



Role of Attitude in Multicultural Counselling Competency

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INTRODUCTION

The Tri-Componential Model of Multicultural Counselling Competency

What makes counsellors or service providers in general culturally/multiculturally competent? This question has been the focal point of research in the area of multicultural counselling and psychotherapy for the past twenty-five years (Arredondo & Perez, 2006; Constantine & Sue, 2005; Sue, 1998; Fuertes et al., 2001; Pope-Davis et al., 2001; Robinson & Morris, 2000). While there are several models of multicultural counselling competency (MCC) (Constantine, & Ladany, 2001; Fuertes & Gretchen, 2001; Mollen et al., 2003; Wehrly, 1995), perhaps the most well-known and researched one is the tri-componential model of MCC, originally developed by Derald Wing Sue and his colleagues in 1982 (Sue et al., 1982). This model was subsequently revised by Sue himself and others (Sue & Sue, 1990, Sue et al., 1992; Arredondo et al., 1996; Sue et al., 1998; Sue, 2001; Sue & Sue, 2003; Sue & Sue, 2008). Sue's MCC models contain *components* of MCC, and each of the components contains *characteristic descriptions* (CDs) of culturally/multiculturally competent counsellors. CDs are elaborations of each competency component and literally describe characteristics of culturally/multiculturally competent counsellors. The MCC model and its CDs have been utilized as bases for item development in wide varieties of MCC measurements (Coleman, 1996; D'Andrea et al., 1991; Kim et al., 2003; La Fromboise et al., 1991; Ponterotto et al., 2002; Sadowsky et al., 1994) and stimulated development of various training models (Abreu et al., 2000; Arredondo & Arciniega, 2001; Evans & Larrabee, 2002; Robinson & Bradley, 1997). Currently, Sue's model is the most prominent theoretical model in the area of MCC theory, research and practice (Sue et al., 1998; 2001; 2003; 2008).

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Change of Components from Belief/Attitude-Knowledge-Skills to Awareness-Knowledge-Skills

In 1982, a group of researchers led by D. W. Sue released a position paper outlining three components of cross-cultural counseling competencies, namely *belief/attitude*, *knowledge*, and *skills* (Sue et al., 1982). The components of competency were revised in 1990 when D.W. Sue and David Sue (1990) published the second edition of *Counselling the Culturally Different* which is now a leading textbook in multicultural counselling. The 1990 edition of this textbook contained a MCC model which consisted of three components: a) counsellor awareness of own assumptions, values, and biases (labelled as *awareness*), b) understanding the world view of the racial/ethnic minority client (*knowledge*), and c) developing appropriate intervention strategies and techniques (*skills*). These components became the foundation for the later development of the awareness-knowledge-skills tricomponential model of MCC (Sue, 2001; Sue & Sue, 2003, 2008). It is notable that the component of *belief/attitude* was replaced with the *awareness* of belief/attitude component in the 1990 publication. Then, gradually through subsequent revisions and evolution in 1992 (Sue et al., 1992), 1996 (Arredondo et al., 1996), 1998 (Sue et al., 1998), 2001 (Sue, 2001), and 2003 (Sue & Sue, 2003), the component of belief/attitude was replaced with the awareness component and removed from the current model (Sue & Sue, 2008). Interestingly, no researchers had either pointed out or questioned the disappearance of attitudinal component. Similarly, none had explored attitude as a potential fourth component. A series of theoretical/conceptual questions can be drawn from these observations: a) What is the nature of attitude? b) What is the difference/relationship between belief and attitude? c) Why was the belief/attitude component replaced by the awareness component? Why did the component disappear? d) Is the awareness of belief/attitude component the same as the belief/attitude? e) Can attitude be a separate component on its own? f) How beneficial is it to include attitude as a separate component? This paper attempts to offer a conceptual analysis of attitude with its functional utilities and formative processes, as well as to expand and enhance the existing tri-componential model of MCC by adding the attitude component.

CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF ATTITUDE During the past two decades of research in the area of social cognition (Ajzen, 2001; Chaiken & Stangor, 1987; Eagly, 1992; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Olson & Zanna, 1993; Petty, et al., 1997; Tesser & Shaffer, 1990), there seems to be no universal agreement on a single definition of attitude (Olson & Zanna, 1993). However, comprehensive review and careful analyses of the past researches revealed that an attitude is a complex psychological construct containing multidimensional characteristics and processes.

Many researchers have reported that an attitude has its *components*. Some (Edwards, 1957) indicated that an attitude is one's *affective* orientation toward a certain object, while others (Katz & Stotland, 1959) suggested attitude has its multiple (*affective*, *cognitive* and *behavioural*) components. Recent development of a latent process/trait view of attitude (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Oskamp & Schultz, 2004) regards such components as *manifestations* or *responses*. In this model, an attitude is considered as a separate cognitive entity which gives rise to three attitude responses (*attitude functions*). It is considered a latent trait in psychometric terms, which can only be inferred from its manifestations. The three components of attitude can also be considered as *sources* of attitude formation. For example, Zanna and Rempel (1988, as cited in Chaiken & Stangor, 1987, p. 578-579) suggested that an attitude develops based on past *affective* information obtained through the process of conditioning, *cognitive* information obtained through the process of knowledge-based evaluations, and *behavioral* information obtained through self-perception inferences from prior actions. In this model, the previous three components of attitude are considered as *sources*, rather than *components* or *responses* of attitude.

Another important characteristic of attitude is that it appears to have an *evaluative* core. Eagly and Chaiken (1993) views attitude as a "psychological tendency that is expressed by *evaluating* [italics added] a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor" (p. 1). Furthermore, Ajzen (2001) states that the evaluative dimensions can take many forms such as good-bad, harmful-beneficial,

pleasant-unpleasant, and likable-dislikable. Attitude also has its *object* (termed *attitude object*) to which subject's affective, cognitive, and behavioral evaluative responses are directed. Eagly (1992) states that "the entity in question, commonly known as the *attitude object* can be anything that is discriminated by the individual" (p. 693). One last, yet crucial characteristic of attitude is that it can be activated *automatically* without one's awareness. Reviews of studies investigating this issue (Ajzen, 2001; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Greenwald et al., 2002; Petty et al., 1997; Olson & Zanna, 1993; Tesser & Shaffer, 1990) seem to consistently indicate the very possibility of automatic activation of one's attitude. This suggests that one can have both *implicit* and *explicit attitudes*.

Development of a Working Definition and an Integrative Model of Attitude

By summarizing the key characteristics of attitude, a working definition and an integrative model of attitude can be derived. Attitude can be defined as a hypothetical psychological construct (*a latent trait*), which refers to one's internal state of readiness or evaluative tendency, formed based on one's past affective, cognitive and behavioral processes of experiences (*attitude sources*), which disposes one to emit either implicit or explicit affective, cognitive, or behavioral evaluative responses (*attitude functions*) towards a particular object or entity (*attitude object*).

The integrative model of attitude is depicted in the appendix A. This model depicts attitude as an inferred latent trait which disposes one to emit three explicit/implicit attitude functions (affective, cognitive, and behavioural evaluative responses) towards an attitude object. This diagram also shows how one's attitude can be formed through affective, cognitive, and behavioural processing of one's past experience with the attitude object. Hence, the model incorporates the processes of attitude formations and functions.

The usefulness of the model also lies in its capability to account for other psychological variables. Evaluative thoughts such as belief, value, opinion, evaluation, and criticism can be construed as cognitive functions of one's attitude toward an attitude object. Similarly, evaluative feelings such as curiosity, interest, willingness, desire, comfort, passion, and motivation can be considered affective functions. Lastly, one's behavioural actions, engagement and commitment can be considered as behavioural functions. The model can also be used to conceptually explain negative racial/ethnic phenomena. If one holds a negative attitude towards racial/ethnic minorities, such attitude can be manifested in either explicit or implicit affective (prejudice), behavioural (discrimination) or cognitive (biases/stereotypes) functions. The combinations and interactive products of such negative racial/ethnic attitude functions can be construed as racism.

Attitude as a Separate Component

The integrative model of attitude is also useful in helping us to examine an independent role of attitude in MCC. The evidence indicating the possibility of automatic activation of attitude and the existence of implicit attitude (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Greenwald et al., 2002; Oskamp, 2004), suggests that one can possess negative or positive attitude unknown to the self. It follows that a counsellor's awareness of his/her belief/attitude has its limits and the awareness component may not be able to cover the implicit parts of his/her attitude. Furthermore, a counsellor can be knowledgeable about racial/ethnic minority issues (high knowledge competency), highly skillful in interventions (high skills competency), and yet highly aware of his/her negative attitude toward racial/ethnic minorities (high awareness, but low or negative attitude competency). As a result, s/he may avoid interacting with these populations. In this case, s/he has high level of all the other MCC components, yet s/he is missing the constructive racial/ethnic attitude. Similarly, a counsellor can admit that s/he is highly aware of her/his negative racial/ethnic attitude and does not want to work with the population. Having either positive or negative attitude is one thing and to become aware of such attitudes is another. These evidences and logics help us to conceptualize that attitude deserves a separate component on its own, which is distinct from the other three existing components (awareness, knowledge, skills) of MCC.

Importance and Benefit of Including Attitude

What are the importance and benefits of including attitude as a separate component? Again, the attitude component can challenge and *change* one's overt or covert negative racial/ethnic attitude. Intending to change one's attitude is a radical statement. Yet, if we truly value nurturing a constructive racial/ethnic attitude in a counsellor, then the MCC model must include a component to cultivate and nurture such an attitude. Developing awareness is necessary, but not sufficient to develop MCC. I believe it is a continuous act of social justice to nurture a constructive racial/ethnic attitude in anyone.

Another foremost important contribution of including the attitude component is its dynamic energy-fueling property. Various educational/training programs to develop MCC would become useless if a counsellor claims that s/he is not interested in, curious about, motivated to, willing to, and comfortable with going through the training programs to develop her/his MCC. The attitude component of MCC and the enhancement of a constructive attitude in the counsellor fuel his/her journey through the development of his/her MCC. The affective attitude functions, such as curiosity, interest, willingness, desire, comfort, passion, and motivation exerts dynamic energy to motivate her/him to explore and take on this task of developing MCC. Behavioural functions of attitude have the power to propel him/her to act on, engage in and commit to developing or promoting MCC. Without such dynamic attitudinal energy, how can educators and trainers expect the counsellor to take on this endless life-long journey of developing MCC? One must be provided with a constructive attitude and the resulting dynamic energy before moving on to developing other components of MCC. The nurturing and force-fueling properties of attitude component are an essential pre-requisite to the development of MCC, thus must be incorporated into the current model of MCC.

DEVELOPMENT AND CONSTRUCT EXPLICATION OF THE FOUR-COMPONENTIAL MODEL OF MCC

The appendix B shows the four-componential model of MCC which incorporates the attitude component. There are two notable features to this model a) the addition of attitude as a new component, and b) fully explicated subcomponents with concrete examples of multicultural competency "ingredients". In order to develop this model, previous models of MCC (Sue et al., 1982; Sue & Sue, 1990; Sue et al., 1992; Arredondo et al., 1996; Sue et al., 1998; Sue, 2001; Sue & Sue, 2003; Sue & Sue, 2008) were thoroughly analyzed. A total of more than 350 characteristic descriptions and explanatory statements (Arredondo et al., 1996) were identified. They were then conceptually analyzed and re-categorized under the light of the four-componential MCC framework. A total of ten subcomponents emerged. Due to the space limitation, full descriptions of the model including development procedures are beyond the scope of this paper. However they can be obtained through contacting the author.

The first component - attitude includes three subcomponents of counsellors' *affective, behavioural* and *cognitive functions* of their constructive attitude towards racial/ethnic minorities. This component highlights the importance of nurturing and acquiring a constructive attitude toward racial/ethnic minorities in counsellors. Considering its dynamic energy-fueling property, the acquisition of a constructive attitude towards racial/ethnic minorities serves as an important pre-requisite and energy for the counsellor to develop other components of MCC.

The second component - awareness includes two subcomponents: a) *cultural self-awareness*, and b) *interactive cultural self-awareness*. The cultural self-awareness refers to a counsellor's own self-awareness of him/herself as a cultural being. This model assumes that we are all cultural beings (Arredondo et al., 1996). It stresses the need for a counsellor to develop awareness of his/her own cultural values, beliefs, and biases to be multiculturally competent. Contents of cultural self-awareness are listed under this subcomponent. The second subcomponent, interactive cultural self-awareness, addresses

counsellors' awareness of how their own cultural backgrounds affect interpersonal dynamics between themselves and racial/ethnic minority clients. One point to note is that the component does not include cultural OTHER-awareness (e.g. client's cultural background, help-seeking behaviours, expectations, symptom expressions, views of etiology etc...), which is included in the knowledge component.

The third component - knowledge includes three sub-components. First, a culturally competent counsellor must be familiar with current *major themes in multicultural counselling*. This component highlights the importance of continuing education for a counsellor to familiarize her/himself with common themes that are documented and discussed in the field. The purpose of it is to better prepare themselves for a wider range of issues that racial/ethnic minority clients may bring or display. Secondly, a culturally competent counsellor must be familiar with the *cultural background of clients* that s/he is working with. This subcomponent highlights the importance of knowing client's general cultural backgrounds, such as sociocultural systems, customs, traditions, and conventions of cultures where the racial/ethnic minority clients are from. The knowledge of such cultural background would greatly enhance counselors' understanding of the clients' worldviews. The last component of knowledge highlights the importance of acquiring knowledge about available *community referral resources*. The community in which a counsellor serves may have specific community services or support systems for a particular racial/ethnic minority client. Counsellor knowledge of such community information would greatly enhance his/her systemic intervention skills.

The fourth component - skills includes two sub-components. First, a culturally competent counsellor is skillful in tailoring her/his own *counselling microskills* (Ivey & Authier, 1978; Daniels & Ivey, 2007) to better suit the needs of racial/ethnic minority clients. Within a counselling context, it is the counsellor's ability to utilize these counselling microskills to better assist clients. The second subcomponent necessitates counsellors to be competent and skillful in utilizing *systemic intervention strategies*. The process of multicultural counselling often calls for systemic interventions and collaborations with local community support systems to better assist clients with their day to day living. Whenever available, it is left up to the skills of a counsellor to utilize such community support systems to better support the racial/ethnic minority clients. Once again, this model is an attempt to enhance the existing model of D. W. Sue by adding the attitude component and explicating concrete "ingredients" for each component.

Implications of the Model to MCC Measurement Studies

In this model, four components are considered mutually exclusive. The attitude component strictly refers to counsellors' attitude towards racial/ethnic minorities, and its functions. The awareness component strictly focuses on counsellors' own cultural SELF-awareness, and how their cultural backgrounds influence interactions with racial/ethnic minority clients. The knowledge component, on the other hand, strictly focuses on counsellors' acquisition of information that resides outside of them, which is differentiated from self-knowledge (self-awareness). The skills component explicitly refers to observable counselling microskills and systemic intervention capabilities. There is a purpose for which the model insists on such stringent specifications for each component. Previous models of MCC were successful in identifying what each component may contain. However, none had specified what each component must not contain. Blurred boundaries between each component and the lack of clear construct/component explications could negatively affect the construct validity of the previously developed MCC measures (D'Andrea et al., 1991; Kim et al., 2003; La Fromboise et al., 1991; Ponterotto et al., 2002; Sadowsky et al., 1994). Developers and researchers (Constantine, et al., 2002; Constantine & Ladany, 2000; Dunn et al., 2006; Holcomb-McCoy, 2000; Kim et al., 2003; Kitaoka, 2005; Kocarek et al., 2001; Lee & Darnell, 2002; Sadowsky et al., 1994) consistently suggested a revision of the theoretical model. It is for this purpose that the present model specifies its components and subcomponents.

LIMITATIONS OF THE MODEL As is the case for all theoretical models, there are four limitations to this model. First, this list is in no way intended to be comprehensive, rather it is an attempt to elaborate on the four-componential model by illustrating each component with examples. Secondly, this list only contains *therapist* competency variables which exclude *client, interaction, contextual/situational/environmental* variables that are part of the whole process and dynamics of counselling. Thirdly, this model does not include multi-level competency (Sue, 2001) such as *professional, organizational/institutional, societal, and political* competencies. Lastly, the order of components does NOT suggest sequential process, rather the four components form a quadrangle of interrelationships with development in one component influencing others. Despite such limitations, I suggest this theoretical framework as an enhanced guideline to develop counsellors' individual MCC.

CONCLUSION This paper offered conceptual analyses, a working definition, and an integrative model of attitude, and its benefits to the MCC theory. Attitude is a complex and multi-componential *dynamic process construct*, which includes its manifestations (*attitude functions*), formative processes (*attitude formation and change*), and useful property (*dynamic energy-fueling*). It offers invaluable contributions to enhance the existing MCC theoretical model. While it still remains uncertain as to why the original belief/attitude component in 1982 was replaced with the awareness component, I suggest the inclusion of the attitude component to nurture counsellor's constructive attitude. The new four-componential model of MCC, with its explicated components and subcomponents, is at its preliminary stage. However, it offers "dynamic" and "energetic" model to assist counsellors' journey throughout their development of MCC, or so I believe.

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