith 2011, p. 17). By following Moustakas’ (1994) rigorous step-by-step data analysis procedures, the researcher developed textural (“what” was experienced) and structural (“how” it was experienced) descriptions for each individual participant’s transcription. To do this, the researcher utilized NVivo to identify and extract non-overlapping relevant statements and added notes with observations and reflections on the interviewee’s experience. The statements and notes were transformed into emerging themes, which were shared with each individual
participant for validation. Next, a universal composite was developed describing the meanings and essences of the phenomenon as experienced by the group. This composite was cross-checked with the individual participant textual and structural descriptions to ensure accuracy and relevancy.

The composite description consists of three core themes and twelve sub-themes: 1. multicultural competence of candidates including a. importance and interconnectivity of competencies, b. cultural awareness, c. cultural competence, d. cultural sensitivity, and e. cultural knowledge; 2. interview formats and questions including a. types of questions, b. sample questions, c. consecutive interviews and involving others in the process; and 3. complexity of the hiring process including a. interviewer's own competency level, b. environmental factors, c. administrator emotions, and d. best practices.

**Table 1** indicates the themes and sub-themes by participant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Multicultural competence of candidates</th>
<th>Henry</th>
<th>Terry</th>
<th>Chris</th>
<th>Lauren</th>
<th>Craig</th>
<th>Jon</th>
<th>Amy</th>
<th>Brian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. importance &amp; interconnectivity of competencies</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. cultural awareness</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. cultural competence</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. cultural sensitivity</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. cultural knowledge</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Interview formats and questions</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. types of questions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. sample questions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. consecutive interviews &amp; involving others</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Complexity of hiring process</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>a. interviewer's own competency level</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. environmental factors</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. administrator emotions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>d. best practices</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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</table>

As shown in Table 1 above, participant descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation were quite similar, with all core themes and most supporting themes encompassing the experiences of the eight participants. Delimited horizons that stood out as invariant qualities
of the experience were reached by the sixth interview (Moustakas, 1994). Nonetheless, the two additional interviews contributed to the richness and thickness of the collected data, and as seen with transcendental phenomenological research, reinforced that the identified themes captured the essence of the phenomenon.

What follows is an introduction of each theme supported by a narrative of the sub-themes, and evidence is provided through direct quotes from the interview data.

**Multicultural Competence of Candidates**

Interviews with study participants yielded several key themes and sub-themes. One key theme was the importance of the multicultural competencies of candidates in the hiring process. Discussions with career service administrators about the competencies needed by effective career counselors who advise international students as defined by Arredondo et al. (1996) assisted in validating the sub-themes. These sub-themes include interconnectivity of competencies and the importance of a candidate’s cultural awareness, cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, and cultural knowledge when making a hiring decision.

Several interview questions focused on the significance of Arredondo’s Multicultural Competency Model (MCC) with its focus on cultural awareness, cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, and cultural knowledge as well as on how the participants define these competencies. While disagreements existed about the importance of one competency over another, all participants described the competencies as being interconnected in some way with four of the eight of them speaking specifically to the interconnectivity. What follows is the first sub-theme of the theme, “Multicultural Competencies of Candidates.”

**1a. Importance and Interconnectivity of Competencies**
The importance and interconnectivity of cultural competencies is a sub-theme of the theme related to the multicultural competencies of potential candidates for the position of international career counselor. In terms of importance, career services administrators provided varying opinions. While one career service administrator referred to cultural awareness as foundational to the other competencies, another suggested similar feedback regarding cultural sensitivity. Subsequently, a third administrator identified cultural knowledge as the baseline. In dissonance with the third administrator’s viewpoint, another contended that cultural knowledge was not as important as the others, because it is “more about knowing where to find answers than it is to demonstrate acquired knowledge.” Several participants “ranked” cultural knowledge as the least sought out competency during the interviewing process, because they felt it is something that can be gained through staff training and professional development.

Regardless of individual opinions on the importance of one competency over another, several administrators used the term “essential” to describe the importance of multicultural competencies collectively. In fact, six of the eight participants stated that multicultural competencies are “essential” for all the career counseling positions they manage, not just the ones that support international students. This aligns with the multicultural competency framework used in this study, which is based on the counseling profession in general and suggests the need to evaluate for cultural awareness, cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, and cultural knowledge during the interview process. In the case of this study, the focus was on evaluating these competencies in candidates for the position of international career counselor.

When answering questions about multicultural competencies for counselors four of the eight research participants spoke of the interconnectivity among the multicultural competencies. Henry stated:
You have to have self-awareness, we talked about your knowledge of cultures outside of your own. I see the second, cultural competence, as being how you use your internal knowledge. Then with external knowledge comes the competency to work with a variety of groups and people. Then I only put sensitivity fourth because I think it's a higher order skill set.

As elucidated from the above quote, Henry believes that the four competencies outlined in Arredondo et al. (1996) are building blocks of each other, but he refers to self-awareness as a “must.” Brian’s input on self-awareness also centered it as a building block in the interconnectivity of all four factors:

I mean self-awareness is good but it's only good enough for a little bit. And skills are good but they're not good unless you have the correct place and way to use them and context. Same thing with knowledge. It only works when it's sewn together and that's what I mean by that space in between. And it's the ability to integrate all of this into action.

Other participants including Craig and Chris offered different perspectives on the most crucial competencies when discussing importance and interconnectivity. Craig said:

Cultural knowledge is the foundational piece to the other three dimensions, but the cultural knowledge piece cannot be something that's simply trained. It also has to be, ‘Gosh, I am motivated to want to know this knowledge,’ and that gets at that cultural sensitivity, that gets at ... Yeah, it's just I think it's all interconnected.

Chris shared her perspective that “competency [comes] first, I think sensitivity next, and self-awareness and then knowledge. And I hesitate between the middle two, I'm not certain which
comes first.” Terry also “ranked” the competencies beginning with “cultural sensitivity [followed by] cultural self-awareness, cultural competence, and then cultural knowledge.”

In a two-way dialogue with Lauren regarding the input received from other interviewees, she expressed that “cultural knowledge, although a baseline is needed, wouldn't necessarily be the most important factor, because a person could be trained for this.” Lauren agreed that self-awareness, competency, and sensitivity are more innate, while cultural knowledge is gained through exposure and can be provided through training opportunities on campus. She expanded on this and said, “I think there's so many tools out there today that someone can get that knowledge, and you can easily access where they need that and provide that for them versus someone who is lacking in cultural sensitivity. I'm not sure they can train them that.”

In summary, the evidence provided supports the concept that the four multicultural competencies presented in MCC, including cultural self-awareness, cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, and cultural knowledge, may assist career services administrators in evaluating candidates for the position of international career counselor. While there were differing opinions on which criteria were more important, in general there was agreement that one criteria cannot exist without the others and that all four were valuable in identifying a qualified candidate. As Craig stated, “it's really difficult to rank these over one another, because in my mind you always look for the utopia and if utopia means that you can find a candidate that has everything that we were talking about then that would be a gold mine to me.” Brian supports this thinking in his words, “the thread or whatever's stitching these components together is really where it's at.” In the next section, the second supporting theme, “Cultural Self-Awareness,” under “Multicultural Competence of Candidates” will be presented.
1b. Cultural Awareness

Career services administrators’ views on the role and importance of cultural awareness in international career counselor candidates were captured in phrases such as “one’s own lens,” “values and personal biases,” and “understanding the impact of your perceptions in your engagement with your students.” All participants spoke of the need to be aware of personal biases and the impact on one’s actions as well as the perceptions of others. Several participants noted an essential part of self-awareness is acknowledging the impact of environment in shaping perspectives. Much agreement existed among participants about the value of cultural self-awareness and its importance in evaluating candidates in the hiring process.

In describing cultural self-awareness, Henry provided a comprehensive description and included related behaviors. He provided the simple statement that cultural awareness is “your ability to interact and deal with other cultural issues.” He added:

It is your own self-knowledge of where you're situated within a group. It is being aware of your own biases and their impact on the situation you are in and the actions you take. A career counselor should be aware of your own cultural origins and how those are perceived by others around them.

While there were strong similarities in how participants described cultural awareness, each offered nuances, supporting the impact of positionality in cultural competencies. For example, Terry carefully defined cultural awareness as “being able to both define the various cultures or demographics that I am a part of, so to me cultural might include age, weight, gender, sexual preference, religion, socioeconomic, education, to be able to define kind of where I fall and who I am, and then also to recognize what that might mean to others when they see me or interact
with me.” Lauren framed this as having an “understanding of where they're coming from, their positionality, and what that impact might be on that student.”

Chris described cultural awareness as the “understanding of one's own lens based upon their culture and lived experience, and an openness and understanding that other folks have their own sort of lived experiences, and even if there are similarities it's still uniquely different from my own.” Craig shares this perspective, but also introduced the concepts of limitations and unconscious biases. This is illustrated in his statement, “at a very metacognitive level, understanding your own values, which includes your limitations as well, so you are aware of not only what you value, but maybe something that we will call the unconscious but now conscious bias.”

Three participants, Jon, Amy, and Brian, spoke to the significance one’s own environment plays in an individual’s cultural awareness. Jon focused on this by stating that “understanding the norms and upbringing by which your personality has been formed is important. We're influenced by any sort of cultural elements of our background, family, whatever it might be.” Amy supported that thought in her comments:

What are the things in perhaps my own up-bringing that biases I may have encountered and how did that form me? And how do I take that and shape that in a way that is positive moving forward? Or what are the unconscious biases that I may not even be aware of just based on environment? So, I think awareness is kind of the first step of just being aware. And then being open to it, and being interested in it, and really having a full appreciation for it.

Brian goes beyond this realization to state, cultural awareness is “knowing that you've grown up within a system that probably supported your identity, and at the same time, there are
many other people in different systems that have not supported their identities, but supported an alternative identity, which can be described as oppressive.” Jon, Amy, and Brian’s comments provide a direct connection between a candidate’s cultural awareness and his or her environment. As a result, the importance of cultural awareness of candidates during the interview process is clear. The difficulty comes in evaluating candidates for cultural competencies.

A direct question was asked about the value of evaluating international career counselors for cultural awareness and all participants agreed that it was an important factor in the interviewing process. While all shared that cultural awareness is important, most expressed difficulty in evaluating for it. Henry said, it is a “more difficult higher order thing to assess in the context of an interview.” He added, “I think issues around cultural awareness probably come up more in the workplace as you are navigating issues than being something you can get at effectively in an interview.” Several participants supported the use of behavioral-based interview questions to uncover a candidate’s cultural awareness. Questions such as “describe a time when you felt culturally uncomfortable and were aware of cultural differences with another. How did you react to the discomfort? How did you engage with the other person?” were offered as suggestions.

In summary, the value of cultural awareness in evaluating career counselors for the position of advising international students was shared by all participants as seen above. While it is important, numerous participants expressed difficulty in evaluating for this during the interview. A few offered behavioral-based questions that can assist in understanding whether a candidate is personally aware of his or her biases and the impact of personal experiences in shaping interactions with international students. Using behavioral interviewing questions was supported as a means of engaging candidates in describing their own cultural awareness and their
ability to use this awareness in an impactful way. In the next section, the third supporting theme, “Cultural Competence,” under “Multicultural Competence of Candidates” will be presented.

1c. Cultural Competence

Cultural competence was also deemed important in the decision-making process of hiring a career counselor who advises international students. While cultural awareness focused on personal biases and an understanding of other cultures, cultural competence was described in terms of behaviors and actions. Phrases such as “what you do with it” and “meeting the student where he is at” were used. Several participants revisited the concept that the competencies are building blocks and connected cultural competence back to self-awareness.

While cultural awareness was described as “being aware of your own biases,” commentary on cultural competence focused on “what you do with that awareness.” This was expressed in words such as “navigate environments,” “raise issues,” and “to probe.” For example, Henry stated:

If cultural awareness to me is how well you are aware of your own culture and how that gets situated within the larger group, I think cultural competence is how well you can interact and navigate in those environments. Describing your ability to converse with folks from other backgrounds that are dissimilar from yours and understand their issues, their needs, their process.

Lauren supported this in her statement, “having a good understanding of different cultures and being competent in working with individuals from different countries and again, I think a little bit with that past question of your own biases and what you bring to a situation.” Chris narrows in on action-based behavior by commenting that cultural competence means:
To be a good listener, to meet the student wherever he or she is at, to not make assumptions upon, you know, based upon how a student may look or what he or she says. It's the ability to know when to probe and dig deeper and to know when you can do that and when maybe you need to back off.

Other career services administrators also spoke to cultural competence in terms of actions and behaviors. Terry referred to cultural competence as “how the [career counselor] approaches change.” Jon remarked that the “key question” is “how…they apply their cultural competence to actuate with other people.” Amy supported this thought by stating, cultural competence is “how…they continue to build a rapport and a relationship with that student.” Brian described it as “someone who asks the right questions.” He said, “in conversations, they're willing to call things out and bring our attention to stuff that the rest of us may have just skipped over without noticing.” He expanded on that thought by saying candidates with strong cultural competence are “willing to raise some issues or questions that would, you know, if everyone's wearing rose colored glasses you're not going to see the other colors so this person does.” Craig described a career counselor with strong cultural competence as:

Someone who will understand who they are first with their identities and… being able to be in multiple kinds of contexts or environments where they can be who they are, but… also understand that there are others that have various other kinds of cultural multiple intersections of their identity… expressed in different ways.

In summary, participates value the role of cultural competence in evaluating international career counselors during the hiring process and describe it as “going beyond your own self-awareness to doing something with that awareness.” They link cultural competences to actions and behaviors, which demonstrate more than cultural self-awareness. As Lauren stated, “it’s
now enough to just be aware, it’s what you do with that awareness, your cultural competence, that is equally important.” In the next section, the fourth supporting theme, “Cultural Sensitivity,” under “Multicultural Competence of Candidates” will be presented.

1d. Cultural Sensitivity

As it relates to the importance of cultural sensitivity in candidates for the position of international career counselor, participants used similar language to how they described cultural awareness. Phrases such as “our own values” and “removing our lens” were used in describing both criteria. At the same time, a new set of words were introduced such as “empathy,” “accepting,” and “non-judgmental.” Like descriptions of cultural competence, participants used language around activities or behaviors such as “to respond,” “to go beyond,” and “to alleviate.” As noted with the previous competencies, the participants provide similar descriptions of cultural sensitivity, but each adds their own nuances to it.

Chris said it’s “not being judgmental or placing our own values on someone else. Or it's really about removing our own lens.” Brian comments supported this by saying “it’s to understand oneself and how we treat and respond to others.” He went on to say that people with strong cultural sensitivity “work to understand and convey that effort of understanding.” Craig described it as a “sense of empathy” and “being able to situate yourself in someone else's shoes.” He furthered this by stating it’s “to go beyond the being able to situate yourself in somebody else's shoes to seeking to learn something new about that individual so that you can actually do something to help and make that actionable.”

Terry described cultural sensitivity as “acknowledging and accepting people's differences.” Amy sees it as an “interest” or “curiosity” and stated candidates who demonstrate cultural sensitivity are:
Interested in people, interested in knowing who they are and where they're from. If I don't really understand the reasoning behind it based on the cultural difference, I want to know why. When I don't get it and I don't understand it, I want to figure it out, because I think it's important.”

Lauren connects cultural sensitivity to emotional intelligence, and stated:

It’s important to have emotional intelligence and be able to read a situation and see if someone is uncomfortable in your presence. Are you doing something that perhaps is making them feel uncomfortable? Just being aware of yourself, again, and the impact of your personality on that individual.

This perspective offers career service administrators with an approach that can be used in interviews to evaluate for cultural sensitivity. In line with previous suggestions, behavioral interview questions can be utilized guiding the candidate to describe a time when “you were meeting with an international student and you could sense they were uncomfortable. What made your aware of their discomfort and what did you do to alleviate it?”

In summary, in the case of cultural sensitivity, participants agree on its importance in making hiring decisions regarding international career counselors. There is agreement among participants that overlap exists between cultural sensitivity and cultural awareness. Participants extend their descriptions of cultural sensitivity to include the emotions or attributes needed to effectively serve international students. The challenge becomes how to assess for this competency in the interviewing process. As suggested in previous sections, behavioral interview questions offer an effective way to engage candidates in dialog and story telling that demonstrates their ability to be cultural sensitive when advising international students. In the
next section, the final supporting theme, “Cultural Knowledge,” under the theme, “Multicultural Competence of Candidates,” will be presented.

1e. Cultural Knowledge

Participants found cultural knowledge to be a more difficult competency to define than the other three competencies discussed. Instead, they often described the types of knowledge needed such as a basic awareness of international student primary needs and issues, knowledge of international student visa types, and an understanding of cultural differences such as individualism versus collectivism and masculine versus feminine societies. The participants agreed that cultural knowledge is not only difficult to define, but equally difficult to assess in an interview, and some suggested it may not be a necessary factor in the interview at all.

Craig stated, “I use cultural knowledge in very broad sense like I was talking about earlier, yeah, I think it's a lot of stuff.” The participants’ hesitancy in defining cultural knowledge can be seen in Terry’s statement:

I think to me cultural knowledge is knowing about something and sharing it, educating others. Funny, I’m noticing I’m getting a little bit anxious around talking about cultural knowledge, because I do not think that I’m an expert in educating others. To me, cultural knowledge would be can you educate others to a level ... You know, to a high degree? From different countries, there are definitely patterns in terms of the approach to career development or their career journey, so just being able to talk about those.

Both Chris and Brian agreed that cultural knowledge is not necessarily knowing all the answers, but rather knowing where to get the answers. Chris said, “it’s working from, having a baseline knowledge of the cultures of the students that we're likely to see in our offices, a little bit of understanding of history between cultures, and a willingness to, if you don't understand to dig
deeper and go learn for yourself.” Brian added, “cultural knowledge is a characteristic, you don't have to know the law, but you have to understand what's behind all of that a little bit so they can help an international student and also understand it.”

Craig stated that cultural knowledge is not just seeking out and understanding relevant information in terms of “different dimensions of culture and not just how their segmented, but also how they work in tandem like intersectionality, so understanding that one's immutable characteristics may not necessarily be their salient identity.” When asked for more details, Craig explained that a candidate needs to demonstrate an understanding that cultural knowledge is more than information, it’s the ability to adapt as needed to deal with different cultural situations. This speaks directly to the complexity career services administrators have in evaluating a candidate for cultural knowledge in an interview. Brian’s enthusiastically shared:

Cultural knowledge, wow! I feel like that could be a large undertaking to ask of one person because just to be honest with you, I don't think I have it all. And to evaluate someone for it during the interview, is a large ticket item. The closest I get to doing this is in the resume review and pre-screening questions.

Lauren supported this idea in comments about another manager who reported to her who was hiring an international career counselor. “He felt that cultural knowledge would be more part of training or ongoing professional development.” Lauren recalled specifically discussing the difficulty of evaluating a candidate for cultural knowledge with this manager beyond a cursory review of the candidate’s resume.

Terry and Craig offered a different perspective that cultural knowledge may not be as necessary to evaluate in an interview. Terry said she felt it was the least important of the factors when considering the significance of characteristics such as cultural awareness, competency, and
sensitively, because, like Lauren, she believes “knowledge is something that can be learned, so out of all of the ones, knowledge I would say would be fairly at the lower end.” Craig shared this sentiment and said “‘Yeah, even if they don't have it, but they have the passion for it, we can give them the tools, the resources in order to continue learning and training.’”

In summary, cultural knowledge appears to be the most elusive factor in the MCC model as seen in this section as well as the section above on the importance and interconnectivity of competencies. Most participants agreed it is difficult to evaluate for in the interview. Some felt it was the least important as candidates “don’t need to know all the answers, just were to find relevant answers,” and other participates described it as something career counselors can be trained on. Next, overarching conclusions are provided on theme, “Multicultural Competence of Candidates,” drawing from the evidence provided in the sub-themes.

**Multicultural Competence of Candidates Conclusions**

Participants agreed that three of four of Arredondo’s (1996) multicultural competencies -- cultural awareness, cultural competence, and cultural sensitivity -- are important in evaluating potential candidates for the position of international career counselor at institutions of higher education in the U.S. While the group acknowledged the importance of cultural knowledge, several participants described it as something international career counselors can gain through training and professional development. They also agreed that these competencies are blocking blocks rather than a linear set of skills and described them in terms of “characteristics,” “a curiosity,” and “higher order abilities.” These observations help explain the difficulty expressed by career services administrators in evaluating candidates for these competencies during the interview process. Even so, behavioral-based interviewing was offered as a strategy since this
approach provides interviewers with the ability to ask probing questions that ask a candidate to “describe a time when.”

The researcher suggests that another strategy could be the development of an interview rubric designed with the MCC in mind, which includes rich descriptions of each competency as it relates to counselors in general. Interviewing rubrics were suggested by several participants and will be described in the sub-theme, “Complexity of the Hiring Process.” In the next section, the second core theme, “Interview Formats and Questions” is presented along with its corresponding three supporting themes, “Types of Questions,” “Examples of Questions,” and “Consecutive Interview and Involving Others in the Process.” These sections are supported with direct evidence from the participant interview data and conclusions are drawn prior to moving to the next theme.

**Interview Formats and Questions**

The second key theme focused on the participants’ perspectives on the types of interview questions that are most effective in evaluating career counselors for multicultural competencies during the hiring process as well as examples of specific questions they have used. In addition, having an interview plan that includes multiple interviews and involves other stakeholders was identified as a best practice by the participants of this study. Two preferred types of interview questions, behavioral-based and case-study questions, were discussed by all participants. While different terms were used to describe these types of questions, essentially, career service administrators agreed on their importance in guiding a potential candidate to provide detailed and rich responses on how they have handled or would approach advising scenarios with international students.

**2a. Types of Questions**
When asked about the types of interview questions most effective in evaluating candidates for the position of international career counselor, only two responses were given by all eight participations, behavioral-based and case-study questions. In relation to the former, three participants referred to them as “behavioral-based questions,” while others described them as asking “developing or probing questions.” As it relates to the later, several referred to them as “case scenario type questions,” while two called them “case studies.” In several cases, it appears that these two terms were used interchangeably. Regardless of what words were used, there was strong agreement among the eight participants that these types of questions are essential in the hiring process for this position.

When speaking to behavioral-based questions, Chris emphasizes the need to “really ask probing questions.” He explained that the role of the career services administrator conducting the interview is to “dig deeper if we're not sort of feeling like the candidate is providing enough context or enough detail.” Terry’s insight supported Chris’ emphasis on “asking a series of questions.” Amy focused on behavioral-based questions as a way of “getting to what influences that person, what excites them.” She also described the role of the hiring manager in the interview:

I think you probably have to really dig deep with your behavioral questions. On paper, it might say that they speak several languages, or that they've traveled extensively, or maybe they've even worked within the higher ed setting in a study abroad office, or an international student office, which certainly gives them some credentials within that sector. But, I want to dig deep on those question to see, is that real? Because, I think there are good employees and bad employees everywhere in every sector, so it's not enough that they have that on their resume.
In Lauren’s commentary on behavioral-based questions, she suggested this type of question could be as simple as asking candidates about their own culture as well as the different students they have worked with. She explained that learning about the candidate’s culture and hearing examples of interactions with students from different cultures provides insight on how he or she adapted to situations and how cultural bias may have impacted the exchange. According to Lauren, “what we would do is probably the dominant culture that we have.” She suggested asking questions such as:

Tell me about a time you were meeting a student from China. How did you make them feel comfortable in the beginning of an advising session or you may ask them if they have traveled across the world and what was their interpretation of that. Just to hear how they explain themselves in a different culture and what that felt to them.

In terms of case-scenario type questions, Amy, Craig, Brian, and Jon spoke of the benefits of candidates describing actual scenarios they had with students, which demonstrate past behaviors in line with their multicultural competency skills. Craig expressed that at his institution:

We look toward past behavior and we also go through case scenarios to see what issues bubble up which lends us to believe that they may be aware of value and biases and how that may apply whether that be to them or within the case scenario that's a given. Does it show their ability to articulate self-awareness or the awareness of the issues that are cultural collisions, if you will, and that's part of how we evaluate.

Craig, Brian, and Henry described “developing” or “unfolding” of questions in an “iterative process.” Craig stated that this approach requires the interviewer to use “developing questions” that are specific to student populations. Brian supported this approach in his remarks, “that is
essential right there, the nature of unfolding the question in a series of questions that's how complex the questions have to be in order to dig deep enough to get at the essence of this knowledge or a skillset from an interviewee.” Henry added, “it is iterative in the sense that we kept refining questions to get at more and more detail throughout the process to try to better assess who would be a better fit for us.”

Being able to guide an interviewee through a series of questions that uncover a rich level of details outlining behaviors, attributes, and skill sets linked to the four multicultural competencies explored in this study was identified as a highly important factor in evaluating potential international career counselors. Behavioral-based and case study questions offer career services administrators a means of doing this. Craig explained why these types of questions work in doing this:

We will deploy case scenario questions and we will also deploy behavior questions, so we look toward past behavior and we also go through case scenarios to see what issues bubble up which lends us to believe that they may be aware of value and biases and how that may apply whether that be to them or within the case scenario that's a given….

[essentially] are they able to navigate successfully those situations that may arise?

In summary, career services administrators demonstrate a preference for behavioral and scenario-based interview questions. They value these types of questions, because of the ability to integrate “unfolding” or “probing” questions. Guiding candidates to provide a deep level of detail on how they have or how they would interact with specific international student groups is considered a fundamental function of the hiring manager. If done well, career service administrators feel that this approach will unveil a candidate’s multicultural competencies in line with the responsibilities, skill sets, and experience necessary to successfully perform in this
position. In the next section, the second supporting theme, “Sample Questions,” under “Interview Formats and Questions” will be presented.

2b. Sample Questions

The second sub-theme of the theme, “Interview Formats and Questions” consists of insights into the wording and purpose of questions that career service administrators have used or suggest would be helpful during interviews with candidates for the position of international career counselor. The eight participants provided examples of questions related to evaluating a candidate’s experience in advising international students, international and cultural experiences, ability to handle ambiguity and challenging situations, and passion for the role.

In terms of experience, career services administrators evaluate for general experience in advising international students, but also experience specific to the international student populations on their campus. Henry, Terry, and Chris spoke to the need to ask interviewees questions about their experience in counseling and advising international students around career issues. Henry described how a question such as this unfolds:

I tell a candidate, [our] students come from diverse cultures. I ask them how would you navigate these cultures to be most effective in this role? It was probably something around you have a first-year international student from China who's interested in X, wants to do this. How do you tackle this? What are some of the major issues you might encounter?

In his approach to understanding a candidate’s experience in working with specific student populations, Brian asks the following question, “tell me about your experience with this population? What kind of programming have you done? What do you think about this, how do you feel?” Through this line of questioning, Brian stated he is “trying to get an understanding of
where they were as an individual and as a professional and their value set.” Lauren provided specific examples of questions she asks candidates including, “how would you greet a student from China? How would you greet a student from ... Probably ask for examples of, tell me what your greeting is for different cultures? Do you change it at all? {I’m} looking for specific things that they do.”

Career services administrators also discussed the need to evaluate candidates for their ability to handle ambiguity and dissonance. The words “comfortable” and “uncomfortable” were used frequently. Henry stated, “we want to hear both what their experience was and how comfortable they were and how frequently they had interacted with international students in the past.” Terry’s approach includes questions related to “a time when they've worked in a diverse, with diverse students, people who are different from themselves, and/or instead of working with, but exposure to what are they doing to get beyond their own comfort zone to advance their own cultural competency.”

Another example provided by Lauren is “tell me about your international travel and was there a time that you felt uncomfortable in an international setting, and how did you overcome that? What did you to do make yourself feel more comfortable in that type of setting?” Terry stated that she felt questions such as these supported interviewees in telling their “success stories” in navigating challenging situations.

Another topic regarding relevant questions related to how career counselors cope with challenges while advising international students. Three of the participants offered insight. Words such as “dealing” and “frustration,” were used. Amy asks candidates about the “challenges they may have encountered in dealing in a previous position with advising international students.” Her interview questions include:
In your own experiences through international travel, can you tell me what challenges that you faced? What were your frustrations? How did you handle them? Can you tell me what is the number one thing you wish you could change in working with international students?

Terry frames her questions around “describing a time when a student has chosen to pursue goals or a path that may not be realistic considering the work authorization and employment visa limits in the U.S.” She asks the candidate to discuss how this conversation “looks and feels” to see the candidate’s level of empathy and support as well as whether he or she set clear expectations for the student as it relates to U.S. employment. Craig also spoke of assessing a candidate’s behavior in challenging discussions with students and offered the following questioning framework:

Talk about a time where you worked with an international student who was from a group that you do not identify with in which you didn't necessarily know everything about their cultural background. What did you do to assess what was going on and what were some of the internal questions that you wanted to address in order to understand or to address the student's needs?

Four of the participants presented questions that focused on assessing the career counselor’s advising abilities and the impact of his or her international experiences on these abilities. Amy suggested that gaining a perspective of the candidate “as the individual” who has experienced “culture and cultural differences, versus [just] their professional experience” is important. Craig referred to a case scenario in which he asks candidates to address their approach with international students and whether this approach is “clinical.” He explained that he wants to understand their “style, how their techniques would change.” He asks them, “why
did you change your approach?” He wants to know if there is a recognition of the international student as an individual, “somebody in the non-majority group.”

Assessing counselors’ advising abilities connects directly to their multicultural competencies as described by the career services administrators. Brian asks them “if you were to develop a career development program or a model, what's important to you and how do you ensure the international student’s perspective is represented?” He stated he is “looking for content around multicultural identity development which can be inclusive of an international student's identity development in the context of a multicultural, intercultural community.”

Brian, Amy, and Jon expressed the need for interview questions to uncover the influence of the career counselor’s competencies such as cultural self-awareness, cultural sensitivity, and cultural competence. Brian stated:

We ask several questions about, behavioral-based questions where we ask candidates to provide examples of times when they've worked with people who are different than them, both as a success story and as challenging situation through a candidate's own storytelling.

Amy asks candidates to:

Imagine yourself in a different country and in a different school system and you're a student. What are the things you think you would need to do to try to adapt, and who would you reach out to? And what would you be looking for? You know, again that walk a mile in my shoes kind of philosophy.

Jon wants to understand a candidate’s ability to deal with “ambiguity and guiding student discussions when the student may not be heading the direction you think is best, student having a challenging time, impact of collectivist cultures and family.” He presents questions such as:
How would you work with the student that is having a challenging time deciding between things that they have interest in, and expectations from the family, how they have conversations with family and parents about career development, or career plans, or goal setting.

Another topic brought up by two of the participants is a candidate’s “passion” for working with international students. Amy will ask the candidate:

What was the most rewarding part for them of working with international students? What sense of satisfaction did they gain from their work? You know, trying to gauge with that question what type of a cheerleader they are, because I think a good advisor is a good cheerleader for our students.

Henry suggested a need to understand if working with international students is “a job that they're going to come in and clock and clock out, and do it?” He feels it is important to understand the “other ways outside of work that candidates engage with international populations.”

In summary, career services administrators provided insight into questions they use or suggest are impactful in evaluating career counselors for positions related to advising international students. Example questions focused on a career counselor’s experience included several levels. General experience in advising as well as experience with specific international student populations were important as well as the impact of the candidate’s own international experiences and multicultural competencies. Other questions posed relate to uncovering a candidate’s ability to work with diverse student populations and his or her “passion” for this work. Often questions dealing with ambiguity and methods for dealing with students with challenging issues are utilized. Collectively, these types of questions are deemed helpful by career services administrators in assessing the candidate’s multicultural competencies.
The researcher suggests that the theoretical framework followed in this study, Arredondo et al. (1996) multicultural competency model, may offer a strong foundation in vetting, enhancing, and development relevant interview questions. The multicultural competencies highlighted in Arredondo’s work align with the qualities, attributes, and characteristics described by career services administrators when discussing relevant interview questions. In the next sub-theme section, “Consecutive Interviews and Involving Others” will be examined.

2c. Consecutive Interviews and Involving Others

The final sub-theme of the main theme related to “Interview Formats and Questions” is the value of a plan that includes multiple interviews and involves other constituents. Because of the complexity in hiring a candidate for the role of providing career advising to international students, several participants in this study articulated the need to conduct multiple interviews for each candidate that incorporate other stakeholders. The department which provides international student services, career services staff members, and a representative group of international students were identified as relevant communities to include in the interviewing process. Phrases such as “external value” and “gain feedback from others” were used to describe the value of this approach.

Brian stated, “we're trying to look for a needle in a haystack sometimes {and must} meet with candidates multiple times, because then at least you can kind of get where they're at.” When asked her opinion on this concept, Amy agreed that “because again of the complexity of this type of hire” there is value in having “a sequential interviewing pattern.” She went on to say, “you've got to keep asking questions that delve deeper and if you can't make a decision by a second interview or a third interview, then you're probably not looking at the right candidate.”
In terms of involving others in the interviewing process, Craig said, “having somebody from our international students’ gig coming in to be able to ask some of their questions and see how {the candidates} respond,” is critical. Brian supported this by saying, “this person will contribute in the selection of a candidate, they'll have some external value to the effect.” He went on to say:

We try to always have in our interview somebody who is representing a non-majority orientation. And I will ask that person to ask questions and provide me feedback. Our goal is to try to get other perspectives and so by intention we'll try to get, kind of force that other perspective by having someone who is not like me.

Amy suggested that there may be another career counselor “whose really successful with international students that would be a good choice to be interviewing this candidate.” As part of a sequential interviewing plan, Amy described, “bringing them to lunch and hosting them on campus a little bit and showing them around, allowing them to share some of their experiences or reaching out to colleagues in other areas like International Student Services that work with international students” to be part of the process.

Henry also spoke to the value others, including international students, can bring into the decision-making process in balancing out the interviewee’s biases:

I like to get as much feedback from other people on it of what they think, what are they impressions of the candidate that will be brought in, did they notice something that I didn't notice throughout the process. In particular, for this role, this person also had a very large forward-facing presence with the international students. So, finding somebody who would be a good fit with them, who could connect with them both emotionally and intellectually was important.
In addition to administrative representation during an interview, Terry and Jon, like Henry suggested that international students be a part of the process, which “allows us to kind of read their response” on a candidate. Terry stated:

I would really want to hear from my partners in international house and the office of multicultural affairs ... I would really want to know how they would ... Their impressions on working with this candidate. The same thing with if I was going to have a student portion of the interview, have the international student to meet with and interview and talk to the person.

While several participants spoke to the value of involving students in the hiring process, Amy offered a different view based on her own experiences:

I think you need to be really careful about your student selection because that could really come back to bite you if the student panel, even if it's one international student who says "I don't like that person" based on maybe their own unconscious biases. And then, you hire that person because everyone else signs off on it, now suddenly you've got this student who's most likely an international student leader on campus and what's going to happen with that relationship with that student and any other students they're engaged with, such as student clubs or organizations on campus.

In summary, career services administrators describe the need for an interviewing plan which includes sequential interviews and multiple stakeholders, because of the complexity in the decision-making process for the position of international career counselor. The identified stakeholders include representatives from the area which provides international student services on-campus, other career counselors, and a group of international students. While all the participants advocated for the value of integrating the perspectives of others in the process, one
career services administrator cautioned the involvement of international students who may not agree with the ultimate candidate chosen. Career services administrators should be cognizant of this risk in advance of involving students. Next, conclusions are presented on the theme, “Interview Format and Questions.”

**Interview Format and Questions Conclusions**

Participants agreed that multicultural competencies outlined in the MCC --cultural awareness, cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, and cultural knowledge -- are important in evaluating potential candidates for the position of international career counselor at institutions of higher education in the U.S. They also agreed that it is difficult for career services administrators to evaluate candidates for these competencies during the interview process. Even so, behavioral-based and case study interviewing questions were offered as a strategy. This approach provides interviewers with the ability to use probing questions that ask a candidate to “describe a time when.” This iterative, two-way dialogue assists the career services administrators in understanding a candidate’s ability to deal with ambiguity and interact with international students in a culturally appropriate manner.

Career services administrators also advocated for hiring managers to use an interview plan that incorporates multiple interviews for each candidate and integrates the involvement of other on-campus stakeholders. By involving other career counselors, members of the area providing international student services, and a representative group of international students, administrators can gain a broader perspective increasing the likelihood of choosing a candidate that will be successful in the role of advising international students on career development related topics. In the next section, the third core theme, “Complexity of Hiring Process” will be presented along with its corresponding four supporting themes, “Interviewer's Own Competency
Level,” “Environmental Factors,” “Administrator Emotions,” and “Best Practices and Resources” through data presented by the participants.

**Complexity of Hiring Process**

Career services administrators contend that while there is complexity in all hiring decisions, the nature of the position of international career counselor provides for added complexity. This is due to the depth of multicultural competencies needed by international career counselors to adequately serve the career advising needs of international students studying in the U.S. The third main theme regarding the complexity of the hiring process includes four sub-themes including the interviewer’s own multicultural competency level, relevant environmental factors, the emotions of the career services administrator during this process, and participant-supported best practices and resources to assist other career services administrators. The following section provides insight into the sub-themes.

**3a. Interviewer's Own Competency Level**

Five of the eight career services administrators believe that understanding their own level of multicultural competencies is an important piece in the hiring decision-making process. While there were no direct interview questions seeking this information and it did not come up in the other three interviews, the five who mentioned it made a compelling argument for its impact in the hiring process. These participants shared their concern with being adequately “equipped” to make hiring decisions that so heavily rely on evaluating another’s cultural competencies. Simple statements were used to express this concern. Henry shared his perspective of “questioning my own ability to evaluate them.” Terry stated, “I don't know what it's like to be anyone other than myself.” In line with questions about evaluating candidates for cultural knowledge, Craig stated, “Wow. I feel like that could be a large undertaking to ask of one person because just to be honest
with you, I don't think I have it all.” Brian agreed with this sentiment by stating, “I don’t know everything... I try to be as intentional as I can be in my selection of staff and in fact often my team they’re surprised when I announce who will get the job. And I'll explain these are some of the reasons and they often are surprised by what I share.”

Jon shared a deep level of concern with his ability to evaluate candidates for the necessary competencies and provided insight on the attention he gives to understanding the impact his own biases have during the hiring process. He feels career services administrators must keep in mind that “your ability to navigate the hiring process” is affected by the “perspective you bring with you.” He urges administrators to spend time being reflective:

What does [the impact of my biases] look like and do I confuse competencies with ... you know, the priorities of other things that are important? So, it's... I think it's a constant, sort of battle to remind myself of the decision making [steps I took] and make some check points in the process to ask myself ... you know, what are the valid elements or factors that are influenced in the decision?

Henry went as far as saying, “Well, who am I to know how to evaluate somebody on cultural sensitivity, or cultural knowledge! Or, cultural competence!”

In contrast, Amy articulated her confidence in her competencies and expressed the positive impact of this in her hiring decisions by stating:

I have a lot of patience and empathy in general, but specifically in a cultural context. I kind of think what that does for me is that translates into if I don't really understand the reasoning behind it based on the cultural difference, I want to know why. So, it really kind of starts there for me... I think that a career manager needs to understand their own skill sets and abilities to be culturally aware, and that they're already sensitive to that,
interested in that, engaged in that. That has helped me in making the right hiring
decisions for international career counselors.

To build the confidence that Amy describes, she advocates for career administrators to use self-
reflection in understanding the level of their own multicultural competencies and their ability to
best utilize these competencies in evaluating candidates. She also advocates for on-going
training and exposure to these competencies as a means of honing and enhancing the
administrator’s ability to evaluate others. This direction is supported by Terry who said, “I would
say that if these four factors [multicultural competencies] are in fact critical to the decision
making, making sure that the person in the decision making [position] has gone through training
and understands what those four things mean.”

In summary, career services administrators expressed concern over the impact their own
multicultural competences have in the process of hiring a career counselor who advises
international students. Several shared concerns with their own ability to evaluate for these
competencies. One observation is that the sensitivity they exhibit on this topic may, in fact, be
an indicator of a high level of multicultural competencies, which puts them in a good position to
evaluate others on the same competencies. An outlier provided a different perspective asserting
her confidence in her ability to be culturally sensitive and culturally aware. She described these
as having a positive impact the decision-making process she has experienced in hiring for this
position.

Regardless of the stance provided, career services administrators acknowledge the impact
of their own biases and multicultural competencies in the making hiring decisions and advocate
that administrators “check in” or reflect on this as they navigate this process. While not
discussed under best practices, the use of reflection seems to be one that administrators could
benefit from. In the next section, “Environmental Factors” affecting career services administrators during the hiring process will be examined.

3b. Environmental Factors

When asked about the environmental factors that impact the hiring decision process, career services administrators often diverted to thoughts related to emotions. Words such as “stressful,” “conflict,” and “pressure” were used. Probing questions were needed to guide the participants beyond the emotions to determine what environmental factors may play a role. While the next section will discuss the emotions involved, this section is a synopsis of factors provided by the participants including time of year, staffing levels, and assessment of overall staffing needs.

“Time of the year plays a big part in it,” stated Henry. Jon, Lauren, and Amy also emphasized this factor. Lauren offered, “for my campus spring and summer are busiest times, those times I would be in crisis mode. Never really a good time of year as a gap in staffing means others have to do those roles and they may not be being done correctly.” Amy spoke to the impact of this factor by stating, “I think, any time that you rush to make a hire based on those other stresses going on, you could have a mistake on your hands, and certainly I've experienced that because of the department that we have being a large department.” In contrast, Terry’s perspective is that “time of year isn’t as big a factor as the priority of getting the right fit, [I’ve] never felt super rushed to find someone who doesn’t fit because of the time of year.”

Assessment of staffing levels and needs was another noted environmental factor. Chris described the need to assess staffing holistically, identify gaps, and use this information in hiring the “right” employee. He feels that the staffing level is an environmental factor that should be considered when assessing “how [a] candidate’s unique strengths and knowledge complement
and diversify that of existing staff members.” Amy discussed being short-staffed and how her team is “struggling to get [work] done,” because of the need to fill an international career counselor position. She noted the burden this places on her team until the position is filled. Team members who are expected to “fill in,” by meeting with international students, experience stress and concern over their abilities to serve this unique student population. While this is a major concern for Amy, she added:

I guess one of the things that I tried to do, related to that is, first kind of understand the stresses that are going on in the environment of, maybe, being short staffed and what other work is struggling to get done, or the burden that places on the team during that process. But, really kind of not ... Trying very hard not to think about that, because I think it's important to take your time to make the best decision.

Other environmental factors mentioned, but not elaborated on included physical location, programs offered, and the ability to pay competitive salaries. Terry shared concern over her institution’s physical location and portfolio of majors, and its ability to attract candidates. She has experienced candidates who are “weary at working for a STEM institution.” In terms of salary factors, Chris explained the level of complexity related to advising international students warrants a larger salary than other advising positions within his team, but he struggles to get approval to “provide a level of salary that is commensurate with the selected candidate’s skills and experience.”

In summary, career services administrators struggled to define the environmental factors related to the decision-making process in hiring international career counselors. Through probing questions, the researcher gained more insight into factors such as time, location, and staffing levels. Often, the participant would revert to describing the emotions involved with less
details on the environmental concerns. This may indicate that career services administrators are not reflecting on the underlying issues that cause the stress level they describe in line with making this hiring decision. In the next section, the “Administrator Emotions” described by participants during the hiring process will be examined.

3c. Administrator Emotions

Six of the eight participants provided a rich data set of language describing the emotions they experience during the decision-making process inherent in hiring a career counselor who advises international students. As described in the previous section, words such as “stressful,” “anxious,” “risk,” “conflict,” and “urgency” were frequently used. While several of the participants acknowledged there is a level of stress with all hiring positions, they confirm there is a higher level with this position. Yet, career administers also described a level of excitement and energy that is involved with this process. This mix of emotions was captured by Terry who said, “I’m anxious, distracted and hopeful.”

In describing his experiences in making hiring decisions for this position, Henry said he feels “a lot of pressure to make the right hire, getting the right balance” of fit, skills and personality. Henry feels it is important to find “somebody that's going to come in and be able to make some changes, but not be so disruptive that they're not successful.” This gives Henry, and the other career services administrators, a high level of stress, because of complexity of the decision-making process and as Henry describes the “going back and forth even if I have decided I could like a candidate, I will stick with that thought for a little while and kind of blow it over and think about it from a couple of different sides before feeling more comfortable pulling the trigger and extending an offer.” This process takes “a lot of conversations with people throughout the interview process to try to weed out and ask different questions to ascertain what
they would be like when they're actually on the job.” When asked if this tension was more extreme because of the complexity of this position, Henry agreed.

These tensions lead to anxiety for the career services administrators who describe risk, a sense of urgency, and conflict as factors. Lauren and Amy identified risks in not having someone in this role and not filling it quickly enough. Lauren stated, “I experience a great sense of urgency to fill as quickly as possible due to impact of work on others.” At the same time, they shared the risk of rushing to make a hiring decision just to fill the position, which would make matters worse. Lauren felt that this created a “huge risk for university” if a poor hiring decision is made and “we do something [that] isn’t done correctly with this group of students with unique career advising needs.” Amy emphasized this through her comment, “by rushing, you're just putting all of that at risk.” Jon provided a comprehensive look at the balance between the urgency of filling this position and the risk of filling it “too quickly” by stating:

Do I have enough time to find a pool that matches that need or want? And, will that candidate have enough experience that I can throw them in right away and hit the ground running? Or, will I not have that? So, I'm stressed now because I've kind of figured out their priority. But, I've got to make sure I'm not ... cutting my nose to spite my face in the sense of; it might take 6 months to get that person up to speed.

Other forms of anxiety were discussed by Amy related to concerns over a candidate’s ability to effectively serve international students. She spoke to being anxious about evaluating whether a candidate was equipped to “manage students who are shopping for the answer they want.” She says this happens, because often, international students want to stay and work in the U.S. even though work authorization is quite limited. Because of this, international students who want to stay and work in the U.S. often meet with several career services staff members
searching for the “answers they’re looking for.” Terry also shared insight about being anxious that a candidate for this position “wasn’t going to be open and forthcoming with their questions or wanted to find answers on their own, over step their role instead of directing students to the International House, that would cause me hesitancy.”

While candidates pointed out their concern with having the ability to make hiring decisions based on their own level of cultural competencies, Henry and others demonstrated optimism. Henry said:

The way that I like to think about it is I would like to hire people that I know are smarter than me. So throughout conversations, I recognized different candidates we were looking at knew more than I did about cultural competencies for culture that I was less familiar with and, therefore, I felt they would be the correct fit.”

Henry, Chris, Lauren, and Terry spoke to feeling “excited” during the process. Henry described being “excited and energized” by interviewees who answered questions with “fresh eyes.” He spoke to a candidate’s “level of energy and excitement,” which made him feel “comfortable in making a decision… knowing that they were coming at this with a lot of good ideas and were excited to tackle this issue head on.” Interestingly, Henry concluded his thought with “then after that, I would say [I am] anxious about making the right choice.”

While Henry was not the only administrator to speak to being excited, he articulated this feeling in full detail:

You bring somebody in, there's a lot of energy and anxiety around bringing somebody in. They may or may not work out and you have to kind of go back to the drawing board and go back to the applicant pool and then you get excited to bring somebody else in and you're anxiously waiting for the negotiation process to end so you can resolve this and
move on with it. So I think the other piece was a lot of that sort of rollercoaster motion of up and down with it.

Chris stated, “I am excited for new perspectives, energy, and ideas. I am somewhat anxious as a hiring decision has long-lasting impact within an organization.” He also described a “sense of curiosity…wondering if what is presented by the candidate throughout the process is what we can expect if the candidate is hired.” Lauren and Terry also share a feeling of excitement when there are “good candidates to interview.” Terry stated:

When candidates give examples of how they have worked with international students and connected with them, physically I found myself leaning into what they’re saying, nodding a lot, smiling, and sharing a mini story that shows how what they said connects to confirm what they’re saying is like our experiences here, If I’m not excited or comfortable with them, I do not share these mini stories, I don’t connect with them on that level.

Terry, Amy, and Lauren spoke of their level of confidence in making these decisions, which they both clearly felt impacted their ability to make strong hiring decisions. Terry stated, “in the last 5 hires for this position, [there has] always been a clear strong candidate, always been an outlier.” Amy added:

I definitely feel like I go into the interviews confident, because I know the institution well. I know what the mission of our, and the purpose of our department is well. And, I know the team well, so I know what ... And, I know our students well, so I'm looking for something in a candidate, so I kind of go into it with, I think, a high degree of confidence is probably a good way to do it. I also think relaxed, because I think that's important to be relaxed and not to put a candidate on guard.
In addition to describing the emotions related to making this hiring decision, several career services administrators remarked on why these emotions exist. As stated previously, while often hiring decisions are stressful, hiring for career counselors who advise international students provides for a more complex hiring decision due to multicultural factors and student expectations in line with work authorization in the U.S. Career services administrators are, according to Jon, “committed to doing what's right.” Amy spoke to a “balance between emotion and logic,” and said:

It's important to take your time to make the best decision. There's still a certain unknown that you're taking a chance that this person will be right for your team and your university and for your students. Your trying to make the best decision for the team, regardless of what stresses are going on.

In summary, career services administrators feel both stressed and excited about the hiring process for career counselors who advise international students. They connect the stress experienced to the complexity involved with this position and the heightened level of multicultural competencies needed by the candidates to effectively serve the international students on-campus. Career services administrators worry about not having someone in this role and the impact that has on other staff members as well as filling the position too quickly and regretting the decision. They also worry about their own ability to assess candidates on their multicultural competence. At the same time, the administrators describe feeling excited and optimistic about finding a candidate that fits well within their team and can have a positive impact on the international student population. The combination of stress and excitement seems to indicate the career services administrators’ drive to “to do the right thing.” In the next section, the sub-theme, “Best Practices” will be shared as presented by the participants.
3d. Best Practices

Best practices discussed by participants included networking and tools such as an interviewing rubric. Other ideas included developing effective job descriptions in line with the department’s purpose and establishing interview questions based on multicultural competencies required for the position. By far, networking was the most prominent best practices discussed. Six participants spoke to the need to network with other career services administrators, informally as well as through higher education professional organizations such as the National Career Development Association (NCDA), the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), and NAFSA: Association of International Educators (NAFSA).

Henry emphasized the need to find “the right network of people that are interested in international populations and career development advising practices that are culturally relevant.” Craig referred to such a group as a “consortia that shares these cultural competency resources with peer colleagues.” Jon described it as a “very close-knit support group” that he can have “honest, open conversations [with] about those conflicts.” The impact of informal networking has a positive impact on Jon during the hiring process. He stated he values connecting with his: Support group of like-minded people who have values that are the same, that are not at my university so I can really have open discussion about it and not have any sort of ramifications pertaining to my work place. I could have that conversation and it helps me re-center what I was trying to do. And, I think it helps me remember the priority to look to diversify my staff in terms of thought and perspective, as well as race and background. Because, inevitably that would make my staff better.

As it relates to formal networking opportunities, in addition to NCDA, NACE, NAFSA, administrators named the American Counseling Association (ACA), NASPA - Student Affairs
Administrators in Higher Education (NAPSA), and the Intercultural Communications Institute. Lauren cautioned that when looking for a relevant professional organization, career services administrators should “look at organizations that reflect the cultural competencies that you're looking for [in candidates].” This advice aligns with Jon’s comments regarding informal networks and the importance of connecting with others who focus on multicultural competencies.

In terms of cultural competency research, Henry specifically named NCDA’s International Task Force, which is made up of members interested in career services and programs for international students in the U.S. and in other countries. In 2015, the International Student Work Group, a subgroup of the NCDA International Task Force, produced a ninety-three-page guide, *Resources for Partnering with International Students*. While this tool provides valuable best practices and resources for career services professionals working with international students, Henry noted it does not include details for leaders in career services related to making an effective hiring decision. While all participants were quick to identify organizations such as NCDA, as it relates to making hiring decisions for positions related to advising international students, a sense of disappointment was shared on the lack of resources and tools to support career services administrators as well as a general lack of consistency and focus on curating and publishing best practices.

Several career services administrators suggested tools that they use or thought would be valuable including an interviewing rubric and a list of effective interviewing questions shared by other leaders. Craig offered the need for a “sound rubric which also can map to…the behaviors that we're looking for so that you find the right person. Being very deliberate and intentional at the beginning will help you down the road.” Craig and Henry suggested that the rubric begins
with developing and ensuring a shared understanding of the department’s purpose. Jon called this the department’s “anchor value system” or mission statement and described it as:

Most important, because it reminds us when we're making decisions and explaining it to the staff as to why we made the decision. We have something we can point to as a place of why we prioritize certain things. Having that support group and having some sort of anchor value system that's collectively developed, as well as collectively known, I think probably are pretty important pieces.

Craig suggested the next step is building a job description with the departmental purpose as a guide and augmenting it with the specific skill sets needed to advise international students. Jon and Henry also spoke to the importance of developing a job description, which provides candidates with insight into the top countries on-campus. Jon described this “as a way of signaling the backgrounds that we were looking for.” He explained further, “we asked for that kind of demonstrated experience and understanding of international and cross-cultural issues… experience working with diverse groups” that represent his institution’s international student population. Terry shared her experience in working with human resources and described how she lobbied for a separate international career counselor job description distinct from the general career counselor position and focused on multicultural competencies. She also shared challenges she faced in securing a salary range consistent with the enhanced job description.

Craig, Jon, and Amy assert the value of an interviewing rubric in uncovering necessary cultural competencies. Like Henry, Jon said the rubric should be specifically based on the job description so that candidates can be measured in line with the needs for this position. Amy stated, “I think rubrics are always helpful and I think it's a road map and for me would serve as a tool that I could use in interviewing potential candidates.” Amy also suggested that career
services administrators benefit from a “tried and proven” list of sample interview questions that give a “deeper methodology to ask the question in a different way that doesn't frustrate the person being interviewed, but kind of helps you get to the answer.”

Henry referred to the interviewing rubric as part of an interviewing guide that includes specific questions he asks of candidates. As discussed in the theme, “Interview Format and Questions,” he uses behavioral and scenario-based questions such as “tell me about a time when...” The list provides Henry with an inventory of questions that he selects as relevant to the conversation he is having with a candidate. According to Henry, many of the questions related to “this issue of somebody's self-awareness and then their ability to deal with cultural issues.” He stated:

One of the questions that we had asked was a behavioral question about describing a time when you felt culturally uncomfortable and how you address that discomfort? So trying to get at both somebody's own self-awareness of where they've been culturally, as well as how they interacted with other people when they felt discomfort.

Henry feels having the questions readily available equips the career services administrator to focus more on probing questions that are specific to the conversation. He added, “it [is] iterative in the sense that we kept refining questions to get at more and more detail throughout the process to try to better asses who would be a better fit for us.”

In summary, career services administrators value informal and formal networking opportunities as a means of gaining support when making hiring decisions related to career counselors who advise international students. While many of them shared appreciation for the informal peer groups they interact with, they also shared their disappointment with the lack of focus within relevant professional organizations. This speaks to the need for a national
discussion on this topic. NCDA’s International Task Force may be a good starting point because of their work in researching best practices for career services areas in serving the needs of internationals students on-campus. Such a taskforce could explore and propose organized networking opportunities as well as vet tools such as an interviewing rubric and lists of effective interviewing questions. In the next section, conclusions on the sub-theme, “Complexity of the Hiring Process” will be presented.

**Complexity of Hiring Process Conclusions**

In the various sub-themes related to the complexity of the hiring process related to career counselors who advise international students, career services administrators expressed concern over the impact their own multicultural competences and with their own ability to evaluate for these competencies. While they struggled to define the environmental factors present, they were quite passionate about the emotions involved. In terms of best practices, they were equally passionate about the need for information and formal networking opportunities as well as tools such as an interviewing rubric and a list of “tried and proven” interview questions.

Throughout the interviews, career services administrators exhibited a high level of sensitivity -- sensitivity to the needs of international students, to the experience of the interviewee, and to their ability to evaluate others for the position of international career counselor. They demonstrated strong multicultural competencies including cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity, which may, in fact, put them in a strong position to evaluate others. Essentially, career services administrators “want to do the right thing” and struggling between filling this position too quickly and the burden placed on their team when this position is vacant. The stress and other emotions they experience may be best minimized by engaging in reflection throughout the process to “check-in” on their goals in filling this position, their progress in line
with the department’s purpose, and the ability of the interviewed candidates in meeting the needs and expectations of the international student populations on-campus.

While the level of stress is high for administrators, so too is their level of excitement and passion in filling this position with the “right” candidate. The associated stress could be lessened if more organized best practices and tools in hiring were available, which supports the need for a national discussion. Professional organizations such as NCDA could have a major impact through efforts to curate, vet, and publish details on interviewing rubrics and “tried and proven” interview questions as well as host in-person and virtual networking opportunities. In the next section, the conclusions drawn on each core theme will be synthesized. Findings will be explained and validated.

**Conclusion**

What follows is a summary of Chapter Four conclusions from the identified themes and corresponding sub-themes in line with the research question -- How do leaders in career services perceive and describe the decision-making processes inherent in hiring career counselors who advise international students? The findings presented in this chapter were produced by applying Moustakas’ (1994) Transcendental Phenomenological methodology to capture the meanings and essences of the experience. Eight participants took part in this study, which was approved by the Northeastern Institutional Review Board.

The data collected was produced through 60-90 minute semi-formal, in-person interviews conducted by phone or over Skype. Follow-up interviews were conducted with six of the eight participants to gain a deeper understanding of relevant environmental and emotional factors. The data were transcribed and analyzed using NVivo. Prior to developing structural-textual composites for each participant, the researcher evaluated her own experiences with the
phenomenon. Invariant themes were identified, reviewed, and refined in a continuous process of horizontalization, resulting in a description of the textures and structures of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher’s textual-structural description became the basis for comparisons with the transcriptions and analysis of the research participant interviews.

Ultimately, a universal composite of the experience was compiled, representing the group holistically. Techniques including purposeful sampling, member-checking, and memoing were used to aid in the trustworthiness and dependability of the study. The researcher also kept a reflective journal with in-depth descriptions of the research strategy and operational details of data collection and analysis. An internal audit was conducted to review the coded transcripts, memoing notes, the reflective journal, an index of themes, and draft reports, leading to the researcher’s recommendations and the implications for practice in Chapter Five.

The findings related to the decision-making process inherent in hiring career counselors who advise international students include the following three core themes and twelve sub-themes: 1. multicultural competence of candidates including a. importance and interconnectivity of competencies, b. cultural awareness, c. cultural competence, d. cultural sensitivity, and e. cultural knowledge; 2. interview formats and questions including a. types of questions, b. sample questions, c. consecutive interviews and involving others in the process; and 3. complexity of the hiring process including a. interviewer's own competency level, b. environmental factors, c. administrator emotions, d. best practices.

These thematic portrayals suggest that career services professionals strive to make the best decisions possible using a collaborative approach and strategic process to evaluate career counselors for multicultural competencies. In the sub-theme, “Complexity of the Hiring Process,” Career services administrators describe the decision-making process as stressful and
complex because of the high level of multicultural competencies necessary for career counselors to be effective in this position. As seen in the sub-themes, “Multicultural Competence of Candidates” and “Complexity of the Hiring Process,” the complexity is further heightened by the interconnectivity and overlap between the competencies and the impact of the administrator’s own multicultural competence levels.

In the sub-theme, “Interview Formats and Questions,” strategies shared by the participants included behavioral and scenario-based interview questions, a series of consecutive interviews for each candidate, and the involvement of stakeholders such as other career counselors, international student services administrators, and international students. When exploring the environmental factors and emotions involved in the sub-theme, “Complexity of the Hiring Process,” career services administrators offered reflection as a strategy for centering themselves in the process to remain in line with goals related to filling this position. They also strongly suggested informal and formal networking and interviewing rubrics as best practices.

A major finding uncovered through the interviews is the need for a broader national conversation on best practices, tools, and resources that would better support administrators in making decisions when hiring international career counselors. Networking and reflection were offered as more personal strategies inherent to the decision-making process. Other more specific findings call for the development of an interviewing rubric and a list of “tried and proven” interview questions.

The researcher suggests that the MCC developed by Arredondo et al. (1996), which served as the theoretical framework for this study, would offer a strong foundation for the needed discussion and in the development of these tools and strategies. This is supported by aspects of this study’s literature review, including guiding principles for providing career services to
international students, which advocate for the importance of multicultural competencies in career counselors who serve this unique student population. Figure 2 provides an illustration of the findings collected through the core and supporting themes, which can be developed and supported with the MCC in mind.

Figure 2. Study’s Findings with Influence from Arredondo’s Model

While this model was intended to provide counselors with a framework to use in understanding how their own culture impacts their ability to provide an adequate level of counseling for students, clients, or patients from different backgrounds, the researcher suggests its applicability in supporting career services administrators in making hiring decisions related to international career counselors. The model’s focus on the cultural background of the counselor would allow administrators to develop relevant job descriptions, interview questions, and rubrics focused on culturally-relevant attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and skills. According to Ahmed et al. (2011) focus on multicultural counseling competencies leads to credibility, expertness, and trustworthiness; the counselor is seen as culturally responsive and respectful. In conclusion, the
researcher asserts that the application of the MCC in context to hiring international career counselors would provide career services administrators with a powerful tool in structuring and conducting an effective interviewing process.

Chapter Five will further explore the thematic portrayals in relation to the study’s research questions, literature review, and theoretical framework as well as provide an analysis of the implications of this study for theory, research, and practice.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Implications for Practice

The purpose of this study was to explore the decision-making processes inherent in hiring career counselors who advise international students for eight university administrators using a multicultural competency (MCC) theoretical framework. Initially introduced by Sue et al., (1992), MCC has served as the foundation for numerous cultural competency assessment models and tools in the counseling industry. In this study, MCC provided a perspective on the importance of multicultural competencies in evaluating career counselors for positions related to advising international students. The theoretical framework guided the formation of this study’s interview questions and as a result, guided the types of responses that were provided by the participants. MCC also assisted the researcher in understanding the complexities involved in the hiring decision-making process including the impact of an administrator’s own multicultural competencies.

Through qualitative inquiry and Transcendental Phenomenological research design, the researcher sought to understand the experiences and gain the perceptions of career services administrators who manage these hiring decisions and the emotional and environmental factors that impact the process. The central guiding research question was -- How do career services administrators perceive and describe their experience of hiring career counselors who advise
international students? Data was collected through in-depth, semi-formal 60-90 minute interviews with eight career services administrators, yielding rich descriptions of the participants’ experiences.

By following Moustakas’ (1994) rigorous step-by-step Transcendental Phenomenological analysis procedures, the researcher developed textural (“what” was experienced) and structural (“how” it was experienced) descriptions for each individual participant’s transcription. NVivo was used to identify and extract non-overlapping relevant statements and to add notes with observations and reflections on the interviewee’s experience. The statements and notes were transformed into emerging themes, which were shared with each individual participant for validation. Next, a universal composite was developed describing the meanings and essences of the phenomenon as experienced by the group. This composite was cross-checked with the individual participant textual and structural descriptions to ensure accuracy and relevancy.

The composite description consists of three key themes and twelve subthemes: 1. multicultural competence of candidates including a. importance and interconnectivity of competencies, b. cultural awareness, c. cultural competence, d. cultural sensitivity, and e. cultural knowledge; 2. interview formats and questions including a. types of questions, b. sample questions, c. consecutive interviews and involving others in the process; and 3. complexity of the hiring process including a. interviewer's own competency level, b. environmental factors, c. administrator emotions, and d. best practices.

The key themes answered this study’s research question by suggesting that career services administrators strive to make the best hiring decisions possible based on an evaluation of the candidate’s multicultural competencies as well as their own. A process involving other stakeholders and using consecutive interviews as well as behavior and scenario-based interview
questions was identified as a preferred model. The third theme addressed the complexity of this hiring decision including how career services administers perceive the influences of emotional and environmental factors in the process. Collectively, these findings present the difficulties expressed by participants as it relates to the hiring process for international career counselors.

This chapter is organized based on the identified findings as situated within past literature. Each finding will be reviewed as to how it clarifies or conflicts with what other research studies have said. In addition, implications of these findings for practice will be discussed and specific examples will be provided. This chapter will conclude with recommendations for future research. The next section will present the first theme, “Multicultural Competence of Candidates” in relation to existing literature.

**Multicultural Competence of Candidates**

As revealed in the first theme, “Multicultural Competence of Candidates,” and its subthemes, “Importance and Interconnectivity of Competencies,” “Cultural Awareness,” “Cultural Competence,” “Cultural Sensitivity,” and “Cultural Knowledge,” participants described the importance of a candidate’s level of multicultural competencies in evaluating them for the position of international career counselor. Evidenced by the subtheme, “Importance and Interconnectivity of Competencies,” career services administrators used the term “essential” to describe the importance of multicultural competencies collectively. This aligns with the theoretical framework used in this study, which is based on the counseling profession, in general, and suggests the need to evaluate for cultural awareness, cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, and cultural knowledge during the interview process.

In relation to “Cultural Awareness,” the second subtheme, participants described the need for effective career counselors to be aware of personal biases and the impact on their actions as
well as the perceptions of others. The third subtheme, “Cultural Competence” provides evidence that cultural awareness is not enough and that actions and behaviors that are culturally relevant and appropriate are also essential. “Cultural Sensitivity,” the fourth subtheme provides evidence that the emotions and attributes of the career counselor such as empathy and culturally-relevant communication skills are equally important. The final subtheme, “Cultural Knowledge,” while important was described as difficult to evaluate and less about knowing the answers and more about knowing where to find the answers. In sum, participants agreed that hiring decisions for international career counselors should be largely centered around the multicultural competencies of the candidates.

In relation to existing research on multicultural competencies in counseling fields, the “Multicultural Competence of Candidates” theme supports the significance of the Multicultural Competency Model (MCC) developed by Sue et al., (1992), a central core of counseling standards in the 1990s (Ponterotto et al., 2002; Pope-Davis, 2003) and remains the basis for numerous counseling profession training, self-assessment, and client-assessment instruments today (Drinane, Owen, Adelson, and Rodolfa, 2016; Sue & Sue, 2013). MCC has been endorsed by the Association of Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) since 1991, used by the American Association for Counseling and Development (AACC) and the American Psychology Association (APA) since the late 90s, and adopted by American Counseling Association (ACA) in 2003 (Pope-Davis, 2003; Tomlinson-Clarke, 2013; Worthington et al., 2007). A similar model is followed by NAFSA: Association of International Educators and referred to as the Intercultural Competence Framework (NAFSA, “Theory Reflection: Intercultural Competence,” 2016).
MCC has been applied in numerous counseling areas including rehabilitation workers (Balcazar et al., 2009), mental health (Arredondo and Toporek, 2004; Constantine, 2001; Patterson, 2004; Pernell-Arnold, et al., 2012; Weinrach and Thomas, 2002), and social care (Papadopoulos, 2006). In addition to Sue et al.’s (1992) work, this study supports the study by Papadopoulos et al., (1998) on the four main stages of multicultural competencies -- cultural awareness, cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, and cultural knowledge (Figure 1).

The participants of this study agreed that these competencies are blocking blocks, or as Papadopoulos referred to them as “stages,” rather than a linear set of skills. While the participants of this study offered differing opinions on which “stage” is more important, in general, agreement was shared that one criteria cannot exist without the others and that all four were valuable in identifying a qualified candidate for the position of international career counselor. As suggested by Ahmed et al., (2011), this study furthers the concept that candidates’ self-awareness of their attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, and skills leads to credibility, expertness, and trustworthiness; the counselor is seen as culturally responsive and respectful.

As it relates specifically to career counseling, this study affirms the argument made by numerous scholars that cultural competency is an essential foundation of career counseling (Byars-Winston & Fouad, 2006; Lee, 2012; Vespia et al., 2010; Ward & Bingham, 1993). As seen with the AMCD, AACD, and APA, multicultural competency standards were instituted by the National Career Development Association (NCDA) in 1997. Research conducted by Lee (2012), utilized NCDA’s Career Counseling Competencies as a conceptual framework to examine multicultural competencies in career advising.
Eight themes were identified including a) self-awareness, b) global literacy, c) foundational knowledge of career development theory, d) ethical knowledge, e) knowledge of multicultural career development theory, f) acquisition of cross cultural experiences, g) development of cross cultural career counseling skills, and h) multicultural career counseling competency. While this study furthers several aspects of Lee’s (2012) work, three aspects are strongly supported related to cultural self-awareness, the influence of cultural experiences, and the development of multicultural competencies. The importance of global literacy is also affirmed in both studies, yet the participants in this study focused more on “knowing where to find answers” as opposed to “knowing all the answers.”

In terms of self-awareness in career counselors, this study aligns with Lee (2012) and others who provide evidence that culturally competent advising begins with the career counselor’s understanding of his or her personal biases and the impact on counseling interactions with international students (Arthur & Collins, 2011; Collins, Arthur & Wong-Wylie, 2010;
Jones, Sander, & Booker, 2013). This study also supports Lee’s (2012) contention that career counselors who actively pursue cultural experiences are better equipped to serve international students. Participants described effective career counselors are those who seek out opportunities such as professional conferences, cultural events, and language acquisition. The pinnacle of Lee’s (2012) research and that of scholars such as Arredondo et al., (1996) and Sue et al., (1992), asserts the significance of multicultural competencies as essential higher-level characteristics of effective career counselors. This study with focus on the need to evaluate career counselors for their multicultural competency levels during the interviewing process furthers Lee’s (2012) concept that “career counselors who are cultural competent have heightened awareness, an expanded knowledge base, and use helping skills in a culturally responsive manner” (p. 11).

In contradiction, scholars such as Weinrach and Thomas (2002) and Patterson (2004), question the need to cull out cultural competencies and challenge that these competencies are necessary in all counseling situations and not just when working with clients, patients, and students from other cultures. By focusing on client differences, Weinrach and Thomas (2002) and Patterson (2004) assert that the significance of universal commonality in humans is ignored. The participants in this study acknowledged that a base level of cultural competence is needed by all career counseling staff, but argued that the nature of the international career counselor position required a higher acquisition of these competencies, which sets it apart from other departmental positions. The depth and breadth of essential cultural competencies agreed upon by participants in this study supports the work of Arthur & McMahon (2005) and Mahadevan (2010), who present a case that based on the growing number of students from different countries and cultures in the US, career counselors who advise international students must demonstrate empathy, advocacy, and cultural sensitivity.
In conclusion, the finding, “Multicultural Competencies of Candidates,” supports past literature on the value of multicultural competencies in the career counseling profession. In the participants’ experience, the school of thought that cultural awareness, cultural competency, cultural sensitivity, and cultural knowledge are strong indicators of a counselor’s ability to be effective is valid. The participants of this study believe that if a candidate for the position of international career counselor is capable of demonstrating these competencies, they are more likely to effective in their role in advising international students. In this way, this study adds to the literature supporting multicultural competencies as an essential component in the decision-making process inherent in hiring counselors who work with international clients or in the case of this study, international students. Participant descriptions of and experience with the interconnectivity and importance of multicultural competencies are consistent with the literature. The participants’ perspectives provide a deep understanding of how each multicultural competency, as defined by Arredondo et al., (1996), individually and collectively demonstrate a candidate’s qualifications for the role of international career counselor.

In the following section, the second main theme, “Interview Formats and Questions” will be discussed as it is situated in previous literature.

**Interview Formats and Questions**

In the second theme, “Interview Formats and Questions,” three subthemes include “Types of questions,” “Sample questions,” and “Consecutive Interviews and Involving Others.” Participants in this study expressed the need for an interview plan that includes multiple interviews with each candidate, behavioral and scenario-based interview questions, and the involvement of other stakeholders on-campus. While no research specific to interviewing or
hiring career counselors who advise international students could be found, numerous studies supported by the experiences expressed by this study’s participants were identified.

Having an interview plan, as described by the participants, relates to and furthers research studies on the benefit of a structured interview process. Because the outcome of the hiring process is so important, it is essential that the process be well planned and executed (Winston, 2001). As cited by Fowler, Posthuma, and Tsai (2016), numerous studies have shown that structured interviews can be reliable and valid predictors of future job performance (Conway, Jako, & Goodman, 1995; Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994; Huffcutt & Woehr, 1999; McDaniel, Whetzel, Schmidt, & Maurer, 1994). This study furthers this research as it applies specifically to career services administrators and the need for specific tools such as culturally-related interview questions and an interviewing rubric when hiring international career counselors.

The eight participants of this study strongly voiced the complexity of this hiring decision as the indicator supporting the need for structure and culturally-focused interviewing tools. The nuances related to the complexity, as described by participants, in support of related literature will be discussed in the final theme. As seen in the theme, “Interview Formats and Questions,” this study contributes to research on job complexity and interviewer’s preference for structured interviewing (Chapman and Zweig, 2005; Terpstra and Rozell, 1997). For example, Chen, Tsai, and Hu (2008) who studied 292 interviewers at 33 firms in Taiwan found that the more complex the job, the higher the preference by interviewers for a structured interview plan. While Chen et al., (2008) evaluated interviewers’ need for power as it relates to their support of highly structured interviews, there is no evidence in the current study related to the career services administrators’ need for power. This may be indicative of an academic environment versus that within manufacturing and financial firms. In fact, Chen et al., (2008) makes the case that “the
discrepancy between academics and practitioners in their perceived value of structured interviews deserves more research attention” (p. 1056).

Critics of the value of structured interviews suggest that while researchers embrace a structured interviewing format, practitioners are not as eager to employ this method due to a variety of reasons including perceived lack of rapport-building and loss of control in the interview and selection process (Latham & Finnegan, 1993; Lievens & De Paepe 2004; Schmitt, 1999; Van der Zee et al. 2002). Despite evidence that practitioners resist structured interviewing (Roulin and Bangerter 2012), the participants in this study advocated for having structured interviews as a means of achieving a more comprehensive evaluation of potential candidates as found in research by Chapman and Zweig (2005), Chen et. al., (2008), and Terpstra and Rozell (1997). They perceived this approach to increase their ability to hire a candidate who would be successful in the role of international career counselor.

As it relates to the subtheme, “Consecutive Interviews and Involving Others,” this study furthers research related to the benefits of involving multiple interviewers with the same candidate. A study by Campion, Palmer, and Campion (1997) of 812 interviewees and 592 interviewers on interview structure found this practice to be commonly used and well received by both parties. While the current study focused on the experiences of the interviewer, career services administrators, it’s findings align with the empirical studies of Campion et al., (1997) and others. For example, a study conducted by Levashina, Hartwell, Morgeson, and Campion (2014), involving 47 employment interviewing subject matter experts found that the use of multiple interviewers was strongly supported by interviewers and, in fact, this technique was rated higher in preference than was originally proposed by Campion et al., (1997). The current study furthers this quantitative research by providing a narrative description of the importance of
and preference for multiple interviewers in the pursuit of gaining valuable insight from a stakeholder’s perspective.

According to Bangerter, Corvalan, and Cavin (2014), the validity of structured interviews is enhanced by the type of questions candidates are asked, specifically behavioral questions. This relates to the subtheme “Types of Interview Questions.” Bangerter et al., (2014) recognized Campion’s seminal work that there are two types of behavioral questions; those that focus on past behavior and those that are situationally-based. As suggested by participants in this study and described by Bangerter et al., (2014), behavioral-based questions focus on the past, typically ask the candidate to “tell me about a time when,” while situational or scenario-based questions ask the candidate what he or she would do in a workplace example relevant to the position (Janz, 1982; Latham, Saari, Pursell, & Campion, 1980).

Caution is also shared by Culbertson, Wehrmacht, and Huffcutt (2017), who conducted a mega-analysis of 29 studies related to both situational and past behavior-based interview questions. They found that practitioners frequently use these two interview question formats interchangeably without recognizing that each format tends to uncover different aspects of the candidate. This finding is supported by the current study. Career services administrators suggested that both formats are helpful, but in many cases participants presented the two formats using the same language. Based on past research and the current study, hiring managers should ensure they fully understand the basis of each format and typical results to ensure they are, in fact, gaining true insight into a candidate’s ability to perform.

Bangerter et al., (2014) caution interviewers on the use of behavioral-based interview questions as a candidate’s storytelling ability may present them as more appealing even when their responses are not, in fact, descriptive of their direct impact in the response they provide.
Like Bangerter et al. (2014), Culbertson et al. (2017) argue that responses to questions specifically focused on past behaviors can be misleading based on the candidate’s storytelling skills. While the participants in this study did not reveal concerns about a candidate’s storytelling skills and ability to answer behavioral and scenario-based questions, this study furthers research by scholars such as Bangerter et al. (2014) and Culbertson et al. (2017) as it relates to the value of these types of interviewing questions through rich narrative description and question examples provided by participants.

In the following section, the third main theme, “Complexity of the Hiring Process” will be discussed as it is situated in existing literature.

**Complexity of the Hiring Process**

The third theme, “Complexity of the Hiring Process,” is made up of four subthemes including the “Interviewer’s Own Competency Level,” “Environmental Factors,” “Administrator Emotions,” and “Best Practices.” The complexities associated with this hiring decision involve unique factors related to career advising for international students including the a) multitude of cultures the students come from, b) an individual student’s level of acculturation, c) the limited nature of work authorization in the U.S. for international students, and d) international students’ expectations of career counselors. Career services practitioners with a deep understanding of the complexities related to hiring an international career counselor will be better prepared to navigate the hiring process from job analysis to international questions to evaluating interviewee responses. As shared by the participants of this study, selecting and hiring an effective career counselor is crucial. Well before a hiring decision is made, career services administrators should consider their own level of multicultural competencies and their ability to hire for these competencies.
While there is adequate research on the cultural competencies of counselors and limited research on these competencies in career counselors, no research was uncovered as it relates to the cultural competencies of career services administrators who hire for international career counselors. Here lies a major conundrum for practitioners as cultural competency is an essential foundation of career counseling (Byars-Winston & Fouad, 2006; Lee, 2012; Vespia et al., 2010; Ward & Bingham, 1993). As expressed in this study, the cultural competence of candidates for the position of international career counselor is a key element in the decision-making process for career services administrators. Thus, as described by participants in this study, career services administrators need a certain level of multicultural competence themselves to evaluate others for these skill sets. According to Sue et al., (1992), people with cultural competence skills interact, advise, evaluate, and manage their tasks effectively in multicultural settings. Dean (1990) adds that managers who exhibit flexibility, sincerity, and other mitigating characteristics tend to function well in intercultural interactions.

After an intense search for related literature on the role of hiring managers’ multicultural competencies, Zener’s (1997) doctoral dissertation of approximately 100 business managers and factors that influenced them revealed that intercultural communication skills, education, number of countries lived in, and number of hours of intercultural training were statistically significant factors in the managers’ level of intercultural competence. While the participants’ in this study did not speak of specific factors related to their own level of cultural competence, they did share concern about whether they were appropriately equipped to evaluate candidates for this during the hiring process. A similar finding was found in a study by DeArmond, Gross, and Goldhaber (2008), which focused on the hiring practices at 10 elementary schools. “Nearly all of the
principals and teachers expressed skepticism about their ability to assess candidates during the interview process,” (DeArmond et al., 2008, p. 334).

To assist practitioners in overcoming these concerns, Zener’s (1997) work includes an in-depth look at the research of Gudykunst, who in 1993, framed intercultural communication competence around several factors -- “ability to empathize, ability to tolerate ambiguity, ability to adapt communication, ability to create new categories, ability to accommodate behavior and the ability to gather appropriate information,” (p. 63). These factors align quite well with the multicultural competences established in Sue’s (1992) seminal work and furthered by Arredondo et al., (1996) who created MCC, the theoretical framework for this study. Sue and Arredondo focused on cultural awareness, cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, and cultural knowledge. One of Zener’s (1997) findings was the need for in-depth, on-going, and multi-tiered cultural training for managers; a strategy that would also be effective in building confidence in career services administrators who evaluate career counselors for cultural competencies related to advising international students. Here lies a possibility for future relevant research expanding upon the current study.

In literature on environmental factors in hiring, scholars often present the case that the hiring process is a crucial part of an organization’s success (Bills, 2003; Bills, Di Stasio, & Gerxhani, 2017. They express concern that the influences in hiring decisions made by employers has received less attention (Bills et al., 2017; Huffcutt 2011; Stainback, Tomaskovic-Devey, & Skaggs 2010). Bills et al., (2017) offer that the behaviors of hiring managers are influenced by internal environmental conditions while most research focuses on external factors with “larger social, organizational, and institutional contexts,” and urges scholars to conduct research to present “a fuller empirical and theoretical understanding of employer hiring behavior,” (p. 291).
Factors such as time of year, staffing levels, and assessment of staffing needs were identified as internal environmental concerns affecting this study’s participants. Career services administrators would benefit from more research on this topic.

The current study supports the conclusion drawn by Bills et al., (2017) that “studying hiring behavior is difficult” due to lack of research focused on the practitioners’ experience (p. 304). Another perspective from Mueller and Baum (2011) asserts managers, “like crime scene investigators… must carefully find evidence of character, credibility and contribution” from candidates (p. 141). The current study supports the work of these scholars and furthers the assertion that more focus needs to be given to the hiring managers’ perspectives and experiences in relation to their internal environment and the impact on the hiring process as a means of improving the process and leading to better hiring decisions.

As it relates to emotional factors involved in making hiring decisions, Zener (1997) applied Gudykunst’s anxiety/uncertainty reduction model, which is based on the concept that a reduction in anxiety and uncertainty promotes effective communication, in the context of the intercultural competence of business managers. This research uncovered multiple findings that could have a positive impact on aspects of cultural communication during the interview process. As asserted by the participations of the current study in the subtheme, “Emotional Factors,” a high level of stress is experienced by administrators when hiring international career counselor’s due to the complexity involved in making this hiring decision. While career services administrators acknowledge there is stress in most hiring decisions, the added level of complexity related to multicultural competencies, makes this decision even more emotionally-charged for them. This study calls for administrators to look for opportunities and supportive measures that will reduce their stress.
Gudykunst (1993) suggests that a reduction in the levels of stress and anxiety will assist in allowing for quality communication, relating back to the multicultural competency level of the hiring manager, as seen in this study’s first subtheme in the finding, “Complexity of the Hiring Decision.” The current study furthers research that administrators who seek ways to minimize their stress and anxiety during the hiring process will benefit. One method for consideration is the practice of mindfulness, which Gudykunst (1994) suggests supports managers in applying three primary factors -- knowledge, motivation and skills -- to reduce stress in intercultural communication situations. These factors are further broken-down to includes a manager’s attention to being empathic, adaptable, and flexible, and proactively gathering information as mentioned above. In a study of international business professionals and educators by Martin and Chaney (1992), Gudykunst’s skill factors were deemed to be important by between 82 to 94 percent of the study’s participants and open-mindedness was found to be essential or important by 96 percent. This strategy is supported by participants in the current study who called for career services administrators to be reflective and to keep in mind that “your ability to navigate the hiring process” is affected by the “perspective you bring with you.”

Concerns about the lack of empirical research related to internal factors influencing hiring managers has long been established amongst scholars (Asher and Scarring, 1974; Ghiselli, 1973; Reilly & Chao, 1982; Martocchio, 1994; Williamson & Cable, 2003). This lack of research has created a barrier for practitioners in fully understanding factors such as the internal environment and emotional influences. (Ferris, Hochwarter, Buckley, Harrell-Cook, & Frink, 1999). Research by Olian and Rynes (1984) asserts that significant focus has been on external environment factors such as labor market conditions. Jackson and Schuler (1995) call for "new human resource management research that takes context more seriously" (p. 238). The current
study supports this gap in the literature and provides a narrative which tells the story of emotional and environmental factors as described by career services administrators during the process of hiring an internal career counselor.

With the complexity of the hiring decision as well as the emotional and environmental factors in mind, participants in this study were asked to identify best practices in support of career services administrators who hire international career counselors. Best practices discussed by participants included networking with other administrators and tools such as an interviewing rubric. Other ideas included developing effective job descriptions in line with the department’s purpose and establishing behavior or scenario-oriented interview questions based on multicultural competencies required for the position.

Research on networking can be found as far back as Marx who stated, “society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations in which individuals stand with respect to one another” (Marx, 1939, p. 176). More recently, research on networking within professional settings is exploding, according to Borgatti and Halgin (2011), and has focused on the impact of social or professional networks on individual, group, and organizational performance as well as job satisfaction, promotion, creativity, and ethics (Borgatti & Foster, 2003; Brass, 2012; Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsui, 2004; Kilduff & Brass, 2010). While earlier criticism existed that most related research has been descriptive in nature and not based on theoretical or empirical analysis (Granovetter, 1979; Salancik, 1995), advancement in the social sciences research has led to theoretical application in areas such as leadership (Brass & Krackhardt, 1999; Sparrowe & Liden, 1997), job performance (Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 2001; Sparrowe, Liden, Wayne, & Kraimer, 2001), and use of knowledge (Tsai, 2001). In research connecting professional networking to job performance, scholars suggest the use of professional
networks assists managers who are grappling with organizational issues to identify solutions and increases the manager’s satisfaction and engagement (Baber, Wylde, & Waymon, 2015).

Participants in the current study collectively shared the benefits of networking with other career services administrators as a means of reflecting and gaining insights and best practices related to making hiring decisions for international career counselors. Based on the complexity of this hiring decision due to the wide array of cultural difference among international students and their limited work authorization in the U.S. career services, the administrators in this study expressed how helpful it is to have a network to discuss thoughts and ideas with as part of a reflective process. By capturing the meaning and essences of this experience, this study furthers research on the value of networking as a strategy to support practitioners at a local, regional, and national level.

While this study focused on the benefits of networking, other scholars urge practitioners to consider the costs of professional networking, including time and effort, the appearance of needing help, and expectations of reciprocity. Burt (1992) cautions that making random connections is not efficient and often leads to limited returns. Instead, Burt (1992) refers to Granovetter’s (1973) seminal research, which argues for building a limited set of professionals related to the manager’s work environment, a concept also supported by Borgatti, Brass, and Halgin, (2014).

In addition to an external professional network, the current study suggests that career service administrators would benefit from building a strong rapport with HR administrators at their institution for hiring and interviewing process support and furthers research on the value of working with HR. Beyond the policies and procedures commonly provided by HR, career services administrators who develop a working relationship with HR colleagues can gain
additional tools and support such as conducting job analysis, building relevant job descriptions, and developing evaluative tools such as rubric for assessing interview question responses. Multicultural competency training for hiring managers is another benefit that HR can offer to career services administrators in support of their hiring decisions.

A job vacancy offers hiring managers an opportunity to work with HR in conducting a job analysis. Once specific tasks and the knowledge, skills, and other characteristics necessary to carry out the tasks have been identified, an effective job description can be created (Heneman III, 2009) aligned with the department’s purpose as described by the participants in this study. HR can provide insight and best practices in writing job descriptions that best capture related tasks within the broader company culture (Mueller & Baum, 2011).

In addition to job analysis and descriptions, Mueller and Baum (2011) suggest that interviewing rubrics can be designed by employers to evaluate critical position-relevant skills. Interviewers may unconsciously influence candidate responses through their nonverbal behavior, asking unrelated questions, and failing to control the interview by talking too much or by not following up when appropriate (Dillon & Ebmeier, 2009). While a rubric can assist the interviewer in staying on point and ensuring that critical aspects of the position are not overlooked, typically a reliable scoring system such as this to evaluate the quality of a candidate responses is not being used (Dillon & Ebmeier, 2009). This gap supports the idea that HR can partner with career services administrators to provide them with culturally-relevant interviewing skills to avoid the concerns presented by scholars.

A study by Wallace, Shin, Bartholomay, and Stahl, (2001) of 92 school administrators found a lack of understanding about the job descriptions and duties related to the paraprofessional positions for which they made hiring decisions. Research by Terpstra and
Rozell (1997) found that businesses rely on subjective assessments in the hiring process rather than established selection tools. This research is supported by a similar study conducted by Rutledge, Harris, Thompson, and Ingle (2008) on hiring decisions made in public education. While participants in the current study advocate for the use of interviewing tools and supporting resources, none reported having or using such tools.

Dillon and Ebmeier’s (2009) study of 15 paraprofessionals and their supervisors focused on the development of an interview rubric based on the skill sets needed for this position. The interview rubric was built from a review of state education standards, professional organization documents, and prior research on the topic, which resulted in a competency matrix. The paraprofessionals agreed to participate in a simulated interview using the rubric developed and their supervisor was asked to rate them on a scale spanning from high quality employee to employment mistake. The goal of this study was to provide school administrators with a tool to assist in identifying effective paraprofessionals from the candidate pool. The researchers found the instrument to show high validity correlations and assert that their study and other similar studies (Ebmeier and Ng, 2006; Longenecker (2005) support the concept that interviewing rubrics built on job-specific criteria can be very useful to hiring managers. The current study provides support and furthers research on the value of working with HR to support hiring managers in designing job descriptions based on related tasks and building evaluative tools to assess interviewee responses in line with job responsibilities.

In the next section, conclusions will be drawn based on the findings of this study, the researcher’s knowledge, and existing literature.
Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to describe how career services administrators perceive and describe their experience of hiring career counselors who advise international student. This was achieved through a Transcendental Phenomenological analysis of collected interview data exploring the meanings and essences of the experiences of eight career services administrators. Congruent with existing literature, the findings of this study suggest that career services administrators could benefit from a) developing a strong understanding of the multicultural competencies related to this position and how their own level of competency affects the hiring decision b) utilizing an interview plan that includes job descriptions based on job analysis and interview questions based on positions tasks using behavioral and scenario-based approaches, c) creating an interview question rubric in support of the interview plan, and d) forming strong ties with HR in order to support the hiring process. The rich data collected substantiates research published by Arredondo et al., (1996), the theoretical framework for this study, on the importance of evaluating counselors, in general, for the multicultural competencies as well as specifically with career counselors working with international students.

Furthermore, this study established a greater understanding of the multicultural competencies that contribute to a career counselor’s success in serving international students. My findings extend research on the emotional and environmental factors affecting the hiring decisions of university administrators and the value of behavioral-based interviewing questions especially with a supporting rubric is used. My study calls attention to the need for relevant professional organizations to identify the hiring practices of career services administrators as a priority to create awareness of best practices such as the development of appropriate tools and resources.
This study presents new data expanding upon existing literature and focuses specifically on career services administrators and hiring for international career counselors, an area of research that is quite limited and focused mostly on the service delivery-side as opposed to the recruitment of qualified candidates. This research demonstrated that career services administrators are dedicated to making sound hiring decisions for the position of international career counselor, yet need support in making more structured hiring decisions that go beyond “gut” feelings. The findings demonstrated that the participants applied specific strategies such as engaging other stakeholders in the interview process, seeking guidance from professional networks, and applying behavioral-based interview questions.

Specifically, the data indicates that career services administrators struggle with their ability to make this hiring decision and would benefit from more organizational support within their institution and from professional networks. Participants also advocate for the use of multiculturally-based interview questions and an interviewing rubric to ensure effective hiring decisions are made. The significant number of new and unique findings generated by this study has concrete implications for practice and future research, which are discussed below.

**Recommendations for Practice**

In the following paragraphs, the researcher will discuss how the themes and subthemes related to the decision-making process inherent in hiring career counselors who advise international students provided her with a deeper understanding of the problem of practice driving her study as well as the phenomenon under investigation. This deepened understanding of the problem and phenomenon enabled the researcher to develop action steps to improve the hiring practices for career services administrators. By providing career services administrators with evaluative tools, encouragement to leverage the support of HR, and networking and
resources through professional organizations, numerous stakeholders will benefit. Career services administrators will benefit in making more informed hiring decisions. The career services team will benefit from the addition of a culturally competent team member who fits well within the department. The institution will benefit from effective career advising and services for international students on-campus and most importantly, the international students will benefit from receiving culturally-relevant career advising. Even employers, those that offer employment opportunities to international students, will benefit from diverse graduates who are prepared for their careers.

The researcher will discuss how she created an interviewing evaluative tool for practitioners using Arredondo’s (1996) MCC, the theoretical framework for this study, as a guide. In support of this more tactical strategy, the need for career services administrators to develop strong relations with their HR department and for more discussion on this topic at the national level through professional organizations will be explained. In the following paragraphs, these implications for practice will be discussed in greater detail.

Based on the findings of this study and supporting literature, the researcher suggests that career services administrators develop a list of applicable interview questions that purposefully align with the multicultural competencies required to be effective in the position of international career counselor. The MCC developed by Arredondo’s et al., (1996) offers practitioners a clear guide in formulating interview questions aligned with counseling positions in general, which can be applied to career counseling roles. This researcher suggests that in addition to the list of questions, career services administrators would benefit from an evaluative rubric in assessing a candidate’s response to the multicultural competency questions identified. The researcher has developed a multicultural competency interview question rubric (Figure 3) to support career
### Multicultural Competency Interview Question Rubric

**Candidate:**

**Date:**

**Position:** International Career Counselor

**Score:**

### I. Counselor Awareness of Own Cultural Values and Biases

Culturally-skilled counselors believe that cultural self-awareness and sensitivity to one's own cultural identity is essential and understand the impact of their own biases when providing effective career counseling to international students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible Questions</th>
<th>Rate 1-5</th>
<th>Listen For</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Give an example of a cultural situation in which you recognized cultural differences between yourself and those you were engaging with and describe how you navigated through that situation.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate demonstrates awareness of the impact of personal cultural biases in engagements with others.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. How would you describe your cultural identity? Can you give an example of how your cultural identity has influenced your engagement with an international student?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate demonstrates awareness of the impact of personal cultural biases in engagements with others.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Can you describe a situation in which you were judged on something other than merit? How did that make you feel? How did you handle that?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate demonstrates knowledge about his or her own cultural identity and how it affects their definitions of and biases about normality/abnormality.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Describe your communication style and give a specific example of how you modified your communication style in an engagement with an international student. How did you decide on the modification? What was the result of that modification?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate possesses cultural knowledge about their social impact on others and exhibits culturally competent communication skills.</td>
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### II. Counselor Awareness of Client’s Worldview

Culturally-skilled counselors understand that the international students they serve come from a multitude of cultural backgrounds and are willing to contrast their own beliefs and attitudes in a nonjudgmental fashion. Actively seeks out opportunities to further strengthen his or her ability to understand the cultural views of others.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Possible Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Describe the nonverbal and verbal behaviors of one group of international students you have frequently worked with. Tell me about a specific exchange with an international student in which you needed to adapt your style to better serve the student.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate possesses specific knowledge and information about the international students he or she has worked with.</td>
<td>A) Candidate possesses specific knowledge and information about the international students he or she has worked with. B) Candidate possesses cultural knowledge about the international students he or she has worked with and recognizes each student as an individual within a culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Describe an example of when you felt wrong cultural differences between yourself and an international student. How did you do to overcome this? For example, if a Turkish student only wants to apply to Fortune 500 companies, because anything below that is deemed less worthy, how would you guide him or her? Would you be able to remain non-judgmental?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate demonstrates willingness to contrast personal beliefs and attitudes with those of the international students he or she has served in a non-judgmental fashion.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. While international students have nonverbal and verbal behaviors commonly associated with their culture, each student has individual differences. Give an example of when you worked with an international student and noticed such individual differences. How did these differences contrast with the student's cultural background?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate possesses specific knowledge and information about the international students he or she has worked with and recognizes each student as an individual within a culture.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Provide an example of an activity you have engaged in or planned where you attended on multicultural counseling skills and knowledge. Describe a situation that you feel strengthened your ability to provide advising to international students and give an example of how you applied that.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate actively seeks out educational and community-based experiences that enrich his or her knowledge, understanding, and cross-cultural skills for more effective counseling behavior.</td>
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### III. Culturally Appropriate Counseling Strategies

Culturally-skilled counselors are aware of barriers and challenges faced by international students as it relates to career planning and actively seeks out knowledge and techniques to support the international students he or she serves.

<table>
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<th>Rate 1-5</th>
<th>Listen For</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Describe a barrier that you have seen impede an international student's willingness or interest in seeking career counseling services. What strategies have you or would you use to support international students who face this barrier?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate demonstrates awareness of cultural barriers that prevent different international student groups from using career counseling services.</td>
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<td>2. Describe an advising session with an international student whose family was highly involved in his or her career planning. What influence did the family have in the student's decisions making? If this was causing conflict for the student, how did you respond when they didn't give you or the</td>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate demonstrates awareness of and empathy for international students who are faced with cultural challenges that affect his or her career planning.</td>
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<td>3. How have you or how might you handle a discussion with an international student around a career assessment tool the student has completed?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate demonstrates knowledge of the potential bias in career assessment instruments and its applicability or lack of applicability to international students.</td>
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<td>4. Describe techniques you use when advising international students with limited English language skills. Give a specific example of how you have applied one of these techniques and the results.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate demonstrates that he or she values bilingualism and does not view another language as an impediment to counseling.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. According to your resume, you speak another language(s) beyond English. What impact do you think this has on your ability to provide career counseling to international students? (Note: Alternative question for candidates who do not speak another language - if you were to learn another language what would be and why?)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Candidate demonstrates that he or she values bilingualism and does not view another language as an impediment to counseling.</td>
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services administrators in making more informed hiring decisions for the position of international career counselor. This tool was created with the rich data provided by this study’s participants and with the MCC as a guide.

When using the proposed evaluative tool, career services administrators need to be aware that for positions in which the cultural competence of the candidate is essential, questions related to cultural identity are necessary for assessing the candidates’ ability to effectively perform job responsibilities. This researcher suggests that administrators utilize the full description of Arredondo et al., (1996) operationalized multicultural counseling competency guidelines as a tool by which to develop culturally-relevant interview questions. This model can provide the context needed to frame the suggested questions and provide the administrator with content to form probing questions if a candidate needs more guidance in answering the questions.

In addition, this researcher strongly encourages career services administrators to actively pursue a collaborative relationship with HR to develop a version of this evaluative tool based the specific job description utilized to identify possible candidates. HR can support the administrator by facilitating an analysis of the vacant career counseling position and using the analysis to review and enhance the job description. HR can provide the guidance needed to ensure the job description and the suggested evaluative tool are in line with the institution’s culture and will be effective in making a more informed hiring decision. As suggested, HR can also provide career services administrators with culturally-relevant training as it relates to decision-making process.

Due to the complexity of this hiring decision, career services administrators describe the challenge of making effective hiring decisions. Career services administrators describe their active outreach in involving others in the interview process such as the international student services area with the goal of making an effective hiring decision. By also building a strong
relationship with HR, the stress-related emotional factors described in Chapter Four could be minimized through a partnership which adds HR to the community of stakeholders already involved in the process.

While the interview question evaluative tool is a tactical strategy and building a strong relationship with HR is an organizational strategy, the researcher also urges a call to action on this topic at the national level. Professional organizations such as NCDA, NACE, and NAFSA provide resources and tools for the career advising of international students. Much of this content is focused on the international student needs and expectations with limited research on career counselors’ multicultural competencies and no research on the hiring decisions of career services administrators. These administrators benefit from local, regional, national, and online networking opportunities with others, who like themselves, manage and hire international career counselors. These national and international organizations have the infrastructure to call attention to the challenges faced by administrators and organize online and in-person events and forums to support practitioners in voicing the challenges, gaining insight from others, and sharing best practices.

In addition to networking, professional organizations should make the development and impact of evaluative tools in support of hiring decisions, a priority. In an industry where practitioners manage staff who support the career planning on students and assist these students in finding employment, it seems this need is an obvious one, not only for the position of international career counselor, but for all relevant career services positions. Our community is one in which job analysis, job descriptions, interviewing, interview questions, and job selection are primary to the services provided to students on university campuses in the U.S. The researcher suggests that a discussion on best practices and tools to support career services
administrators who hire international career counselors is needed. This research identifies a gap in relevant support, tools and opportunities and urges practitioners who belong to relevant national organizations to educate others on the need for a national discussion to better support administrators during the decision-making process inherent with hiring career counselors who advise international students.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study suggests the need for future research in four areas. First, this study establishes a foundation for future research specific to hiring decisions made by administrators for career services and career counseling positions in higher education institutions in the U.S. Because this study was limited to career services administrators and focused on hiring related to career counselors who advise international students, the themes identified in this study may not be transferable to other administrators or other positions within higher education institutions. At the same time, there may be aspects of this study that relate to other hiring decisions at US universities. Thus, it may be beneficial to replicate this study with university administrators whose primary job function is not related to hiring international career counselors.

Second, this research revealed several environmental and emotional factors that influence the decision-making process inherent in hiring international career counselors, but the extent to which these factors influenced decisions varied by participant. An in-depth study of these factors may offer more insight into the role these factors play and the extent and impact of their influence. Third, the themes identified in this study suggest several promising practices that may warrant future research, such as the effectiveness of the proposed multicultural interview question rubric in improving the hiring decisions of career services administrators. Lastly, relevant professional organizations are encouraged to conduct research and to encourage
members to conduct research focused on training, resources, tools, and best practices related to
the decision-making process inherent in hiring career counselors who advise international
students.
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