Effective Techniques

The Career-in-Culture Interview: A Semi-Structured Protocol for the Cross-Cultural Intake Interview

L-10
C-1
D-1

Joseph G. Ponterotto
Lourdes Rivera
Lina Adachi Sueyoshi

The authors introduce the Career-in-Culture Interview (CiCI), a flexible, semistructured interview protocol designed for the career counseling intake session. The contents of the CiCI are based on recent theoretical advances in multicultural counseling and on the social cognitive model of career development. The authors describe a pilot evaluation of the interview and present guidelines for using the CiCI in practice.

Stimulated, in part, by changing demographics in the United States and by dissatisfaction with the utility of career counseling services across varied segments of society, several authors have called for increased attention to context-sensitive career counseling (e.g., Bingham & Ward, 1994; Gysbers, Heppner, & Johnston, 1998; Leong, 1995). Despite this call, few pragmatic tools are available to help career counselors in their work with culturally diverse clients. The purpose of this article is to introduce the Career-in-Culture Interview (CiCI), a semistructured, flexible interview protocol designed for the career intake interview within a cross-cultural context. We believe that the CiCI can be an effective tool in career counselors' work in an increasingly heterogeneous society.

Conceptually, the CiCI is rooted in recent theoretical advancements in multicultural counseling and therapy (Pedersen, 1997; Sue, Ivey, & Pedersen, 1996) and in the social cognition approach to career development (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Structurally, the CiCI

Joseph G. Ponterotto is a professor, and Lourdes Rivera and Lina Adachi Sueyoshi are doctoral candidates, all at Fordham University at Lincoln Center, New York, New York. Correspondence regarding this article should be sent to Joseph G. Ponterotto, Fordham University–Lincoln Center, Division of Psychological and Educational Services, 113 West 60th Street, Room 1008, New York, NY 10023-7478 (e-mail: Jponterott@aol.com).

is modeled after the popular Person-in-Culture Interview of Berg-Cross and Chinen (1995). We begin by briefly reviewing theoretical developments in multicultural counseling and social cognition; we then discuss the structural origins, development, pilot testing, and suggested use of the CiCI.

DEVELOPMENTS IN MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING AND CAREER THEORY

Theory of Multicultural Counseling and Therapy

According to Sue et al. (1996), Multicultural Counseling and Therapy (MCT) is a metatheory of counseling that combines elements of preexisting theories (e.g., psychodynamic, behavioral, humanistic, biogenic). MCT is meant to supplement and extend, rather than supplant, preexisting approaches to counseling (Schneider, Karcher, & Schlapkohl, 1999). According to MCT, the worldviews of both the counselor and client will affect the conduct of counseling.

Another tenet of MCT is that cultural identity is considered a major determinant of counselor and client attitudes toward self, others of one's cultural group, others of different groups, and the dominant group. All individuals have multiple identities that progress at different rates and are more or less salient at different times. Regarding treatment, MCT proposes that counseling will be more effective if the counselor incorporates the life experiences, worldview, and multiple identities of the client into problem conceptualization and intervention planning. The theory acknowledges the relevance of both culturally universal (etic) and culturally specific (emic) conceptualizations in understanding and assisting clients (see Pedersen, 1999).

MCT's focus is broad and flexible; it is targeted for all individuals, not just racial–ethnic minority clients. It is important to note that MCT stresses the liberation of consciousness as a basic goal of counseling (see Ivey, 1995). There is an emphasis on *conscientizacao* (critical consciousness of social injustice) and client empowerment as central components of the counseling process. The theory considers clients in relation to their social context, that is, self-in-relation, family-in-relation, and organization-in-relation.

Social Cognitive Career Theory

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent et al., 1994) can best be thought of as an attempt to conceptualize the career development of individuals in a holistic and dynamic manner, which incorporates all facets of a person's life and identity. Adhering to Bandura's (1986) triadic reciprocal model, SCCT views career development as a function of the complex interaction between the individual's environment, personal attributes, and specific behaviors or actions. These three realms of influence affect one another in a continuous, dynamic manner in which the individual is influenced by her or his environment, while simultaneously creating the environment within which career development unfolds.

Although SCCT recognizes external and environmental factors that influence career development, it gives primacy to the individual's active role in this process as expressed through mechanisms of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals. Within the SCCT model, social–cultural aspects of the client's career development are considered central to the process (Brown & Lent, 1996; Byars & Hackett, 1998; Gainor & Lent, 1998; Hackett & Byars, 1996). The considerable significance placed on life experiences in the formation of self-efficacy, behavioral patterns, and outcome expectations warrants the need to gain access to this wealth of information during career counseling.

MCT and SCCT are comprehensive models of human understanding and helping. Each model emphasizes the sociocultural complexity of both the client's life and the counseling relationship. The models, therefore, serve as appropriate conceptual anchors for the CiCI. Before addressing the specific development of the protocol, we first present a rationale for the interview and review its structural origins.

THE CAREER-IN-CULTURE INTERVIEW (CiCI)

Rationale and Structure

It is expected that the use of a semistructured, culturally sensitive interview, which seeks to obtain information about the individual's family influence; cultural background; worldview; environmental factors, including societal barriers; and perceived personal strengths, can facilitate accessing and incorporating this information into the career counseling process. Engaging the client in this kind of interview can facilitate the client's own understanding of the various factors that influence her or his career decisions and situation and can identify areas of belief that may need to be reevaluated.

In addition, this kind of interview can help the counselor gain a greater understanding of the dynamic factors that contribute to the client's career issues and help identify areas that need to be explored further within the career counseling process. This guided interview procedure also helps the counselor (and client) understand the client's worldview in relation to the role of career and helps identify areas of worldview convergence and divergence in the counseling dyad.

Structurally, the CiCI was modeled in part after the popular Person-in-Culture Interview (PiCI; Berg-Cross & Chinen 1995; Berg-Cross & Zoppetti, 1991). The PiCI was initially designed as a training device to provide counselors with a tool to approach and dismantle potential barriers to cross-cultural understanding. The latest work on the PiCI presents 25 open-ended questions

> with the goal of birthing a deep human encounter between individuals with culturally different backgrounds. . . . The interview is constructed so that both cultural and idiosyncratic values will be spontaneously revealed in the course of the interview. (Berg-Cross & Chinen, 1995, p. 339)

In developing the PiCI, Berg-Cross and Chinen (1995) were building from the foundations of four major theoretical positions in counseling: psychodynamic, humanistic, family systems, and existential.

From the dynamic perspective, all people, regardless of cultural background, must deal with anger, shame, and the desire to increase pleasure and decrease pain. Furthermore, all individuals experience and must address physical and emotional needs (humanistic theory), family power, expectations, and dynamics (family systems theory), and considerations of the meanings of one's own life and death (existential theory).

The 25 questions of the PiCI are organized into these four broad domains. Various versions of the PiCI can be used in individual counseling sessions, in counselor training, and in training workshops. Table 1 presents sample items from the PiCI that tap into each of the four central theoretical domains (see Table 1).

Though the PiCI elicits important information for a multicultural and worldview assessment, it does not directly query career-specific issues. It was our goal in developing the CiCI to capitalize on the practical and semistructured format of the PiCI and develop a flexible protocol that was career-specific.
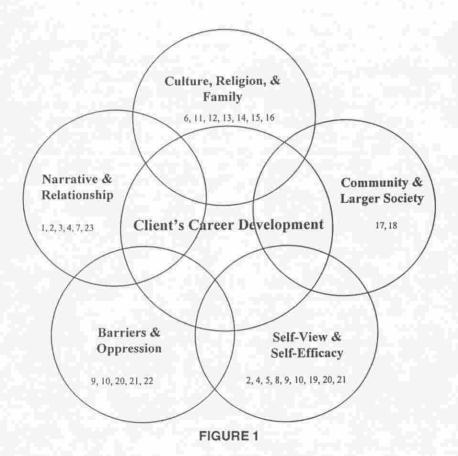
Development of the CiCI

As noted earlier, MCT theory and SCCT provide the conceptual anchor for every question in the CiCI, which is presented in Appendix A. The protocol questions are arranged in five spheres of influence that affect the client's career development. Figure 1 presents a schematic of this interrelationship and specifies the interview questions that are connected to specific spheres of influence. In reviewing Figure 1,

TABLE 1

Sample Questions From Berg-Cross and Chinen (1995) Person-in-Culture Interview

Type	Sample Questions
Psychodynamic	1. In general, what type of experiences are particularly painful to you? 2. How do the different members of your family express anger?
Humanistic	1. Do you feel safe where you live? 2. What types of things make you feel important?
Family	1. Draw me a totem pole of the important people in your life. Put the weakest person on the bottom. Put the most powerful person on top. Pretend that the totem pole is 100 feet high and people can be placed on any of the 100 steps—each one foot higher than the next. People can share "steps" on the totem pole. Be sure to include yourself and anyone in the community or elsewhere who is very important in your life.
Existential	1. What are your feelings about death? 2. How can your life be more meaningful?

Extracted from Berg-Cross & Chinen, 1995, p. 340.

FIGURE 1

Interacting Domains of Client Career Development

the reader should visualize the five spheres as fluid, rotating in and out of the central circle. All five spheres are constantly in motion, circling in and out, to greater or lesser degrees, into the inner circle and into each other.

Narrative and Relationship. The first cluster of questions focuses on the client as an individual. The client is guided so that her or his career development story can be told. Emphasis is on co-construction and conscientizacao (Ivey, 1995; Sue et al., 1996), where the client is empowered from the first question to be a partner in the counseling process.

Self-View and Career Self-Efficacy. The second cluster of questions assists clients in providing a self-appraisal of their life- and work skills. The focus here is still on the individual within her or his cultural context.

Culture, Religion, and Family. Questions in Cluster 3 expand from a focus on the individual to one on family and culture. Items here query such variables as immigration history, language preferences, religious and cultural background, and family values and expectations. Preparation of a family genogram (Item 16) can be a useful tool in

understanding family influences on career development. (For guidelines on using the family genogram in career counseling and for detailed examples of completed genograms, the reader is referred to Borodovsky & Ponterotto, 1994; and Sueyoshi, Rivera, & Ponterotto, in press).

Community and Larger Society. The two questions specified in this cluster consider the client's perception of her or his broader community, including influential community organizations and role models.

Barriers and Oppression. A cluster of five questions guides the client into a discussion of perceived challenges and barriers in meeting and implementing career goals. The questions explore both intrapersonal (e.g., lack of awareness or specific skills) and extrapersonal (e.g., racism, sexism) barriers to career development. Within the protocol, the spheres of influence are not mutually exclusive, and some questions overlap multiple spheres.

Pilot Testing the CiCl

In the fall of 1997, we conducted a more formal pilot test of the CiCI. Thirty graduate students in a career counseling class were grouped into 15 dyads. Students represented diverse race, ethnic, and religious backgrounds; they were primarily female master's level students, although a few doctoral students were also in the class.

The students assumed the roles of both counselor and client in two 30-minute sessions to determine their impressions of the interview protocol. For the pilot sessions, students in the counselor role were asked to follow the protocol items in the order in which they were presented. Students received process forms in both their counselor and client roles to evaluate their comfort with the interview and their perceptions of its helpfulness.

The process questions for students in the counselor role were as follows:

1. How helpful were the questions in helping you understand your client's personal and career issues—situation?
2. Were you comfortable asking the questions and using the semistructured interview format? Please elaborate.
3. Has the interview facilitated your understanding of the client's cultural worldview? Please elaborate.
4. What would have made the interview more useful or helpful to you?

The process questions for students in the client role were as follows:

1. Did this interview help you gain a better understanding of yourself generally from a career identity perspective? If so, in what way?
2. Did this interview help you understand more fully the role of culture in your life and in your career development? Please elaborate.
3. Were you comfortable answering the questions? Please elaborate.
4. Looking back over the questions, which two or three were most helpful in clarifying your career issues or career identity?
5. What would have made this interview more helpful to you?

After completing the dyadic role plays, we processed interview reactions with the group for approximately 45 minutes. We took detailed notes throughout the process session. Student responses on the process forms were also transcribed and reviewed to determine what respondents found helpful, somewhat helpful, and unhelpful about the interview. Furthermore, we isolated comments referring to suggestions for improving the protocol, reviewed specific comments, and assigned them to either a "helpful," "somewhat helpful," or "unhelpful" category. We reached 100% agreement before placing each comment in its respective category. A brief summary of the results follows in narrative form.

Approximately 80% of the respondents' comments in the counselor role indicated that the CiCI was a helpful instrument for use in the career counseling process as a way to understand the client's personal and career concerns. Of particular usefulness was the ability to introduce and elicit culturally relevant information that the counselor might otherwise feel uncomfortable introducing. Typical comments included, "provides direction," "helps keep discussion focused," "forced you to focus on client's unique experience," and "helped provide an understanding of the influence of upbringing and community on career."

Approximately 20% of the comments evaluated the CiCI as not useful or only somewhat useful. Concerns expressed here were that some items were repetitive, there was a need for more culture-related questions, the interview was too structured, some questions were vague, and that they were not comfortable reading the questions. Overwhelmingly, suggestions for improving the CiCI included having more time with the client to talk about the information that was obtained in the interview.

Approximately 90% of the comments from respondents in the client role were favorable regarding the helpfulness of the CiCI. Sample comments included, "I saw patterns throughout my life contributing to my career goals–path"; "it helped me to integrate the personal and career related themes/issues"; "I'm from the South, and I had never thought about how much influence 'southern hospitality' had on me and my chosen career"; and "it helped me to understand my cultural base and why I have chosen to go into counseling in an effort to empower others of my culture." Regarding the specific questions that respondents thought were most helpful in "clarifying your career issues or career identity," a variety of questions were listed.

Approximately 10% of the comments referred to the CiCI as not being helpful. Most of these comments focused on the client already being in touch with her or his career and cultural issues. For example, "I already have a solid understanding of who I am, what I want, and what I need to do"; "I've considered so much of this material already." It is interesting that in responding to the process question that queried increased understanding of the role of culture in one's life–career development, a few respondents indicated that they did not see culture playing a part in their career development. Some examples include the following: "I have a lack of culture" and "I'm a White middle-class majority person; I don't know the role of culture."

Regarding the process question on elements that would have made the interview more helpful, common suggestions focused on more time in the interview and less vagueness and repetiveness in the questions.

Overall, the students valued the CiCI and thought that it was a useful tool. The fact that many more strengths were perceived in the CiCI than weaknesses is, we believe, an accurate representation of the class's collective evaluation. Students felt strongly that we should continue working on the CiCI and that other counselors would find the protocol a helpful tool for practice.

After the pilot test of the CiCI, the second and third authors and a third colleague incorporated the protocol into their clinical work with late adolescents and adults. Using the CiCI in "real counseling" gave us additional insights and ideas for modifying the interview. Class feedback, discussion, and anecdotal clinical results required us to make changes to the interview. These changes included asking directly about religion (Item 12) and incorporating the family genogram (Item 16). The informal and semiformal testing of the protocol was also very helpful to us in preparing the following guidelines for using the CiCI.

Using the CiCI in Practice

The 23 questions in the CiCI were designed to follow an orderly progression, from individual-based questions to those more broadly focused on family, religion, culture, and community. Completing the interview in one sitting generally requires from 60 to 90 minutes. Sometimes it may be appropriate and productive to ask clients the questions in the order presented over the course of one, two, or three sessions. At other times, however, aspects of the client's personality (e.g., comfort with structure), the presenting concern, or the natural flow of the counseling process may preclude the counselor addressing all of the questions in the CiCI or addressing them in sequential order.

It is important to keep in mind that some clients do not expect a discussion that focuses on cultural issues during the initial career session. In a study of client preferences and expectations for career counseling (cf. Galassi, Crace, Martin, James, & Wallace, 1992), 92 clients visiting a college counseling center for career counseling noted that they expected career counseling to last about three sessions and that the process should result in a clearer sense of career–major direction, or in confirming one's choice of major or career. Although participants in this study expected some focus on self-understanding, none anticipated exploration vis-à-vis a cultural self. Though the sample used in the Galassi et al. (1992) study is quite limited (96% were White, and all were from one Southeastern university), the study raises an important concern for counselors regarding the introduction of culture-related questions during the intake interview. Our own pilot evaluation found that several White graduate students did not initially relate to the concept of "culture." From a theoretical perspective, this information is insightful and useful clinically because both the Sue et al. (1996) and Lent et al. (1994) theories apply to Americans of all races.

Consistent with recent writing on multicultural counseling practice (particularly Atkinson, Thompson, & Grant, 1993; Fischer, Jome, & Atkinson, 1998; Sue et al., 1998; Sue et al., 1996), we urge the counselor to be flexible and adaptable during counseling. Though culture is not directly assessed until Item 11, issues of culture and race may emerge earlier in the interview. For example, in Item 2 when the client is talking about herself or himself, a comment such as "I am an orthodox Jew and . . . " may emerge and could be processed further. If career issues in Item 3 concern racism or sexism at the workplace, cultural issues will again emerge quickly. We hope that the counselor will be attuned to these issues and will feel comfortable processing them when they are raised and throughout the career-counseling process (see Gysbers et al., 1998).

CONCLUSION

We introduced CiCI, a semistructured protocol that is designed for career counseling in a multicultural society. The CiCI is rooted in recent theoretical developments in multicultural counseling (cf. Sue et al., 1996) and social–cognitive career counseling (cf. Lent et al., 1994). The CiCI has been used with numerous graduate students in counseling and has been incorporated into initial career-focused client intake interviews with late adolescent and adult clients. Our initial work with the CiCI indicates that it can be a helpful tool in understanding the client's career worldview.

The CiCI is not intended to serve as a quantitative instrument, in which case systematic empirical validity testing would be in order. Instead, the CiCI, like the landmark Person-in-Culture Interview (Berg-Cross & Chinen, 1995), is conceptualized and developed solely as a flexible protocol to help guide the counselor and client in considering issues that are viewed as central to the career counseling process in a culturally heterogeneous society.

Nonetheless, the CiCI has only been piloted in one university training program and in a few community career planning agencies and would, therefore, benefit from further trial and elaboration. For example, it would be interesting to test whether counselors using the CiCI early in counseling show stronger therapeutic alliances than counselors who do not use the CiCI. Also, do White middle-class clients, who sometimes report not being in touch with their culture (see Sue et al., 1998), benefit more or less from the CiCI? We invite the reader to conduct her or his own evaluation of the CiCI.

REFERENCES

Atkinson, D. R , Thompson, C. E., & Grant, S. K. (1993). A three-dimensional model for counseling racial/ethnic minorities. *The Counseling Psychologist, 21,* 257–277.

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Berg-Cross, L., & Chinen, R. T. (1995). Multicultural training models and the Person-In-Culture interview. In J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki, & C. M. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural counseling* (pp. 333–356). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Berg-Cross, L., & Zoppetti, L. (1991). Person-in-Culture Interview: Understanding culturally different students. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy, 5,* 224–232.

Bingham, R. P., & Ward, C. M. (1994). Career counseling with ethnic minority women. In W. B. Walsh & S. H. Osipow (Eds.), *Career counseling for women* (pp. 165–196). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Borodovsky, L. G., & Ponterotto, J. G. (1994). A family-based approach to multicultural career development. In P. Pedersen & J. C. Carey (Eds.), *Multicultural counseling in schools: A practical handbook* (pp. 195–206). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Brown, S. D., & Lent, R. W. (1996). A social cognitive framework for career choice counseling. *The Career Development Quarterly, 44,* 354–367.

Byars, A. M., & Hackett, G. (1998). Applications of social cognitive theory to the career development of women of color. *Applied & Preventive Psychology: Current Scientific Perspectives, 7,* 255–267.

Fischer, A. R., Jome, L. M., & Atkinson, D. R. (1998). Reconceptualizing multicultural counseling: Universal healing conditions in a culturally specific context. *The Counseling Psychologist, 26,* 525–588.

Gainor, K. A., & Lent, R. W. (1998). Social cognitive expectations and racial identity attitudes in predicting the math choice intentions of Black college students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 45,* 403–413.

Galassi, J. P., Crace, R. K., Martin, G. A., James, R. M., Jr., & Wallace, R. L. (1992). Client preferences and anticipations in career counseling: A preliminary investigation. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 39,* 46–55.

Gysbers, N. C., Heppner, M. J., & Johnston, J. A. (1998). *Career counseling: Process, issues, and techniques.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Hackett, G., & Byars, A. M. (1996). Social cognitive theory and the career development of African American Women. *The Career Development Quarterly, 44,* 322–340.

Ivey, A. E. (1995). Psychotherapy as liberation: Toward specific skills and strategies in multicultural counseling and therapy. In J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki, & C. M. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural counseling* (pp. 53–72). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (1994). Toward a unified social cognitive theory of career/academic interest, choice, and performance [Monograph]. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 45,* 79–122.

Leong, F. T. L. (Ed.). (1995). *Career development and vocational behavior of racial and ethnic minorities.* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Pedersen, P. B. (1997). Recent trends in cultural theories. *Applied & Preventive Psychology: Current Scientific Perspectives, 6,* 221–231.

Pedersen, P. B. (1999). Culture-centered interventions as a fourth dimension of psychology. In P. B. Pedersen (Ed.), *Multiculturalism as a fourth force* (pp. 3–18). Philadelphia: Brunner/Mazel.

Schneider, B. H., Karcher, M. J., & Schlapkohl, W. (1999). Relationship counseling across cultures: Cultural sensitivity and beyond. In P. B. Pedersen (Ed.), *Multiculturalism as a fourth force* (pp. 167–190). Philadelphia: Brunner/Mazel.

Sue, D. W., Carter, R. T., Casas, J. M., Fouad, N. A., Ivey, A. E., Jensen, M., LaFromboise, T., Manese, J. E., Ponterotto, J. G., & Vazquez-Nutall, E. (1998). *Multicultural counseling competencies: Individual and organizational development.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sue, D. W., Ivey, A. E., & Pedersen, P. B. (1996). *A theory of multicultural counseling and therapy.* Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Sueyoshi, L. A., Rivera, L., & Ponterotto, J. G. (in press). The family genogram as a tool in multicultural career counseling. In J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki, & C. M. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural counseling* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.