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1       **Two Confessional Tales of Trainee Sport Psychology Practitioners' Experiences of**  
2                               **Operating in Trinidad and Tobago**

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### **Abstract**

We present two confessional tales of our transnational experience as UK-based trainee Sport Psychology Practitioners when working in a professional sport organisation in Trinidad and Tobago. We first provide contextual elements of our placement before sharing the confessional tales regarding the nuances of providing sport psychology services in a cultural context different to the one we are currently training in. Within the confessional tales, we share some challenges and hurdles we experienced relating to our culturally led assumptions. The tales are titled “Boundary Issues” and “Punctuality is a Privilege”. We then share some reflections in which we explore our lessons learned about cultural humility and describe our underestimation of our cultural arrogance, and the challenges experienced during our cultural reflection process. We conclude this professional practice paper by offering several practical implications for trainees and qualified sport psychology practitioners to consider when developing a culturally grounded approach to practice.

*Keywords:* Arrogance, Cultural Humility, Euro-American Centrism, Professional Development, Reflexivity, Transnational Placement

49 **Two Confessional Tales of Trainee Sport Psychologists Practitioners’ Experiences of**  
 50 **Operating in Trinidad and Tobago**

51 The increased internationalisation and globalisation of sport has led the industry to  
 52 become culturally diverse, with athletes (Agergaard & Ryba, 2014) and sports professionals  
 53 (i.e., coaches, managers, and sport medicine staff; Quartiroli et al., 2021) migrating to  
 54 different parts of the globe to pursue their careers. Since athletes, coaches, and support staff  
 55 hold different intersecting identities, Sport Psychology Practitioners<sup>1</sup> (SPPs) must consider  
 56 the role of cultural diversity within their practice when working with individuals from various  
 57 multinational and cultural backgrounds (Ryba et al., 2024). Scholars have described culture  
 58 as a complex, multifaceted and developmental construct rooted in internal processes and  
 59 social interactions, whereby a person’s identity is shaped by significant social dynamics and  
 60 their environment (Quartiroli et al., 2021a). Despite some SPPs recognising the importance of  
 61 developing cultural awareness and sensitivity to enhance the chances of effective service  
 62 delivery (Quartiroli et al., 2021), their approach to practice is often guided by frameworks  
 63 grounded in Euro-centric and westernised values, beliefs, and worldviews (Ryba & Schinke,  
 64 2009). When working with clients from diverse backgrounds, traditional Euro-Western-  
 65 centred theories of practice in psychology may not be as effective or applicable (Sue, 2001),  
 66 highlighting the importance of SPPs deliberately developing a more culturally grounded  
 67 approach to practice (Ryba et al., 2024).

68 In recent years, scholars have advocated for SPPs to honour the beliefs, customs, and  
 69 values of others as well as to reflect on one’s own cultural heritage, values, and biases to

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<sup>1</sup> In this manuscript, the authors used the term, “Sport Psychology Practitioner(s)” [SPP(s)], to depict professionals engaged in sport psychology applied practice, regardless of their formal qualifications (e.g., licensed, registered, chartered, certified) as professional qualifications vary among countries and could include or exclude the title “psychologist”.

70 develop what is known as cultural humility (Perelman & Reel, 2022). Cultural humility has  
71 been conceptualised as a repackaging of components related to cultural competence and anti-  
72 oppressive practices (Danso, 2018). Despite being used as a framework for respecting  
73 cultural diversity and differences for many years (Sue, 2006), the notion of cultural  
74 competence has recently been challenged for its focus on skill mastery and knowledge  
75 acquisition instead of accountability and advocacy. Thus, the concept of cultural humility  
76 moves away from an emphasis on achieving cultural competency or mastery of another  
77 person's culture (Fisher-Borne et al., 2015), to a stance that acknowledges the need for an  
78 endless process of self-discovery and self-improvement (Krane & Waldron, 2021). Rather  
79 than focusing on avoiding appearing "incompetent", cultural humility encourages SPPs to  
80 embrace their discomfort and is an essential process for professional growth and  
81 accountability (Hook et al., 2017). A culturally humble approach to practice can help  
82 practitioners build their awareness of the way they interact with others, and reduce the impact  
83 of potential implicit biases (Hook et al., 2013), and remain mindful of the structural and  
84 systematic dynamics that shape individual experiences (Fisher-Borne et al., 2015). Taken  
85 collectively, cultural humility appears a concept that has high relevance for SPPs' work with  
86 increasingly diverse client groups.

87         Despite the potential value that cultural humility holds for practitioner development  
88 and practitioner-client relations, current training routes do not appear to reflect this worth  
89 (Lee, 2015). A way in which trainee sport psychology practitioners (tSPPs) can begin to  
90 understand and develop more cultural humility in their practice is through transnational  
91 experiences (Quartiroli et al., 2021b). Yet, to the best of our knowledge, there are currently  
92 no published reflective accounts documenting tSPPs' experiences of operating within a  
93 different cultural context from their own. We aim to address this gap through the current  
94 professional practice paper and hope that by sharing our experiences, we highlight the value

95 that transnational experiences can have in tSPPs' development and the importance of  
96 considering cultural humility as part of their training to enhance service delivery.  
97 Additionally, due to supervisors' crucial role in supporting tSPPs' training and professional  
98 development (Fogaca et al., 2020), we aim to shed light on the importance of culturally  
99 competent supervision prior to, during and following such transnational opportunities.

## 100 **The Practice Context**

101 The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) is an independent island country located  
102 in the south-eastern West Indies. The country has experienced a turbulent colonial history  
103 being first colonised by the Spanish in 1592 (and remained for two centuries) and  
104 subsequently by the British in 1797 (Lougheed, 2021). T&T gained independence from the  
105 British Empire in 1962 and obtained membership in the Commonwealth that same year, later  
106 becoming a republic in 1976. Since the 20th century, the two dominant ethnic groups in the  
107 country are those of African and South Asian heritage. A third group consisting of people of  
108 mixed ethnicity (i.e., migrants from European countries, Africa, East and Southeast Asia, the  
109 Middle East, mixed-race Cocoa Panyols [combined Afro-Spanish-Indigenous descent], and  
110 indigenous inhabitants) also contribute to the ethnic diversity and composition of the country.

111 As part of a newly established strategic partnership between the [University] and a  
112 professional sport organisation in T&T, I [Author #1] along with [Author #2] and [Author  
113 #3] had the opportunity to undertake a three-month work placement (i.e., a form of  
114 employment in which university members work full-time in an industry relevant to the field  
115 of study; Brooks & Youngson, 2014) in the system's elite development and performance unit.  
116 The organisation is governmentally funded and provides technical, physical, and  
117 psychological support to T&T's national level athletes across a range of sports (e.g., athletics,  
118 cricket, rugby, squash, swimming) and age groups (e.g., junior, senior). The aim of the  
119 placement was to encourage a two-way relationship based on a reciprocal exchange of

120 knowledge and experiences within the local cultural contexts. Whilst fully embedded in the  
 121 organisation, [Author #2], [Author #3] and I worked daily with the organisation's four  
 122 applied SPPs and their multidisciplinary team. The placement took place during a twelve-  
 123 week period and was split into two blocks of six weeks. [Author #2] and I, undertook the  
 124 work placement together during the first block, whilst [Author #3], was alone for the second  
 125 block. [Author #2] and I, stayed in regular contact with [Author #3] and shared our  
 126 experiences of working in T&T before his arrival. Towards the end of our working period,  
 127 [Author #3] had arrived in T&T and was able to spend some days with us onsite before  
 128 beginning his working cycle. The SPPs hosting us were all from T&T and undertook their  
 129 sport psychology training in institutions within the United Kingdom (UK) and the United  
 130 States of America (USA), and often operated across the Caribbean region.

131 **Situating the Authors**

132 [Author #2], [Author #3], and I are tSPPs currently enrolled on a Professional  
 133 Doctorate degree in Sport and Exercise Psychology in the UK. The degree encompasses both  
 134 an applied and research component, leading us to qualify as doctoral level academics and be  
 135 eligible to register with the Health and Care Professions Council as qualified practitioners in  
 136 the UK. During the placement, I was in my first year of training while [Author #2] and  
 137 [Author #3] were in their second year. Through the Professional Doctorate at [University],  
 138 [Author #4] and [Author# 5] are the primary practice and research supervisors for [Author  
 139 #2] and I, while [Author #3] is being supervised by [Author# 5] for applied work and [Author  
 140 #6] for research. At the time of this placement, our ages ranged from 24 to 27 years old, and  
 141 each of us had 1 to 2 years of applied practice experience in the UK, primarily offering our  
 142 applied services through our individual private practices or as employees of sports teams.  
 143 [Author #3] and I, identify as White heterosexual cis men and [Author #2] as a White  
 144 heterosexual cis woman. While [Author #2] and I, have personal transnational experience of

145 living in different countries, none of us have any prior transnational professional experience.  
 146 Before our placement experience, we had limited knowledge concerning T&T's history with  
 147 British colonialism and were largely unaware of how our identity as White European middle-  
 148 classed individuals may impact people's perceptions of us. [Author #4] and [Author #5] are  
 149 experienced researcher-practitioners with extensive applied expertise, and we regularly  
 150 received supervision from them before, during and after our time in T&T. All three  
 151 supervisors are White males. [Author #4] is from Italy with extensive transnational personal  
 152 experience as well as professional experience engaging in culturally grounded sport  
 153 psychology as a practitioner and scholar. [Author #4] provided feedback on our applied  
 154 practice during the placement and extensive guidance in the development of this manuscript.  
 155 [Author #5] and [Author #6] are from the UK and provided editorial guidance and supported  
 156 the writing process. Together, they used their knowledge and experience to engage in critical  
 157 dialogue with [Author #2], [Author #3], and I during the write up to facilitate greater clarity  
 158 in the confessional tales, thereby helping to provide a more detailed and evocative narrative.

159 **Confessional Tales**

160 To share some of our reflections on the various hurdles we encountered during our  
 161 transnational experience, [Author #2], [Author #3] and I constructed two confessional tales.  
 162 Confessional tales are narrative accounts where researchers and/or practitioners openly and  
 163 creatively share and discuss the challenges encountered and lessons learned during their  
 164 research or applied work (e.g., Cavallerio et al., 2019; Darpatova-Hruzewicz, 2021). In this  
 165 professional practice paper, we used confessional tales as a novel way to illuminate the  
 166 complex interactions between our biases, feelings, social positions, and intersecting identities  
 167 and how these impacted our professional experiences in T&T.

168 **Constructing the Tales**



169           To ensure rigour in the reflections in each confessional tale, they were formulated by  
170 incorporating elements and techniques of the autoethnography method. Autoethnography is  
171 an approach to writing that draws on individuals' personal experiences in relation to the  
172 culture and sub-cultures of the context in which they are embedded (Allen-Collinson, 2012).  
173 This method requires the individual to deeply and carefully reflect on their intersections  
174 between the self and society, thus allowing them to become more culturally centred in their  
175 practice (McGannon & Smith, 2015). The autoethnography elements used to formulate our  
176 reflections included active participation in, and observation of, the cultural and professional  
177 environment in T&T (Poulus, 2021); individual reflections recorded in personal diaries and  
178 professional practice logbooks (Gupta, 2022); and peer reflections conducted with our  
179 supervisors (Fogaca et al., 2018). These processes enabled us to capture and analyse the  
180 complex interactions between our biases, feelings, social positions, and intersecting  
181 identities, and how these impacted our professional experiences in T&T.

182           [Author# 2], [Author# 3], and my reflective practice process began while onsite in  
183 T&T to help us make sense of our experiences as they were unfolding. During this reflection-  
184 in-action process (Schön, 1983), in supervision we shared some of the nuances identified and  
185 reflections made when observing *how* the hosting SPPs operated with their athletes. Our  
186 supervisors played a crucial role in challenging our reflections, thoughts, feelings, and  
187 behaviours while in T&T, which, on reflection, we may not have entirely appreciated or  
188 considered at the time. Upon our return to the UK, we reflected individually on our  
189 placement to provoke deeper thinking about our personal experiences. During a peer  
190 supervision session, we shared our individual reflections and realised a common thread in our  
191 experiences, learnings, and insights. Due to the potentially insightful contribution that our  
192 reflections could have if shared with the wider sport psychology community, we were  
193 encouraged by our supervisors to consider writing a manuscript on our experiences.

194 We began by refining our reflections into two “key moments” that we felt were  
 195 important to us and insightful to report in a manuscript. We then shared these key moments,  
 196 accompanied by a variety of reflections, with our supervisors in written form. [Author# 4]  
 197 and [Author# 5]’s feedback on our reflections included that they were superficial and lacked  
 198 the depth and detail necessary for the messages we hoped to convey. Subsequently, [Author#  
 199 2], [Author# 3], and I established our own peer-supervision sessions during which we spent  
 200 extended periods of time critically discussing our reflections and challenging each other's  
 201 beliefs and perceptions, this necessitated that we were more expansive in describing how our  
 202 experiences impacted us. Throughout this time, we also continued having individual sessions  
 203 with our supervisors which additionally helped us make sense of our reflections and  
 204 experiences in a safe and supportive environment (Poczwardowski et al., 2023).

205 Eventually, we felt ready to share a second written draft of our reflections in the form  
 206 of confessional tales to our Professional Doctorate cohort supervision group consisting of  
 207 current tSPPs and our supervisors. We believed it was important to share our reflections to an  
 208 audience who had no preconceptions of our experiences, as a way of critically assessing  
 209 them. The feedback from the group was that our confessions lacked detail on the explicit  
 210 assumptions, thoughts, and feelings we had before, during, and after the placement and once  
 211 again came across as superficial. We were therefore encouraged by our peers and supervisors  
 212 to be more comfortable in being vulnerable with ourselves and the reader. [Author# 2],  
 213 [Author# 3], and I continued to spend sessions thinking about how to communicate our  
 214 reflections as authentically as possible, and finally settled on the confessional tales below.

215 **Contextualising the Tales**

216 The following confessional tales centre on the main theme of cultural arrogance.  
 217 Specifically, the tales expose our arrogance of over-relying on our international backgrounds  
 218 and previous transnational experiences and how this led us to overlook and fail to consider

219 the cultural norms and traditions of T&T. Indeed, these stories shed light on our lack of  
220 cultural humility regarding T&T's colonial history, awareness of cultural differences and  
221 even our own cultural backgrounds, despite conversations on this topic with supervisors prior  
222 to our departure. While each tale has a different emphasis, both serve as examples of how we  
223 demonstrated our lack of cultural humility during our time in T&T. In the first tale, the reader  
224 will notice that reference is made to academic literature (see Cavallerio et al., 2019 for an  
225 illustrative example) to frame and contextualise some of our reactions and reflections in the  
226 moment. [Author #2] and I collaboratively wrote the first confessional tale focused on our  
227 time together in T&T, while [Author #3] wrote the second confessional tale based on his  
228 personal experience.

### 229 *Confessional Tale 1: Boundary Issues*

230         During the first week of our placement at the sport organisation, we ([Author #2] and  
231 I) focused on immersing ourselves in both the T&T and professional contexts. We travelled  
232 with the hosting SPPs to different locations and attended the training sessions of various  
233 teams across individual and team sports to familiarise ourselves with the environment. We  
234 had the opportunity to observe teams' training sessions while also experiencing how the in  
235 situ SPPs interacted with their clients. As the first week unfolded, we noticed a consistent  
236 pattern during these client-practitioner interactions. Specifically, when athletes spotted their  
237 SPPs watching them on the sideline, they greeted and embraced them with open arms and  
238 would joke with and tease each other, just like old friends who had known each other for  
239 years. Listening to the conversations unfold, we noticed that both parties had engaged in  
240 substantial personal disclosure with each other in the past, and this seemed to have helped  
241 establish a sense of familiarity and friendship. Their relationships appeared strong, and they  
242 engaged in a great deal of playful physical contact (e.g., pushing each other's arms when  
243 laughing, hugging).

244           Although we acknowledge it is not unusual for practitioners to engage in humour with  
245 athletes at home in the UK (Pack et al., 2019a; Pack et al., 2019b), these behaviours stood out  
246 to us because, in our inexperience, we felt a dissonance between the level of familiarity they  
247 were displaying and the guidance around professional boundaries espoused to us during our  
248 training. To elaborate, our beliefs, specifically around boundary setting, were particularly  
249 rigid. This was perhaps grounded in fears about breaking ethical rules, anxieties about  
250 litigation, and worry about intimacy with clients; fears which are not uncommon in trainees  
251 as discussed by Foster (2007) and Tribe (2015). These resulted in a tendency for us to ensure  
252 minimal voluntary self-disclosure and carefully monitoring the use of humour with the aim of  
253 protecting both the practitioner and client. By contrast, we observed T&T to have a very open  
254 and warm culture, where sociability and gregariousness are encouraged. Consequently, when  
255 observing our hosting SPPs engaging with their clients, we became nervous, sceptical, and  
256 feared ethical repercussions. In other words, we were afraid of the potential criticism from  
257 the UK or US-based sport psychology field associated with their familiar and informal  
258 approach to interacting with clients.

259           Our level of discomfort about our perceived vulnerability to being criticised for  
260 overstepping an ethical boundary resulted in a culturally led knee-jerk reaction where we  
261 subconsciously perceived ourselves as occupying the “higher ground” professionally  
262 speaking. We felt, as tSPPs from the UK, that perhaps we had a responsibility to uphold the  
263 expectations we had around what we believed “being ethical and professional” to be (e.g.,  
264 through establishing rigid boundaries with clients, and that perhaps those were not being  
265 appropriately adhered to in this cultural context). Our fear of being criticised or accidentally  
266 crossing any ethical lines led us to lean into subconscious prejudices and assumptions we  
267 held prior to arriving in T&T, concerning the quality of the service delivery practice we were  
268 going to encounter. In other words, prior to our arrival we assumed that the SPPs may not

269 appreciate the rigidity of ethical practice as much as we did as they were operating in a region  
270 in which applied sport psychology was less developed than in America and Europe. Anxiety  
271 led us to participate in—and therefore revealed—a culturally led assumption that our UK-  
272 based knowledge and experience of practice boundaries could be situated above theirs (from  
273 a less economically developed cultural context). Rather than stepping back, examining the  
274 uncomfortable feelings with curiosity and humility, and choosing our next course of action  
275 with intentionality as we would now hope to do, we dove in with the assumption that we  
276 came from an educational and socioeconomic background that meant we would know more  
277 than the T&T practitioners we were working with.

278         With time, we began to settle into our new surroundings, relax, and reduce our focus  
279 on ourselves. We began to open up and learn about how the T&T practitioners approached  
280 their clients, characterised by upbeat and positive conversations. We also saw the client-  
281 practitioner relationships; their authenticity and the strength of the therapeutic alliance, and  
282 we began to recognise the fallacy in our culturally led assumptions. We saw how both the  
283 practitioner and client were able to feel comfortable and open around each other outside the  
284 consulting context (Sharp & Hodge, 2013). Our observation led us to reflect together on the  
285 positive aspects of the SPPs' approach to interacting with clients, which resulted in a new  
286 kind of discomfort. We now felt uncomfortable about the arrogance we had carried into this  
287 placement. We remembered that we had a lot to learn ourselves, we saw the presumptions our  
288 anxieties had exposed, and started wondering how the approach these SPPs employed with  
289 clients might fit our philosophy and approaches to practice in our home cultural context.

290         To help make sense of our reflections, during the placement, we shared our  
291 observations about the closeness of the client-practitioner relationship to one of the T&T  
292 supervising SPPs. They empathised with our reflections and explained that, on returning to  
293 T&T following their training in the US, they too experienced some incongruence between

294 their professional boundaries and the T&T cultural norms when interacting with clients  
 295 outside of sessions. Indeed, the SPP explained that Trinidadian cultural norms *required*  
 296 practitioners to be very open and friendly with their clients, as opposed to engaging in a more  
 297 reserved and neutral approach that we believed to be effective and necessary to maintain a  
 298 level of professionalism. The SPP explained to us that if any of the practitioners in the  
 299 department were to uphold the rigid boundaries that we assumed were appropriate, through  
 300 avoidance or minimal interaction in public, it would most likely upset the client or be  
 301 perceived as rude, thus damaging the client-practitioner working relationship.

302         Upon further discussion during a peer-supervision session about the potential ethical  
 303 implications of the T&T's practitioners' approach to practice, particularly concerning playful  
 304 physical contact with clients, [Author #4] encouraged [Author #2] and I to reflect on the lack  
 305 of cultural sensitivity in our approach to ethical practice. To elaborate, we discussed how our  
 306 ethical framework was not contextually driven and how as practitioners we failed to consider  
 307 and acknowledge the cultural norms and differences of the environment in which we were  
 308 operating (see e.g., Dudley-Grant et al., 2018; Roopnarie et al., 2021). These reflections  
 309 underscored the importance for practitioners to be contextually and culturally driven within  
 310 their practice and to adapt their ethical standards according to the context's traditions and  
 311 norms (Stambulova & Schinke, 2017). Learning how our assumptions may have led us to  
 312 make relationship-damaging mistakes in our service delivery, as well as in our professional  
 313 relationships with colleagues, helped us recognise the need to move ourselves towards a  
 314 humbler standpoint to further our personal and professional growth in the future (Hook et al.,  
 315 2013).

316 ***Confessional Tale 2: Punctuality is a Privilege***

317         I, [Author #3], have always prided myself on my punctuality. Indeed, punctuality has  
 318 been ingrained into my upbringing as a valuable commodity which shows respect towards

319 others. It is a value which had never been challenged and I therefore perceived punctuality to  
320 be a universal value. During my time at the T&T sport organisation where I completed my  
321 placement, meetings and client sessions were often delayed or cancelled, sometimes with no  
322 further explanation than “I am not going to make it”. The more this would occur throughout  
323 the placement, the more frustrated I got. I perceived that the athletes and staff did not value  
324 punctuality in the same way I did, and neither did they value my time. I felt disrespected.

325         A specific example comes from my time working with a youth athlete, where I was  
326 asked to be present in their strength and conditioning sessions. My task was to develop a  
327 sense of how the athlete may benefit from psychological support by observing them in their  
328 context and through informal conversations. The athlete, however, would often arrive late to  
329 training by 30 minutes. Since they trained before my contracted working hours (i.e., 7am), I  
330 found myself feeling disheartened; I felt I was showing high levels of commitment and  
331 respect to best support the athlete, but that this respect was not being reciprocated. I truly felt  
332 my time was being wasted.

333         Initially, I questioned whether the lack of punctuality I was experiencing was down  
334 to some error on my part. Maybe this athlete found my presence distracting, or perhaps the  
335 informal questions I was asking them in between exercises made them feel uncomfortable. I  
336 reflected that maybe my presence as a White British person was playing a part. That  
337 perhaps my Whiteness was making this individual feel nervous or intimidated. Maybe I was  
338 seen by this athlete as an authoritative figure, who held more power due to my education  
339 and our countries’ colonial histories. All these factors combined may have led the athlete to  
340 make excuses for being late in the hope I was not observing his session.

341         When looking back, my frustration about the athlete’s lateness was perhaps the first  
342 indicator that I was becoming aware of the differing cultural dynamics at play; yet, at the  
343 time, I chose to not explore them further, perhaps due to how uncomfortable I thought the

344 process may have been for myself. After sharing the punctuality concerns with my T&T  
345 colleagues, it became clear that they were accustomed to this lack of punctuality and did not  
346 necessarily experience it as a challenge to themselves or their work. That is, most of my  
347 colleagues experienced delayed or cancelled meetings during my placement, but were  
348 notably far less bothered when it occurred. In fact, they sought humour in my frustrations  
349 by observing my first experiences of “Trini time”; a joke made in T&T to refer to lateness  
350 commonly occurring.

351         During a later conversation with a colleague about everyone’s patience with “Trini  
352 time” compared to my own, the colleague, who had studied and lived previously in the UK,  
353 explained how the cultural and contextual parameters were totally different to what I was  
354 used to. For example, in T&T, there is minimal public transport, heavy traffic, and extreme,  
355 often unpredictable weather conditions (e.g., flash flooding, tropical storms) which  
356 consequently make punctuality difficult for even the most conscientious person. This  
357 observation reinforced an informal conversation that I had with the athlete, who explained  
358 that they travelled<sup>2</sup> to training and, thus, they were completely reliant on a notoriously  
359 unreliable form of transport. Following these discussions, I reflected on the importance I  
360 ascribed to punctuality, how this was framed within my British ideals regarding  
361 professionalism (i.e., it is professional to be punctual), the meaning this frame placed on my  
362 interpretation of the athlete’s “lateness”, and how I had arrogantly failed to consider the  
363 cultural and contextual parameters in which I was operating. On learning about the cultural  
364 expectations, my feelings of frustration turned to guilt. I was concerned that the arrogance  
365 and frustration I showed to my T&T colleagues regarding punctuality may have offended  
366 them and that my lack of cultural sensitivity was being seen as being disrespectful. The

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<sup>2</sup>In T&T, *travelled* is the term for using a form of taxi service which you cannot book and often have to wait on a main road until one drives past.



367 conversation with the T&T SPP made me realise that rather than centring the athlete's  
 368 personal factors regarding their experiences of lateness, I had centred myself in the  
 369 narrative. I had focused on what this experience said about their regard for me and the  
 370 efficacy of my practice, as opposed to trying to understand the components that had shaped  
 371 their experiences regarding punctuality. This meant that I did not show up authentically for  
 372 the athlete's needs and, instead, was focused on what *I* wanted from this relationship.

373 My experience has given me the opportunity to learn the importance of stepping  
 374 back and reflecting on the extent to which our work is congruent with not only our values,  
 375 but also the values of those we are working with. Furthermore, I now realise that a  
 376 culturally humble practitioner is required to be active in their attempts to gain knowledge  
 377 regarding one's socio-cultural components. That is, for one to truly centre the athlete's  
 378 needs in their work, they actively need to seek information which maps out the cultural  
 379 context of their client. Overall, this experience has highlighted personal prejudices that I  
 380 was previously unaware of, establishing an acceptance that we all have subconscious biases  
 381 and that, at times, these can be difficult to acknowledge. I believe that it is important that  
 382 SPPs dismantle their arrogance as well as practice self-awareness, to consciously explore  
 383 where such assumptions come from and within their cultural context, regardless of how  
 384 uncomfortable the process may be.

### 385 **Our Reflections**

386 In the following section, we [Author #1], [Author #2] and [Author #3] offer some  
 387 further reflective thoughts which expand upon our cultural arrogance and lack of cultural  
 388 humility as described in the confessional tales. These reflections also aim to provide insight  
 389 on the important role our supervisors played along with our general reflective process which  
 390 enabled us to develop the aforementioned tales. While we appreciate not all practitioners may  
 391 have access to such transnational experiences, we hope that the reader is able to consider the

392 relevance of culture and context within their practice and how their intersecting identities  
393 play a role in how they see the world and deliver their services.

394 **Reflection 1 – Ignorance and Arrogance Go Hand-in-Hand.**

395         Due to our past experiences of cultural diversity throughout our upbringing (e.g.,  
396 through school and sport) and having friends and partners from different cultures, we  
397 believed ourselves to have developed a solid foundation of cultural sensitivity and  
398 understanding. We therefore felt comfortable and confident when interacting with those from  
399 another culture to our own. Indeed, prior to our arrival in T&T, we (arrogantly) considered  
400 ourselves able to effectively understand and adjust to the contextual and cultural nuances that  
401 this placement would have brought us. However, the thoughts, feelings and emotions  
402 described in both confessional tales suggest that we knew much less about what cultural  
403 diversity and what being inclusive meant than we originally thought. In both instances, we  
404 failed to consider the T&T SPPs and athletes as individuals with distinctive and contextually  
405 determined cultural backgrounds and experiences. Despite living in a different cultural  
406 context, we arrogantly expected them to behave in ways which were aligned with our  
407 culturally led values and beliefs. Specifically, we underestimated the power of our privileges  
408 and the influence of these privileges within a primarily non-white, lower socioeconomic  
409 status practice context. We failed to ask ourselves specific and crucial questions on how  
410 intersectionality impacts our service delivery. It was not until after our transnational  
411 experience that we realised the true importance of cultural context within applied practice and  
412 how unprepared we were for this.

413         Practitioners reading the current manuscript can learn from our mistakes and arrogant  
414 approach to practice by proactively engaging in self-reflection and reflexivity. Like clients,  
415 SPPs also have their own cultural background and identities such as heritage, ethnicity,  
416 nationality, socioeconomic status and gender, as well as beliefs, attitudes, values, biases,

417 assumptions, and stereotypes of others and themselves (Champ et al., 2021; Quartiroli et al.,  
418 2020). Engaging in reflective practice specifically focused on one's cultural humility allows  
419 practitioners to become aware of how their identity may impact their service delivery.  
420 Cultural identities are not always visible and are often unconscious and automatic, yet these  
421 can become apparent through self-reflections and self-awareness (Storry & Childs, 2022).  
422 Although we support the use of self-reflection as a starting point, we encourage practitioners  
423 to move toward being self-reflexive. Reflexivity is a form of reflective practice, offering  
424 practitioners a critical lens on how their positionality within power structures shape their  
425 behaviours, perspectives and understanding of the applied context in which they are operating  
426 (Darpatova-Hruzewicz et al., 2021). While self-reflection promotes growth and development,  
427 self-reflexivity allows for a deeper insight into how one's social position, intersecting  
428 identities, cultural backgrounds and sense of self shape their practice and interaction with the  
429 broader socio-cultural context (Price et al., 2022). In sum, being self-reflexive can enhance  
430 multicultural awareness and sensitivity, leading to more effective and ethical practice.  
431 Consequently, being self-reflexive could prevent practitioners from adopting a cultural  
432 arrogant stance and promote cultural humility when starting to work in a different cultural  
433 context.

434 Practitioners should also consider the role of contextual-driven sport psychology  
435 practice; that is, drawing on a thorough analysis and understanding of a client's cultural  
436 context (Stambulova & Schinke, 2017). Being contextually driven suggests that there is not a  
437 one size fits all approach and that we need to consider each client's unique circumstances; we  
438 were ignorant, if not arrogant, to the need for such sensitivity. For instance, it was not until  
439 after our ([Author #1] and [Author #2]) conversation with the T&T SPP and subsequently  
440 [Author #4] surrounding boundaries, that we became aware of the importance of embracing a  
441 culture-centred and context-driven approach to practice (Schinke & Stambulova, 2017) for

442 effectively establishing a positive and meaningful working relationship with clients. We now  
 443 recognise that our initial approach to practice, which did not account for the contextual and  
 444 cultural nuances of T&T, would have led us to engage with our clients in a rigid and sub-  
 445 optimal manner. Indeed, our approach may have been received as cold, rude, or insensitive  
 446 by the T&T athletes, potentially jeopardising our ability to positively connect with them and  
 447 to develop effective working relationships. These reflections also demonstrate the importance  
 448 of practitioners to recognising and holding the client at the centre of the relationship, and to  
 449 allowing them to be the driving structure rather than arrogantly imposing our own  
 450 assumptions and approach. Therefore, to effectively engage in service delivery, SPPs should  
 451 adapt their approach based on the cultural background characterising the context within  
 452 which they work, and the cultural identities and nuances brought by the clients in the  
 453 consulting relationships.

454 **Reflection 2 – A Need for Humility**

455         Developing an understanding of our subconscious prejudices also revealed a position  
 456 of arrogance. As previously mentioned, a key aim of our placement was for us to work  
 457 collaboratively with the host organisation through the exchange of sport psychology  
 458 knowledge and ideas. However, the reflective process with [Author #4] exposed the small  
 459 extent to which we believed this would be the case. Before this placement, we held the belief  
 460 that our training, which is grounded in the Euro-American assumptions and theories, was the  
 461 golden standard. Indeed, we believed any individual who did not have access to such  
 462 education and operated outside of the Euro-American regions could not have the same level  
 463 of knowledge and expertise; this included the T&T SPPs with whom we would collaborate  
 464 with. Whilst it is uncomfortable to admit, we arrogantly assumed that much of the exchange  
 465 in knowledge was going to be unidirectional (i.e., us to them). These reactions depict  
 466 elements of the concept of ethnocentrism which refers to the attitude that other cultures are

467 perceived as inferior when compared to one’s own, and that one’s own perspective is judged  
 468 as right while the other is judged as wrong or less than (Atingdui, 2011). Our prejudices were  
 469 soon exposed after we began to work with the hosting SPPs and realised that they had far  
 470 greater experience and knowledge within the field than all of us combined. Further  
 471 reflections during supervision allowed us to become aware of how we had subconsciously  
 472 engaged in a colonial hangover power dynamic (i.e., “we are better”).

473         Reporting these reflections in the current manuscript has brought up feelings of  
 474 discomfort, shame, and guilt. Who are we, as trainees with next to no experience, to judge  
 475 and think in this way? Our sense of superiority was very much undeserved and exposing our  
 476 limits to practice in this reflective account was daunting. We were initially resistant to  
 477 sharing our experiences, fearful about what the sport psychology community and the hosting  
 478 SPPs, with whom we are now friends, would think of us. In initial drafts, we subconsciously  
 479 held back from fully sharing our thoughts to protect ourselves from any potential challenging  
 480 confrontations which may have resulted from the publication of this professional practice  
 481 paper. This instinctive reaction of wanting to suppress our discomfort and struggle to come to  
 482 terms with how we presented ourselves in T&T illustrates our lack of cultural humility (cf.  
 483 Hook et al., 2017). We were protecting ourselves from the “risk” of being judged. [Author  
 484 #4] challenged us to become aware of this defensiveness and of our reluctance to face these  
 485 uncomfortable feelings, and to explore ways of how to make sense of them.

486         After reflecting in many supervision sessions, we began to overcome the “feeling  
 487 sorry for yourself” perspective to one of learning to embrace these feelings of discomfort.  
 488 This discomfort is a key part of the process of cultural humility, and it is only once one  
 489 becomes comfortable with the idea of making mistakes and to be vulnerable that they allow  
 490 themselves the space to grow (Hook et al., 2017). We, therefore, encourage SPPs who are  
 491 faced with difficult and sensitive cultural dilemmas to acknowledge and embrace their

492 mistakes and engage in the lifelong process of self-reflection toward cultural humility, rather  
493 than focusing on how they may appear or come across to others.

494         Given his scholarly and applied expertise and knowledge of cultural competence and  
495 humility, [Author #4] played a pivotal role in helping us arrive at embracing such reflections  
496 through peer and individual supervision sessions. The supervision process, however, was  
497 characterised by resistance and friction between us trainees and [Author #4], during and after  
498 our transnational experience. Despite having regular conversations with [Author #4] and him  
499 challenging us over the course of many months, including during the initial stages of writing  
500 the current manuscript, we failed to come to terms with the arrogance we displayed in T&T.  
501 We adopted an arrogant stance not only before and during our experience in T&T, but also  
502 during the supervision sessions after our return. Beyond simply reporting on the lessons  
503 learned regarding “functional boundaries” and “punctuality”, we found it difficult to go  
504 deeper into the cultural aspects of our initial reflections despite [Author #4]’s encouragement  
505 and collaborative approach (Watson et al., 2014). We overlooked the deeper and underlying  
506 messages of our overall experiences in T&T, as well as failed to initially overcome the  
507 discomfort of deeper reflection, to push ourselves to be vulnerable, and to share an authentic  
508 account with the reader by exploring our past limitations and ongoing opportunities for  
509 growth in cultural humility. Not only does this struggle between supervisor and trainees  
510 demonstrate the importance for supervisors to provide culturally competent supervision but  
511 also highlights how trainees should embrace and be open-minded when supervisors’  
512 challenge them.

513         Overall, our experience in T&T provided us with the opportunity for our privileges,  
514 assumptions, and prejudices to be challenged. An opportunity that would not have been  
515 possible had we stayed operating within a system built for us and our sets of identity, and  
516 within which our worldviews, biases, stereotypes, and privilege were systematically

517 supported rather than challenged (i.e., in the Euro-American system). Based on our  
 518 experience, we have a better understanding of the value of adopting an open, humble, and  
 519 non-judgemental stance when operating in an unfamiliar and foreign cultural context. We  
 520 believe these reflections are not only relevant for when we work in a different cultural setting  
 521 but also apply when working with individuals from different gender identities, gender  
 522 expressions and, sexual identities for instance. We now appreciate that to be more ethical and  
 523 effective in our practice, we need to become more culturally grounded and to continually  
 524 engage in critical reflections regarding our intersecting identities (Quartiroli et al., 2020). We  
 525 realise that we are merely at the beginning of our journeys towards the development of a  
 526 more culturally humble and safe approach to practice and there is still much we need to learn  
 527 (Ryba et al., 2024).

### 528 **Professional Practice Recommendations and Conclusion**

529 Drawing from our learnings in these confessional tales, we [All Authors] now offer  
 530 some applied recommendations and considerations to support tSPPs and qualified SPPs when  
 531 beginning their own journey to becoming more culturally grounded in their practice. We  
 532 hope the reader can learn from our mistakes and recommendations by engaging in reflection-  
 533 in-action as their transnational experience unfolds. This approach would enable them to  
 534 address and acknowledge their potential prejudices, biases, privileges, and assumptions in  
 535 real-time, rather than reflecting on these aspects post-transnational experience.

536 Due to our lack of preparedness and understanding of the T&T context, we may have  
 537 benefited from engaging in a pre-trip training on the cultural context (e.g., colonial history)  
 538 prior to our departure. Such training would have been appropriate to help us better take on the  
 539 transnational experience so that not all of the experience gained comes from learning on the  
 540 job. Additionally, engaging with Trinidadian, West Indian, and Caribbean-specific theories  
 541 and approaches available in the literature prior to our departure (e.g., Dudley-Grant et al.,

542 2018; Roopnarine et al., 2021) would have been beneficial. This engagement would have  
543 provided us with a deeper understanding of the cultural context of T&T, thereby grounding  
544 our practice more effectively and enhancing our journey towards cultural humility during our  
545 transnational experience. While such training or immersion into the T&T and Caribbean  
546 literature may be helpful to prepare practitioners, this should not be the be-all and end-all  
547 (i.e., “I now know everything about the cultural context”). Indeed, practitioners should  
548 continue to adopt a humble stance, be open to learning, and employ a context-driven  
549 approach to practice while operating in the context itself.

550 Further, despite current training programs not appearing to reflect the need for  
551 practitioners to develop a more culturally grounded approach to practice, practitioners could  
552 consider engaging in transnational experiences. Based on our experiences and the realisation  
553 of our own lack of preparation and cultural humility, such transnational experiences are of  
554 great value. Such first-hand experiences provide a unique opportunity to develop cultural  
555 humility, and these placements will encourage practitioners to consider the importance of  
556 their positionality when working in different cultural contexts or with individuals from  
557 different cultural backgrounds. Additionally, these placement opportunities underscore the  
558 ethical and moral imperative for practitioners to develop cultural humility and competence,  
559 thereby ensuring effective service delivery to clients (Quartiroli et al., 2023). Nonetheless, we  
560 recognise that we were extremely privileged to have had the opportunity to undertake such a  
561 placement, which may not be feasible for all trainees. To mitigate these barriers, professional  
562 organisations, qualifying bodies and education institutions could work collaboratively to offer  
563 additional training and professional development opportunities to tSPPs and qualified SPPs  
564 focused on cultural humility (see also, Lee, 2015; Quartiroli et al., 2020), as well as  
565 accessible transnational work placements.



566 For those unable to complete transnational experiences, there are a variety of ways in  
567 which practitioners can proactively make their practice more culturally grounded. First, they  
568 may consider engaging in cultural discourses with practitioners from different cultural  
569 backgrounds and experiences to that of the Westernised and Euro-centric contexts (Quartiroli  
570 et al., 2021b). Gaining an understanding of the nuanced approaches of practitioners who  
571 work in different cultural contexts may help SPPs become aware of their potential blind spots  
572 and lack of cultural humility. Second, practitioners can attend local cultural festivals or  
573 immerse themselves in local cultural neighbourhoods to learn about and enhance one's  
574 awareness of different cultures and cultural norms (Quartiroli et al., 2022). Third, SPPs may  
575 engage with clients from culturally diverse backgrounds to modify existing beliefs about, and  
576 prevent, possible stereotyping towards a cultural group (Campinha-Bacote, 2011). In this  
577 way, SPPs may view clients as individuals rather than as members of a group, and they may  
578 familiarise themselves with the cultural nuances within different groups. Additionally, such  
579 cultural encounters allow the opportunity for the practitioner to be inquisitive, self-reflective,  
580 and engage in the process of life-long learning (Fahlberg et al., 2016). Dos Santos and Dallos  
581 (2012) encourage practitioners to develop skills that enable them to engage effectively and  
582 openly discuss cultural elements with clients from diverse backgrounds during sessions,  
583 helping to overcome any associated anxieties which stem from the fear of making cultural  
584 related mistakes. Quartiroli and colleagues (2022) suggest that it is important for SPPs to be  
585 comfortable with making mistakes when engaging in difficult conversations around culture  
586 with clients, as this is a key process in developing cultural humility. By paying closer  
587 attention and identifying when such fear or reluctance arises, practitioners may adopt a more  
588 culturally sensitive approach to practice, and thus co-construct a safe space with the client in  
589 which they are able to explore core aspects of their identity within the therapeutic work.  
590 These recommendations can be applied to practitioners across their career span. Indeed, from

591 trainee to supervisor status, these recommendations can support one's own applied work and  
592 enhance their ability to engage in culturally sensitive practice.

593 Fourth, given the vital role that supervisors play in supporting tSPPs' and qualified  
594 practitioners' training and development, supervisors are encouraged to integrate cultural  
595 humility into their supervision (Poczwadowski et al., 2023). Integrating cultural humility can  
596 help supervisors create a safe reflective space which embraces mistake making and  
597 vulnerability and considers how culture and cultural identities play a key part of practice and  
598 personal life (see Quartiroli et al., 2022). To enhance multi-culturally competent supervisory  
599 practices, supervisors can encourage and guide their trainees' cultural knowledge, skills, and  
600 abilities, engage in cultural broaching (i.e., the willingness to deliberately discuss cultural  
601 issues and differences with supervisees; see Tibbetts & Smith, 2022), and openly and  
602 authentically commit to active learning about their supervisees to build a solid multicultural  
603 supervisory alliance (see Mitchell & Butler, 2021). Supervisors can also collaborate with  
604 their supervisees on culturally attuned interventions and skills to be delivered to supervisees'  
605 clients and hold multi-cultural focused discussions with supervisee (see Poczwadowski et  
606 al., 2023).

### 607 **Conclusion**

608 In summary, we have presented two confessional tales to highlight the challenges we  
609 faced as tSPPs during our transnational experience in T&T. Our reflections move beyond  
610 exploring the challenges of boundary setting and punctuality to reveal the limitations of our  
611 initial cultural humility and how this was influenced by our values and privileges. To support  
612 other tSPPs in their professional training and development of cultural humility, we have  
613 offered practical recommendations for self-reflection and the development of self-awareness.  
614 We also highlight the crucial role that supervisors have in supporting tSPPs to engage in  
615 cultural humility. By sharing our challenges and lessons learned during our transnational

616 experience in T&T, we hope that the current professional practice paper will continue to  
617 stimulate discourse around the importance of cultural humility, contribute to the cultural sport  
618 psychology literature, and, ultimately, inform effective service delivery.

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