

MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING COMPETENCY

ASSESSMENT: TEST TAKER FRAME OF REFERENCE

By

Sean Kia`i Kitaoka

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College of the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Psychological Studies in Education

Under the Supervision of Professor David Moshman

Lincoln, Nebraska

December 2007

UMI Number: 3293916

PREVIEW

UMI<sup>®</sup>

---

UMI Microform 3293916

Copyright 2008 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.  
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against  
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

---

ProQuest Information and Learning Company  
300 North Zeeb Road  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

# MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT:

## TEST TAKER FRAME OF REFERENCE

Sean Kia`i Kitaoka, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2007

Adviser: David Moshman

Based on a review of the multicultural counseling competence literature, Kitaoka (2005) identified four areas of further research: 1) integrating discrepant factor analyses regarding the structure of multicultural competence; 2) the ambiguity of Multicultural Awareness; 3) the impact of an inclusive versus an exclusive definition of culture; and 4) the impact of test taker frame of reference on multicultural competency assessment test scores. This study examined the effects of test taker frame of reference on scores for the Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI). The instructions to the MCI were revised to create three different versions: 1) instructions that were not revised; 2) instructions that cued participants to think of cultural groups with whom they were relatively familiar; and 3) instructions that cued participants to think of cultural groups with whom they were relatively unfamiliar. Participants were randomly assigned to one of these groups.

Using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) it was found that the familiarity a test taker had with a particular cultural group did not significantly impact MCI scores. Test takers did demonstrate preferences for certain frames of reference when responding to the MCI: 1) participants conceptualized culture based primarily on race/ethnicity; and 2)

participants responded to items based on groups they were relatively or very familiar with, even when instructed otherwise. These findings may be of relevance to individuals developing and constructing tests and test items, as well as training programs that use the MCI and similar measures to assess MCC.

PREVIEW

## **Table of Contents**

Abstract.....	2
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	5
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	9
Chapter 3: Methods.....	31
Chapter 4: Results.....	38
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	42
References.....	61
Appendix: MCI and Supplemental Questionnaire.....	68

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Sue et al.'s (1982) seminal work on the Multicultural Counseling Competencies (MCC) has given the field of applied psychology direction and purpose in its efforts to provide culturally sensitive mental health services to an increasingly diverse population. Initially, Sue et al. (1982) contended that MCC was composed of Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills. While the model has undergone some minor revisions, its fundamental tenets of Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills have remained. Two of the most notable revisions included Sue et al.'s (1998) work which posited the following: 1) MCC is relevant at both the individual and organizational levels; and 2) the term 'culture' should not be reserved to racial/ethnic groups, but to various forms of diversity (e.g. sexual orientation, disability, SES, gender, religious affiliation, etc.). The second and most recent revision is titled the Multiple Dimensions of Cultural Competence (MDCC) (Sue, 2001). The model is based on a 3 x 4 x 5 design in which the primary dimensions of MCC are organized: 1) components of cultural competence (Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills), 2) foci of cultural competence (Individual, Professional, Organizational, and Societal), and 3) specific racial/cultural group perspectives (European American, Native American, Latino American, Asian American, and African American) (Sue, 2001). Ridley, Baker, & Hill (2001), Reynolds (2001), and Suzuki, McRae, & Short (2001) provide reviews and critiques of the model in its totality. This study however, will focus on the component parts of cultural competence (Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills) and their assessment. The addition of specific racial/cultural group perspectives and the foci of cultural competence have not as yet changed the tripartite conceptualization of MCC and the professions' efforts in assessing it at the level of individual counselors and

psychologists.

Both the American Psychological Association (APA) and the American Counseling Association (ACA) have demonstrated their increasing awareness of the importance of MCC. Two divisions of the APA (17 and 45) and six divisions of the ACA have officially endorsed the MCC framework (Ponterotto, Fuertes, & Chen, 2000).

As the Sue et al. competency model has been gaining recognition, the field has been making efforts in devising valid and reliable means of assessment. While portfolio assessment is often cited as a popular method of evaluating MCC (Coleman, 1997), the end product of this type of assessment is not necessarily theoretically based on MCC as delineated by the Sue et al. (1982; 1992; 1998; 2001) competency model. The focus of this paper will be in the arena of quantitative assessment of MCC. Currently, the four most cited quantitative forms of assessment theoretically based on the Sue et al. (1992) competency model are as follows: 1) The Cross-Cultural Counseling Inventory-Revised (CCCI-R) (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Hernandez, 1991); 2) The Multicultural Counseling Awareness Scale-B (MCAS-B) (Ponterotto, Sanchez, & Magids, 1991); 3) The Multicultural Awareness-Knowledge-Skills Survey (MAKSS) (D'Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991); and 4) The Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI) (Sodowsky, Taffe, Gutkin, & Wise, 1994). Each of these measures is conceptually rooted in the Sue et al. (1992) competency model (Ponterotto, Rieger, Barrett, & Sparks, 1994; Rogers & Ponterotto, 1997). One is in the form of observer-report (CCCI-R), while the others are in the form of self-report (MCAS-B, MAKSS, and the MCI).

Kitaoka (2005) reviewed and integrated the existing research surrounding the development of these instruments. This work uncovered four potentially problematic

issues relevant to the valid and reliable assessment of MCC: 1) Discrepant factor structures of MCC; 2) 'Multicultural Awareness' primarily referring to the Awareness a counselor has for the client's culture versus the Sue et al. (1992) emphasis on Self-Awareness; 3) The impact of an inclusive definition of culture on MCC and assessment; and 4) the test taker frame of reference in competency assessment. Each of these issues raise interesting questions concerning the assessment of MCC. For example, discrepant factor structures raise the question of "Is MCC best conceptualized as being composed of Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills?" The issue of current assessments' focus on Multicultural Awareness as Other as opposed to Self-Awareness begs the question "Do our instruments assess Other Awareness or Self-Awareness?" The latest revision of the MCC model (Sue et al., 1998; 2001) endorsed an inclusive definition of culture. Meanwhile, current instruments seem to emphasize work with ethnic/racial minorities, and we may now ask "To what extent do we have adequate assessment methods for MCC assessment with respect to forms of diversity other than racial/ethnic groups?"

The last issue is the test taker's frame of reference. Instructions in MCC assessments are vague and give the test taker free reign in the interpretation of questions, while leaving researchers in the dark as to what test scores mean. For instance, the instructions for the MCI states "Indicate how accurately each statement describes you...when working in a multicultural counseling situation." Does this mean you should evaluate yourself based on work with clients from one culturally different group? Or, should you evaluate yourself based on work with clients from a variety of culturally different groups? What about the level of familiarity with various cultural groups? Should you think about your work with culturally different groups with which you are



particularly familiar or unfamiliar? What frame of reference are people using when responding to these types of assessments? Until we can determine the frame of reference of the test taker, and the effect of that frame of reference, we cannot meaningfully interpret the scores from these assessments. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the possibility of differential effects of test taker frame of reference on MCC test scores.

The research hypothesis investigated is that individuals approach the MCI with varying frames of reference, and test taker frame of reference impacts test scores. The study will create three frames of reference from which respondents are to approach the MCI. First, is the Familiar Condition, in which the instructions are revised so that respondents are cued to think of groups with whom they are relatively familiar. Presumably, the Familiar frame of reference will yield the highest mean relative to the other two conditions.

Second, the Control Condition, in which respondents read the instructions of the MCI as they are currently stated. Respondents in this condition are not specifically cued to think of groups in terms of familiarity or unfamiliarity. Thus, this condition is anticipated to be comprised of both individuals who use a Familiar frame of reference, as well as other individuals who use an Unfamiliar frame of reference. This Condition is anticipated to have the second highest mean of the three conditions.

The third condition is the Unfamiliar Condition. The MCI instructions are revised so that respondents are cued to think of groups with whom they are relatively unfamiliar. The mean for this group is anticipated to be the lowest of the three, as this condition would be composed of individuals who only reference groups with whom they are

relatively unfamiliar.

## **Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**

D'Andrea and Daniels (1995) posited that “multiculturalism represents the single most important test of the counseling profession’s moral character, pragmatic viability, and professional relevance as we approach the 21st century” (p. 18). As cultural anthropologist Jennifer James (1996) puts it, “Our ability to come to terms with differences in nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, and religion – all the elements of diversity -- will be a critical predictor of economic success in the next century” (p. 208).

In 1980, The Division of Counseling Psychology’s Education and Training Committee began work on the Cross-Cultural Counseling Competencies to give training programs direction in preparing counselors for working with culturally different clients. The committee’s work resulted in the Sue et al. (1982) publication that describes 11 competencies. Follow up work by Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) resulted in a description of 31 competencies. Further expansion of these 31 competencies were then presented by Arredondo et al. (1996) with 119 statements of how the competencies may be accomplished from a training perspective. The two most recent revisions of the competencies are by Sue et al. (1998) and Sue (2001). These revisions maintain the basic structure of MCC being composed of Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills, but adds three new propositions: 1) the concept of organizational MCC, 2) the use of a more inclusive definition of culture, and 3) the acknowledgement of the multidimensionality of MCC (e.g. component parts of cultural competence, specific cultural group perspectives, and the foci of cultural competence) (Sue et al., 1998; Sue, 2001).

### The Current State of Affairs of the Multicultural Counseling Competencies

The current model proposed (Sue, 2001; Sue et al. 1998) conceptualizes MCC as being comprised of three component parts: Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills. Briefly, *Awareness* involves a counselor's self-understanding with respect to culture, values, and biases. *Knowledge* is most often considered an understanding of the worldviews of culturally different clients, the role of racism/oppression, and the impact of social and cultural influences on human functioning. And lastly, *Skills* includes the application of knowledge and experience in a culturally sensitive manner; also included as a skill is an individual's seeking out further development in MCC.

Sue et al. (1998) defined the multiculturally competent counselor as an individual who "...is actively in the process of becoming aware of his or her own assumptions about human behavior, values, biases, preconceived notions, personal limitations, and so forth...actively attempts to understand the worldview of his or her culturally different client without negative judgments...[and] is in the process of actively developing and practicing appropriate, relevant, and sensitive intervention strategies and skills in working with his or her culturally different clients" (pp. 38-40).

The latest revisions of the competencies (Sue, 2001; Sue et al., 1998) have endorsed a broad or inclusive definition of culture. Sue et al. (1998) state that the term multiculturalism "...includes diversity in race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and so on." (p. 1). Therefore, Sue et al. (1998) define multicultural counseling as "...a metatheoretical approach that (a) recognizes that all modes and theories of helping arise from a particular cultural context; (b) refers specifically to a helping relationship in which two or more of the participants are of different cultural backgrounds; (c) includes any

counseling combination that fulfills the definition of “culture”; (d) recognizes the use of both Western and non-Western approaches to helping; and (e) is characterized by the helping professional’s culturally appropriate awareness, knowledge, and skills” (pp. 12-13). A guiding principle for the multicultural movement in counseling has been availing the profession to the diversifying population it serves. Counseling services should be readily accessible, sensitive to client needs and preferences, and effective in resolving client concerns.

An advantage of the broad definition is its emphasis on including and respecting human diversity on many different dimensions. At the same time, a huge burden is presented. The profession is expected to provide appropriate services not only for racial/ethnic minorities, but also for a host of other disenfranchised populations. Essential questions that arise are “How do we train for this?” and “How will we know if our goals are being met?” Although these are difficult questions to answer with a broad definition of culture, these concerns are also present when one uses the narrow definition. In the case that culture specifically refers to racial or ethnic groupings, one could reasonably argue that no training program could possibly prepare a counselor to work competently with people from all cultures. The challenge of inclusive cultural competency may be great, but it is not unique to the inclusive definition of culture.

Ponterotto and Casas (1999) assert the competency model’s content validity in the following ways: 1) for the past 20 years, multicultural experts working with the model seem to have come to a consensus that multicultural competence is indeed composed of Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills; 2) the model has been “operationalized” by efforts to develop self-report measures and are specifically delineated by Arredondo et al. (1996);

and 3) two divisions of APA and six divisions of ACA have officially endorsed the competencies.

Additional support of the current conceptualization of MCC comes from process-outcome studies that seem to indicate the positive effect of cultural responsiveness on the therapeutic alliance (Ponterotto, Fuertes, & Chen, 2000).

Most of our understanding about the nature and structure of MCC have come out of factor analytical studies based on the development and subsequent validation of paper and pencil measures of the construct. Dunn, Smith, and Montoya (2006) identified the four most commonly used MCC assessment instruments: the MCI (Sodowsky et al., 1994), the MAKSS (D'Andrea et al., 1991), the MCAS-B (Ponterotto et al., 1991), and the CCCI-R (LaFromboise et al., 1991). These measures for MCC have variously suggested that this construct is composed of the following factors: (1) Multicultural Awareness/Sensitivity (Rogers & Ponterotto, 1997); (2) Knowledge/Skills, and Awareness (Ponterotto et al., 1996); (3) Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills (D'Andrea et al., 1991); (4) Cross-Cultural Counseling Skill, Socio-Political Awareness, and Cultural Sensitivity (LaFromboise et al., 1991); (5) Multicultural Counseling Skills, Multicultural Awareness, Multicultural Counseling Relationship, and Multicultural Counseling Knowledge (Sodowsky et al., 1994).

Some of the more recent instruments to assess MCC include the Multicultural Counseling Checklist (for School Counselors) (Holcomb-McCoy, 2004), the Multicultural Counseling Competence and Training Survey (Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999), the Multicultural Counseling Ethics and Assessment Competency Scale (Byington, Fischer, Walker, & Freedman, 1997), and the Multicultural School Psychology

Counseling Competency Scale (Rogers & Ponterotto, 1997). For a review of these scales, the interested reader may reference a published review by Dunn et al. (2006). What follows is a chronological review of the four most commonly used MCC assessments.

### Assessment of Multicultural Counseling Competence

#### Cross-Cultural Counseling Inventory-Revised.

The CCCI-R by Lafromboise et al. (1991) represented the first attempt to quantify MCC. This inventory is conceptually rooted in the Sue et al. (1982) work which posits that MCC is composed of Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills. Developers of the CCCI-R used the Sue et al. (1982) framework as it was the most comprehensive model of multicultural counseling at the time, and also hoped that an instrument based on the model would be most useful for counselor training programs and curricular reform. Another defining characteristic of the CCCI-R is its format for observers to rate a particular counselor. Only the MSPCCS (Rogers & Ponterotto, 1997) shares this Observer-rating format.

Sue et al. (1982) described 11 specific characteristics of the multiculturally competent counselor. Items for the CCCI-R were designed to coincide with these characteristics (two items per characteristic). 22 items were initially derived, and redundant items were eliminated resulting in an 18 item inventory. A pilot test was conducted in which 50 students were asked to assess a videotaped counseling session via the CCCI-R. Revisions were made and two items reflecting an understanding of general counseling processes were added. The 20 item CCCI-R reports a coefficient alpha of .95.

Three studies are described for the CCCI-R's development. These studies addressed content validity, reliability, and the factor structure of the CCCI-R. Results for

these studies indicate that the level of agreement across raters and items was 80%. The generalized kappa for interrater reliability of judges was .58,  $p < .001$ . This level of agreement is well above what one could find due to chance alone. The data here suggest that the CCCI-R has acceptable content validity and is adequately representative of the construct of MCC. Reliability of the CCCI-R across raters and stimulus tapes found moderate support with correlations among raters ranging from .39 to .69. Finally, the factor structure as derived by an orthogonal factor model revealed two plausible solutions. The possibility of a one factor solution, as well as a three factor solution, is presented. Due to the theoretical basis of the CCCI-R, the three factors that were identified were (1) Cross-Cultural Counseling Skill, which refers to the counselor's communication skills and his/her understanding of the counselor's role; (2) Socio-Political Awareness, which speaks to the counselor's understanding of his/her limitations and its impact on counseling; and (3) Cultural Sensitivity, which is conceptualized as the counselor's capacity to empathize with client's feelings and appreciate environmental influences on clients' experiences. A cautionary note is warranted as Ponterotto et al. (1994) suggest the inventory be scored unidimensionally rather than using a three factor model.

Discussion and Critique. The purpose of the CCCI-R was to address the urgent need for a measure of MCC. In this effort, LaFromboise et al. (1991) have given us insight as to the nature and complexity of the construct. The mixed results of the factor analyses are consistent with Sadowsky et al.'s (1994) work which posits that MCC may be best construed as unidimensional.

One question regarding the CCCI-R relates to its other-report format. This