

**PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLORS' UNDERSTANDING
AND PRACTICE OF MULTICULTURAL
COUNSELLING IN MALAYSIA**

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Dedication

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceived multicultural counselling competencies (MCCs) of practising professional counsellors and their practice reflections of multicultural counselling in Malaysia. A national survey with the aid of a questionnaire was conducted as a primary data collection method and a total of 508 responses were statistically analysed. To enhance and supplement the surveys, semi-structured interviews with 12 licensed professional counsellors were conducted and thematically analysed. The results of the survey revealed five factors as constituents of MCCs: Multicultural Knowledge, Multicultural Understanding, Multicultural Skills, Multicultural Awareness, and Cross-Cultural Skills dimensions. Participants generally perceived themselves to be multiculturally competent: they felt most competent on the multicultural knowledge and least competent on the multicultural skills dimensions. Among a list of participant characteristics investigated as potential correlates of MCC (e.g., gender, ethnicity, completion of multicultural counselling courses, and years of practice), ethnicity, highest education level, and participation in professional development training have the ability to influence and predict perceived MCCs. The interviews revealed that some Malaysian counsellors were indeed using a culturally sensitive approach when engaging with culture and diversity. Although the approach resembles a general counselling process, it was found that the drivers and facilitators of the multicultural counselling process were mostly counsellors' perceived MCCs and their multicultural experiences. The study has implications for theory, practice, training, and future research. It is hoped that the Malaysian counselling profession will begin incorporating these competencies to develop guidelines for better practice and training of counsellors in Malaysia.

Summary

Although multicultural counselling has gained considerable attention among researchers and practitioners in most multicultural countries around the globe such as the United States of America (USA), Britain, and Australia, little has been known regarding its understanding and practices among professional counsellors in the specific cultural context of Malaysia. This context-specific counselling research explored how professional counsellors in Malaysia understand multicultural counselling concepts and how this understanding is translated into their counselling practices with culturally different clients in the Malaysian context.

A mixed methods research approach was used, comprising a nationwide survey (the major part of the research) and a semi-structured interview as data collection methods. Qualitative interview data enhanced and supplemented the survey findings. A survey package was mailed to 1500 registered practising counsellors in various states of Malaysia, who were identified through a mailing list provided by the Malaysia Board of Counsellors. The survey instrument, named the Multicultural Counselling Survey (Malaysian version) or MCS-Mal, was a 55-item questionnaire consisted of three main parts. Part A requested demographic, background education and training, and factual work-related information. Part B, also known as the Multicultural Counselling Competency Scale – Malaysian Counsellor Edition or MCCS-MCE, requested self-report information pertaining to counsellors' perceived multicultural counselling competencies (MCCs) using a 5-point Likert scale response format. In Part C, counsellors' reflections on their understanding and practices of multicultural

counselling were sought using open-ended questions and multiple-choice questions from a case vignette.

A total of 508 valid responses were collected (a return rate of 34%) for data analysis. Semi-structured interviews with 12 registered licensed counsellors were conducted to gain in-depth perspectives of the counsellors' multiculturally competent practices with culturally different clients in the socio-political context of Malaysia. The quantitative responses from the national survey were descriptively (percentages, means and standard deviations) and inferentially analysed (factor analysis, t-tests, one-way ANOVA and multiple regression) using SPSS 17, while the qualitative survey responses were analysed using coding analysis. The text data from interviews were thematically analysed using NVivo 8.

Results from the principal component analysis revealed that the MCCS-MCE comprised five dimensions (i.e., Multicultural Knowledge, Multicultural Understanding, Multicultural Skills, Multicultural Awareness, and Cross-Cultural Skills). Overall, participant counsellors, as a group, perceived themselves to be multiculturally competent ($M=3.55$, $SD=.34$). They perceived themselves to be most competent on the Multicultural Knowledge ($M=3.86$, $SD=.63$) and Multicultural Understanding ($M=3.75$, $SD=.55$) dimensions and least competent on the Multicultural Skills ($M=3.11$, $SD=.80$) and Multicultural Awareness ($M=3.36$, $SD=.56$) dimensions.

Results from t-tests and one-way ANOVA showed that there were no significant differences in perceived MCCs in terms of gender and completion of multicultural education, but significant differences were observed due to ethnicity, highest education

level, and recent training in multicultural counselling. Multiple regression analysis revealed that ethnicity, highest education level, which is having a Masters or a PhD qualification, and recent training in multicultural counselling were the best predictors of perceived MCCs among the Malaysian counsellors community sample.

These findings were further enhanced and substantiated by results from the interview analysis, which revealed that counsellors' MCCs were also reflected in how the participants provided counselling services with culturally different clients. In particular, thematic analysis revealed a Malaysian-based culturally-sensitive model that these counsellors used to systematically and effectively engage with culture and diversity, and to respond to power differential issues due to ethnic politics within the counselling context.

Overall, the results provide support that MCCs are very important qualities for professional counsellors to successfully practice multicultural counselling in the specific cultural context of Malaysia. Hence, MCC guidelines and standards should be made available to all practising counsellors in Malaysia. Finally, the implications of this research for education and training of counsellors, practice, and further research are discussed.

CHAPTER ONE

Introducing the Research: Context, Problem, and Rationale

Knowledge regarding counselling is culturally bound and grows from a specific context (e.g., Cheung, 2000; Draguns, 2008; D. W. Sue, 2004). As counselling originates from the Euro-American culture and continue to develop in the context of the United States of America (USA), there has been a great deal of debate in the literature over the past four decades regarding the cultural relevance of such knowledge to ethnic minority groups in the USA and other multicultural contexts (e.g., Cheung, 2000; D'Andrea & Heckman, 2008a; Leong & Ponterotto, 2003; Leong & Savickas, 2007). Current thinking and subsequent revisions of counselling theories have considered diversity and multicultural issues in counselling, especially when working with culturally diverse clients. However, such knowledge may or may not be culturally relevant to multicultural countries other than the USA. Unless international researchers investigate or 'deconstruct' counselling in their specific cultural contexts, the counselling profession remains a profession that is 'culturally encapsulated' and informed by 'ethnocentric monoculturalism', which ignores the existence of traditional and indigenous aspects of helping within a specific cultural context such as Malaysia (Cheung, 2000, p. 131; Pedersen, 2008, p. 5; D. W. Sue et al., 1998, p. 14, respectively).

This chapter aims at introducing the research and describing its context, problem statement, rationale and specific aims. It was a mixed-method context-specific counselling study which aimed at exploring the understandings and practices of

multicultural counselling among professional counsellors in Malaysia. The goal was to generate better understanding regarding the practices of multicultural counselling in a specific cultural context, which few previous research studies have investigated.

Background to the Study

The study of culture and context has long attracted scholarly inquiry in many disciplines including anthropology, education, medicine, and psychology and counselling. With the passage of time, different disciplines of study have contributed to our knowledge about the importance of culture and context in human lives. Due to this, there is a growing interest among scholars, researchers, and practitioners in the mental health professions regarding how to better address diversity and multicultural issues in service delivery and how to better educate and train mental health professionals to become multiculturally competent, especially in a multicultural context (Laungani, 2004; D. W. Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992; D. W. Sue, Ivey, & Pedersen, 1996; D. W. Sue & Sue, 2008; Whaley & Davis, 2007). This interest and need has contributed to the emergence of the multicultural counselling movement, which began in the 1960s, and a growing body of multicultural counselling literature (D'Andrea & Heckman, 2008a; Jackson, 1995). Although multicultural counselling research has experienced rapid theory development in recent years, it has actually gained less than optimal attention among international scholars and researchers in the counselling field. This has spurred the development of The International Forum (IF), a feature of the *Counseling Psychologist* journal, to encourage research and publications exploring the topic of multicultural counselling in specific cultural contexts (Kwan & Gerstein, 2008).

Nevertheless, over the last two decades, the field of multicultural counselling has gained considerable importance in post-industrial, capitalist and neo-liberal countries such as the USA, Australia, Britain, and New Zealand due to the changing cultural and societal contexts of such nations (Arredondo, Tovar-Blank, & Parham, 2008; Leung, 2003). As a result, multicultural counselling competency (MCC) has emerged as a key topic in the multicultural counselling literature and a key construct in research on training counsellors. Professional counsellors have been identified and expected to be the key figures to successfully engage with multicultural issues in academic counselling curricula, counsellor education, training and supervision, counselling practices and research in a multicultural context (Worthington, Soth-McNett, & Moreno, 2007).

MCC, as a field of study, has undergone rapid growth in both theory development and research. Some of the major accomplishments can be observed in the conceptualization of MCC models (e.g., Constantine & Ladany, 2001; Sodowsky, Taffe, Gutkin, & Wise, 1994; D. W. Sue, et al., 1992; D. W. Sue et al., 1982); the operationalisation of MCCs (e.g., Arredondo et al., 1996; D. W. Sue, et al., 1992); and the assessment of MCC (e.g., D'Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991; Kim, Cartwright, Asay, & D'Andrea, 2003; Lafromboise, Coleman, & Hernandez, 1991; Sodowsky, et al., 1994). This development highlights the importance of MCCs - multi-dimensional 'cultural competency' needed to work effectively and ethically in a culturally diverse society (Arredondo, et al., 2008; D. W. Sue, et al., 1992; D. W. Sue & Sue, 2008, p. 43; Whaley, 2008, p. 215). Although MCC research literature has made significant contribution to the counselling profession, its rapid development poses some challenges, especially for international scholars and researchers, to operationally conceptualise and

measure the construct of MCC (e.g., Dunn, Smith, & Montoya, 2006; Hays, 2008), and to design culturally relevant research methodologies when transporting multicultural counselling knowledge and practice into their specific cultural contexts (e.g., Cokley & Awad, 2008; Karlsson, 2005; Ponterotto & Mallinckrodt, 2007). This, in turn, gives rise to some conceptual and methodological issues and challenges when communicating research in other cultural contexts such as Malaysia. Some of these issues concern potential problems with the validity of MCC constructs (i.e., factor structure or internal validity and reliability issues) and the generalisation of its findings (i.e., external validity issues) (Cokley & Awad, 2008; Ponterotto & Mallinckrodt, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

As one of the developing countries in the South East of Asia, the population of Malaysia is culturally diverse. Yet, the vast majority of counsellors are Malays by ethnicity and Muslim by religion (Lembaga Kaunselor Malaysia, 2009), and the vast majority of the major theoretical approaches to counselling are strongly influenced by the Euro-American culture (Pope, Musa, Singaravelu, Bringaze, & Russell, 2002; Scorzelli, 1987a). This phenomenon gives rise to some concerns in the current Malaysian counselling profession. Do Malaysian counsellors have sufficient cultural education and training to work effectively with clients from multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-cultural backgrounds in the Malaysian context? What are the nature and state of their MCCs? How do they address diversity and multicultural issues in their current practices with culturally different clients? To date, there has been no record of empirical studies which specifically investigated multicultural counselling in Malaysia. In particular, although there is some literature related to diversity and multicultural issues in Malaysian counselling (Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2003b; Aga Mohd Jaladin & Amit,

2007; R. Ismail & Othman, 2001; Ng & Stevens, 2001; Othman, 2001a; See & Ng, 2010; See, Othman, Salim, & Che Din, 2009; Sumari & Jalal, 2008), no study has specifically investigated theory development and practice of multicultural counselling in the Malaysian context, in which the historical and socio-political dynamics among Malaysians are unique, and can influence and pose challenges to the profession itself.

There is a body of empirical studies on MCC-related topics, but the research was mostly done in the West (particularly in the USA) (reviewed in Arredondo, Rosen, Rice, Perez, & Tovar-Gamero, 2005; D'Andrea & Heckman, 2008a; Worthington, et al., 2007). Most of these studies focus on diversity and multicultural issues in the American counselling profession, using samples from the (a) ethnic majority (White or Euro-American) or minority groups (the African American, Hispanic American, Asian American, and Native American Indian) and (b) the community of mental health practitioners, trainees, clients and/or a combination of these groups in the USA context (e.g., Constantine, Melincoff, Barakett, Torino, & Warren, 2004; Holcomb-McCoy, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999). Yet, there are still a lot of unresolved conceptual and methodological issues regarding research in multicultural counselling, in general, and MCCs that need further investigation, especially in a specific cultural context other than the USA (Ægisdóttir, Gerstein, & Çinarbaş, 2008; Cokley & Awad, 2008; Kwan & Gerstein, 2008). Therefore, it is argued that the findings from previous studies may not be culturally relevant to the Malaysian context.

Furthermore, the existing studies on MCC mostly used graduate student trainees as research participants, among other study populations (Constantine, 2001c, 2002b; Dickson & Jepsen, 2007; Dickson, Jepsen, & Barbee, 2008; Worthington, et al., 2007)

in diverse fields such as counselling psychology (Constantine, 2001c), social work (Allen-Meares & Burman, 1999; Green et al., 2005), clinical psychology (D. S. L. Lee & Tracey, 2008; Neufeldt et al., 2006), rehabilitation psychology and counselling (Granello & Wheaton, 1998a, 1998b; Wheaton & Granello, 1998, 2002) and school psychology (Holcomb-McCoy, 2001, 2004, 2005; B. Robinson & Bradley, 2005). Minimal research attention has been directed towards exploring the MCC of practising professional counsellors (Holcomb-McCoy, 2001, 2004, 2005; Whitney, 2006). Thus, there is a need to focus on and explore professional counsellors' perspectives on MCC in order to gain further insight into their understanding and practice of multicultural counselling, especially in the specific cultural context of Malaysia.

Only a small number of relevant studies focus on multicultural counselling in other cultural contexts such as Britain (Glockshuber, 2005; Loewenthal & Rogers, 2004), New Zealand (Selvarajah, 2006), and Australia (Khawaja, Gomez, & Turner, 2009; Pelling, 2007; Pelling, Brear, & Lau, 2006). The studies are quite diverse, ranging from a scale development and validation study to a wide range of surveys on public understandings of counselling and mental health professionals' perceptions of cross-cultural counselling. This poses some challenges in the selection of appropriate research methodologies and use of relevant findings to inform the development of the current research.

Moreover, previous studies on MCC were primarily quantitative (90.1%) with survey and analogue research accounting for 72.7% and 24.7% of quantitative studies, respectively, and only a small number of studies used qualitative or mixed methods (4.9% for each) (Worthington, et al., 2007). This information is useful for choosing the

appropriate design for the current study and, at the same time, highlights the need for more studies in either qualitative or mixed methods in nature. Therefore, this study has elected to use mixed methods investigations to explore Malaysian professional counsellors' MCCs and gain further insight into their understanding and current practices of multicultural counselling in the specific socio-political context of Malaysia. The completion of this study will add to the multicultural counselling literature by generating knowledge regarding the understanding and practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia.

The Need for the Study

Why is multicultural counselling research important in Malaysia? The need to explore professional counsellors' understanding and practice of multicultural counselling in the Malaysian context is justified by several factors – the diversity of the Malaysian population, the absence of specific multicultural competencies guidelines in the Malaysian counselling profession, ethnic disparities in counsellor and client populations, limitations in the current counsellor education programs, my own ethnography, and the scarcity of counselling research in Malaysia. The following paragraphs discuss each of these factors in more details.

Malaysia is a complex nation with unique historical and socio-cultural dynamics within its population of 27 million. It is a multicultural society. Its ancient history as a trading centre between Europe, East and West Asia, India and China and its history of colonisation for several decades have spurred the formation of a multi-ethnic society which comprises 65.1% *Bumiputera* (i.e., 80% Malays and 20% indigenous people), 26% Chinese, and 7.9% Indians, with the rest of the population being made up of

indigenous tribes such as Orang Asli, and Iban (Malaysian Census, 2000; Saw, 2007). It is also a multi-religious nation with the state religion being Islam. The vast majority of Malays are Muslims and there is a majority Muslim population in peninsular West Malaysia. Besides Muslims, there are significant numbers of Hindus, Taoists, Buddhists, Christians and atheists (Haque, 2000, 2005; Malaysian Census, 2000).

In East Malaysia, on the Island of Borneo, there is a broader ethnic and religious mix. The overall religious breakdown is 52% Muslim, 18% Buddhist, 8% Hindu, 8% Christian, 4% tribal, the remaining 10% are atheists or abstain from religious beliefs (Malaysian Census, 2000). Because of its cultural diversity, many Malaysians are bilingual or multilingual. Most of them can speak Malay as it is the national language and this is combined with other community languages such as English, Mandarin, Tamil, Hokkien, and some others. With their history, location and societal composition, Malaysians have unique needs and values that are specific to their cultural context and ethnic/religious backgrounds, and it is in this context that this research was conducted.

Throughout its history, the Malaysian counselling profession has failed to seriously address diversity issues. Although Malaysian counselling has been recognised as a profession with a documented history for over 40 years (Glamcevski, 2008), some Malaysian authors have argued that the Malaysian counselling profession has given minimal attention to the importance of addressing diversity and multicultural issues in the policy implementation, practice, training, and research aspects of counselling in the Malaysian context (Ng & Stevens, 2001; See & Ng, 2010; See, et al., 2009). To date, there has been no development and formal endorsement of the standard guidelines and competencies for counselling culturally diverse Malaysian clients, even though some

Malaysian authors, including myself, have highlighted the need for MCCs among professionals in the field (Amit & Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2005; Ng & Stevens, 2001; See & Ng, 2010; See, et al., 2009). For example, See and Ng (2010) made the following remarks when outlining the future agenda for the Malaysian counselling profession, which is of utmost importance to this research:

For the next few years, efforts must be made to ensure that counselors have the competencies to provide effective counseling services leading to a specialization, such as drugs/HIV counseling, sexual minority counseling, mental health counseling, and marriage and family counseling (p.22)

These are among the current limitations of Malaysian counselling. As a result, little is known regarding the state of, need for, and extent of multicultural counselling understanding and practice of counsellors in Malaysia. Therefore, the present research was designed to improve the current system by generating knowledge about multicultural counselling in Malaysia and a set of detailed criteria and standards that is contextualised and culturally relevant to evaluate multiculturally competent practices in Malaysia.

There are ethnic disparities in (i) the provision of counselling services (i.e. an increasing number of Malays among the registered counsellors and trainees); and (ii) underutilisation of counselling services by members of the minority groups (i.e. among the Chinese and Indian ethnic groups, males, people from rural settings, low socio-economic status, and less educated, among others). According to the latest statistics provided by the Malaysia Board of Counsellors or locally known as Lembaga Kaunselor Malaysia (LKM), there are currently 75.1 per cent Malays, 15.5 per cent Chinese, 3.8 per cent Indians, 0.38 per cent indigenous Bumiputera, and 5.2 per cent other ethnic in the registered practising counsellor community in Malaysia. Therefore,

there are great concerns regarding the quality of their counselling services when working with clients from different cultural backgrounds. Yet, they have an ethical-legal responsibility regarding their practice with the diverse Malaysian clients, which was first made explicit in the Malaysian Counselling Association or locally known as Persatuan Kaunseling Malaysia (PERKAMA) Code of Ethics in 1994 (and its revised version in 2008) and the Counsellors Act (580) in 1998. It is hoped that the current research will contribute to better practices with diverse ethnic and minority groups' clients, and better strategies on how to educate and train multiculturally competent counsellors in the Malaysian context.

The vast majority of Malaysian counsellor trainees in the counsellor education institutions are currently females, Malay by ethnicity, and Muslim by religion. This profile may become a major challenge in the Malaysian counselling profession if these trainees are not properly trained to become multiculturally competent. Furthermore, there is a lack of culturally based subjects in the current counsellor education programmes in Malaysia (Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2008; Lembaga Kaunselor Malaysia, 2003). Although there is a specific subject called 'multicultural counselling' or 'cross-cultural counselling' and some courses related to culture and diversity in the counselling programme curriculum, it has been argued that it resembles an imported version from the USA (Pope, et al., 2002; See & Ng, 2010; See, et al., 2009). In addition, there also seems to be a lack of experiential and formal Malaysian culture awareness training in the teaching-and-learning process of counselling in most universities (Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2008; Ng & Stevens, 2001; See & Ng, 2010). Without prior studies regarding how these subjects contribute to counsellors' perceived MCCs, the quality of

multicultural education and training among Malaysian counsellors remains unclear. Therefore, research regarding counsellors' MCCs is of paramount importance.

As one of the main objectives of this research was to provide a general picture regarding the state of MCCs among current practising counsellors in Malaysia, the research has direct implications to the education and training of counsellors in the Malaysian context. In addition, collection of some detailed documentation of practices that work well in counselling the various Malaysian clients served as exemplars which were in accordance with the ethical and legal requirements of Malaysian counselling. Thus, the findings of this research not only can contribute to the development of culturally sensitive programs to better educate pre-service counsellors, but it also contributes to better training for in-service counsellors professional development.

My personal background and professional experiences have fostered my awareness of a need for a multicultural focus in counselling. As a person, I am a female of mixed-ethnic (Malay-Indian) Muslim origin. I have been in contact with various ethnic groups and people of diverse age, gender, religion, socioeconomic status, education, nationality, and other cultural diversity factors during my upbringing, growing up and schooling years. As a professional, I am a product of a Western-based professional education and training programs in Australia (BSc (Hons) in Psychology) and Malaysia (Master of Counselling, which program bears a striking resemblance to the counsellor education programs in the USA). During my experiences as a practising counsellor and counsellor educator over the last 10 years, I have been confronted with many cultural issues and questions when trying to reflect on the meaning of my personal and professional experience working with Malaysian clients. This raises some

issues of the adequacy and relevance of my previous Western-based education and training, the level of multicultural competency of my current practice, and the degree of cultural modification needed in my counselling approach to localise and provide effective and ethical services to diverse Malaysian clients. I shared my reflections on these experiences with local Malaysian counsellors and some publications resulting from this contributed to the development of this research (e.g., Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2003b; Aga Mohd Jaladin & Amit, 2007; Amit & Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2005).

Research in Malaysian counselling is generally lacking, especially with a focus on multiculturalism. There are some commentary articles in the current Malaysian literature addressing cultural issues in Malaysian counselling, which I briefly review here (refer to Chapter Three for a detailed review of Malaysian counselling literature). In particular, recent literature on Malaysian counselling has highlighted the need for a multicultural focus in training and practice (Ng & Stevens, 2001; See & Ng, 2010; See, et al., 2009; Sumari & Jalal, 2008). Of particular importance to this research is one of See and Ng's (2010) comments on the future of counselling in Malaysia:

We expect to see an increased number of quality training programs resulting from...the demand for increased professionalism and competence from the public as well as from within the Malaysian counseling profession because an increased number of homegrown and overseas-trained master's-level and doctoral practitioners (p.21).

Despite being a multicultural society, empirical evidence regarding the state of multicultural counselling training and practice in Malaysia is lacking. Therefore, this investigation is needed to provide some empirical evidence regarding how Malaysian counsellors comprehend and engage with diversity and multicultural issues in their counselling practice in the socio-political context of Malaysia. Using an appropriate

scientific approach to explore counsellors' reports of their practice is the best way to advance knowledge in order to provide better counselling services that match the needs and preferences of Malaysian clients in the future.

Purpose and Aims of the Study

This research was significant in that it aimed to contribute to multicultural counselling research in a specific cultural context. On the one hand, it aimed to revisit previous research findings, which were mostly obtained in a Western context, and attempted to address the conceptual and methodological issues associated with multicultural counselling research, particularly MCC assessment studies. It was a pioneer study that aimed to investigate how multicultural counselling concepts are understood by Malaysian professional counsellors and how this understanding is translated into their current practices with diverse Malaysian clients in the Malaysian context. The ultimate goal of this study was two-fold: to contribute to better practices (promoting multiculturally competent practices) and generate meaningful information to improve the current education and training of counsellors in Malaysia.

There are three overarching-primary research aims and these are:

1. To describe the personal and professional backgrounds of Malaysian counsellors;
2. To assess Malaysian counsellors' self-perceived MCCs using a culturally relevant assessment tool in order to:
 - a. identify the nature (factor structure) and extent of self-perceived MCCs of Malaysian counsellors;

- b. compare the self-perceived MCCs of Malaysian counsellors by (i) gender, (ii) ethnicity, (iii) highest education, (iv) completion of multicultural courses, and (v) participation in recent multicultural training.
 - c. investigate the relationship between Malaysian counsellors' personal and professional background characteristics and their self-perceived MCCs;
3. To explore Malaysian counsellors' reflections on their understanding and practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia, specifically to:
- a. explore Malaysian counsellors' understanding of multicultural counselling concepts;
 - b. explore Malaysian counsellors' perceptions of a multiculturally competent counsellor's characteristics;
 - c. identify self-perceived barriers and challenges to effective multicultural counselling in Malaysia;
 - d. explore the ways Malaysian counsellors engage with culture and diversity factors in multicultural counselling practices; and
 - e. explore the ways Malaysian counsellors respond to power differential issues due to ethnic politics in their multicultural counselling practices.

Specific Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following research questions were addressed in this study. For some questions, which require statistical test analyses, the formulated hypotheses are also presented.

1. What are professional counsellors' demographic, training backgrounds (prior training and training needs) and work experiences regarding multicultural counselling in Malaysia?
2. What are the dimensions (factors) that constitute the self-perceived MCCs of Malaysian counsellors?

Hypothesis 1: The three foundational dimensions of awareness, knowledge and skills would be present because previous studies suggest that the MCCs comprise more than these three dimensions (Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Sadowsky, et al., 1994; D. W. Sue, et al., 1992; D. W. Sue, et al., 1982).

3. To what extent do Malaysian counsellors perceive themselves to be multiculturally competent based on these dimensions?

Hypothesis 2: Malaysian counsellors would perceive themselves to be most competent on the multicultural knowledge dimension and least competent on the multicultural skills dimension (in contrast with Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999) because a review of the counsellor education and training programs in Malaysia (see Chapter Three for detail) indicates that these programs emphasise theory-based rather than practice-based components.

4. Do the perceived MCCs of Malaysian counsellors differ significantly by (a) gender, (b) ethnicity, (c) highest education, (d) completion of multicultural courses, and (e) participation in recent multicultural training?

Hypothesis 3: There would be significant differences in Malaysian counsellors' self-perceived MCCs due to gender, ethnicity, highest education, completion of multicultural courses, and participation in recent multicultural training because previous studies have found support for the significant effect of differences in gender (Carter, 1990), ethnicity (Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999), completion

of multicultural courses (Castillo, Brossart, Reyes, Conoley, & Phoummarath, 2007; Holcomb-McCoy, 2001, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999), and participation in multicultural training activities (Sodowsky, Kuo-Jackson, Richardson, & Corey, 1998) on perceived MCC.

5. What are the factors that influence/predict Malaysian counsellors' self-perceived MCCs?

Hypothesis 4: Some demographic (e.g., ethnicity and highest education) and MC training variables (e.g., completion of multicultural counselling courses and participation in multicultural training) would be predictive factors of perceived MCC among professional counsellors in Malaysia because previous studies have provided support for the relationships between ethnicity, highest education, completion of multicultural counselling courses and multicultural training experiences in workshops/seminars and MCC (Constantine, 2001d; Robles-Piña & McPherson, 2001; Sodowsky, et al., 1998).

6. How do professional counsellors in Malaysia understand multicultural counselling concepts?
7. What are their perceptions of a multiculturally competent counsellor's characteristics in Malaysia?
8. What are their perceptions of barriers and challenges in the practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia?
9. How do professional counsellors report engaging with culture and diversity issues when counselling culturally different clients in Malaysia?
10. How do professional counsellors report responding to power differential issues due to ethnic politics in multicultural counselling in Malaysia?

Theoretical Perspectives and Contextual Considerations

Most theorists agree that counselling, like all behaviours, takes place in a cultural context (Cheung, 2000; D. W. Sue, et al., 1996; D. W. Sue & Sue, 2008). Since there is no specific study on multicultural counselling in Malaysia, the development of this research has been mainly informed by knowledge and theoretical perspectives from the USA and other multicultural contexts in the West. However, the role of culture and context has been carefully considered in developing the appropriate methodology of the research. This section discusses theoretical considerations and contextual issues in framing the research. It begins by defining multiculturalism as a concept. Then, two selected models for conceptualising multicultural counselling competence (MCC) are discussed and followed with a brief discussion of the alternative perspective of understanding MCC as a construct. Both perspectives become the theoretical and contextual lens in framing the research.

What is multiculturalism?

Since the emergence of multiculturalism in the 1960s, there have been ongoing debates and controversies surrounding the term multiculturalism. Some argue for a broad and inclusive definition of multiculturalism that would include, but not be limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, disability, and other social identities that differentiate people (e.g., Pedersen, Draguns, Lonner, & Trimble, 2008; D. W. Sue, et al., 1996; Trimble, 2007); others argue for a narrow approach that focuses exclusively on race or ethnicity, primarily because a broad definition of multiculturalism often overlooks the difficult issues of race or ethnicity (e.g., Cokley, 2007; Helms, 2007; Locke, 1998; D. W. Sue, et al., 1982). After

acknowledging the debate, I argue for viewing multiculturalism from an inclusive viewpoint because of the assumption that if counsellors are going to adequately serve an increasingly culturally diverse society, they must be prepared and confident to deal with the reality that many clients have multiple cultural identities which result from the intersection of race, ethnicity, gender and other social traits in specific cultural contexts (Constantine, 2002a; Matsumoto & Juang, 2004) or across cultures (Pedersen, et al., 2008).

In addition, there are also some debates and resistances to recognising multiculturalism in psychology, which will be discussed at length in Chapter Two. After reviewing such debates, I argue, following Pedersen (2000, 2008) that multiculturalism influences counselling and psychotherapy to the same degree as psychodynamism, humanism/existentialism, and behaviourism have influenced counselling in the past, and therefore represents a “fourth” force or dimension in modern counselling and psychotherapy . This means that multiculturalism can be perceived according to two complementary lenses in this research. The first involves viewing multiculturalism as a revision of the earlier Western frameworks of counselling because this perspective promotes subsequent rethinking and modifications of the existing models of counselling to address and incorporate culture and diversity issues using a multicultural perspective. This also means that the study acknowledges the existence of both the universal (etic) and culture-specific (emic) elements of multicultural counselling (Draguns, 2008; Pedersen, 1991, 2008). The second perspective views multiculturalism as a revolution in psychology and counselling because it involves a great deal of political and socio-cultural controversy in its implementation in counselling and psychotherapy in a society that is multicultural, multiethnic, multifaith and multi-sexual. This means that in this

study, I acknowledge the role and influence of power and competency for working with diverse cultural groups (W. M. Liu & Pope-Davis, 2003; Proctor, 2002; D. W. Sue & Sue, 2008) because the socio-political dynamics among Malaysians are complex due to ethnic politics.

What is multicultural counselling competency?

One of the major and most recent contributions to the body of knowledge on multicultural counselling is the work on developing MCCs among mental health professionals to work effectively and ethically with culturally diverse clients (D'Andrea & Heckman, 2008a, 2008b). Pioneering work on this concept defines multicultural counselling competence (MCC) as a counsellor's (a) *beliefs* and *attitudes* regarding racial and ethnic minorities, the need to check biases and stereotypes, and the development of a positive orientation toward multiculturalism; (b) *knowledge* of one's own worldview, knowledge of cultural groups with whom one works, and knowledge of socio-political influences on members of these groups, and (c) *skills*, strategies and interventions needed to work with minority groups within a cross-cultural counselling context (D. W. Sue, et al., 1982). These dimensions resulted in 11 specific "minimal" characteristics of a culturally skilled counsellor and became the foundation of multicultural competence and the essential components in training, assessing, and identifying multiculturally competent counsellors. With the passage of time, numerous models have been proposed which have also given rise to several measurement scales in the previous literature (e.g., Constantine & Ladany, 2000; D'Andrea, et al., 1991; Lafromboise, et al., 1991; Sadowsky, et al., 1994; D. W. Sue, et al., 1992).

The present research, however, used Sue et al.'s (1992) model to inform part of the development of the questionnaire because it has been used extensively by other researchers as the theoretical basis for their research (e.g., Constantine & Ladany, 2000; Sadowsky, et al., 1994). The model is an expansion of the earlier three-pronged conceptualisation of multicultural competence, but introduces three additional general cross-cultural counselling characteristics. This resulted in a 3 (Characteristics) x 3 (Dimensions) matrix to further organize the multicultural competencies. According to this model, there are three core characteristics of multiculturally competent counsellors. The first characteristic is *awareness* of their own assumptions, values, and biases. According to Sue et al. (1992), "a culturally skilled counsellor is one who is actively in the process of becoming aware of his or her own assumptions about human behaviours, values, biases, preconceived notions, personal limitations, and so forth" (p.481). The second characteristic is *understanding* the worldview of the culturally different client, which also includes understanding of self and diversity factors. Therefore, a multiculturally understanding counsellor refers to "one who actively attempts to understand the worldview of his or her culturally different client without negative judgement" (p.481). The third characteristic is developing appropriate *intervention strategies and techniques*. Within each of the three characteristics, the authors posited the existence of the three previously identified dimensions: (a) beliefs and attitudes, (b) knowledge, and (c) skills.

In line with this model, this research defines the construct of MCC as a product of specific 'characteristics of the culturally skilled counsellor' and specific 'dimensions of multicultural/cultural competence'. However, the awareness quality of the culturally skilled counsellor has been expanded to include awareness of power issues associated

with culture and specific context based on recent argument on the current conceptualization of MCC (Hays, 2008). According to Hays,

MCC assessment is a multidimensional process that involves evaluation of counselor competencies for specific cultural groups as well as awareness of power issues among groups in response to the social justice movement. (Hays, 2008, p. 101)

Hence, Hays recommends that future MCC assessment research should focus on incorporating issues of power and competency for working with diverse groups because counsellor self-awareness of social justice issues is a growing concern for counsellor educators and researchers. In view of this recommendation, I used three theoretical perspectives to inform the development of this research and to highlight factors that could contribute to power differential issues in counselling: Lie and Pope-Davis' (2003), Sue and Sue's (2008), and Joseph's (2006).

Power has been argued to have implications for multicultural competence, especially when involving cross-cultural relationships between a counsellor and a client who come from different groups along these dimensions: "oppressor-oppressed", "privileged-marginalised", or "advantaged-disadvantaged" (W. M. Liu & Pope-Davis, 2003). In this regard, power refers to 'the various ways in which people, institutions, and cultures engage each other to negotiate perceived competing demands and goals' (W. M. Liu & Pope-Davis, 2003, p. 96). This means that power varies between people and contexts and in order to be multiculturally competent, counsellors must be able to recognize and map power between people and within a particular environment in a specific context. In particular, they must be able to recognise and work carefully with their own professional and ethnicity based power.

Sue and Sue (2008) discuss power in terms of the politics of interethnic and interracial bias and discrimination in the American counselling context, which might be applicable to the Malaysian context. They argue that interethnic and interracial bias and discrimination can happen between the White population (i.e., the ethnic majority) and people of colour (i.e., the ethnic minority) because of several factors: belief in superiority, belief in the inferiority of others, power to impose standards, and manifestation of ethnocentric values and beliefs in the programs, policies, practices, structures, and institutions of the society. On the other hand, people of colour are reluctant to discuss interracial misunderstandings and conflicts between various groups because they fear that such problems may be used by those in power. Their discussions emphasise differences in power which are primarily due to racism between the ethnic majority and ethnic minority groups in the socio-political context of America. However, other sources of power differential issues in counselling are also mentioned in the literature and these include the influence of sexism, 'misogyny, homophobia and economic oppression' or classism (Balkin, Schlosser, & Levitt, 2009; Constantine, 2002a; W. M. L. Lee, Blando, Mizelle, & Orozco, 2007; W. M. Liu, Pickett, & Ivey, 2007; Moodley, 2007). So, in this study, it is argued that culture and diversity factors are potential sources for power differential issues in counselling.

In Malaysia, the complexity of Malaysian society could contribute to power differential issues in counselling. Joseph (2006, p. 55), whose research focuses on the complexity of socio-political power issues related to ethnic identification in the context of schooling in Malaysia, uses the term 'politics of ethnic identification' to capture differences in Malaysian diverse ethnicities and cultures. In addition, she has highlighted the existence of power imbalances in the social and educational settings due

to ethnic identification between the Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera groups. This is due to the fact that official ethnic labelling determines certain rights and privileges within Malaysian society. The Bumiputeras are Malays and other indigenous people who constitute 67.3 per cent of the society (Government of Malaysia, 2001). The Malay term Bumiputera means sons of the soil. This group has indigenous status that guarantees attendant privileges. The Malays, the largest ethnic group in Malaysia, comprise 80 per cent of the Bumiputera category. Malay ethnicity and the Malays' entitlement to special rights as Bumiputeras are constitutionally defined in Malaysia (Joseph, 2006, p. 54).

In addition, using a counselling context, Sumari and Jalal (2008) also discuss the complexity of socio-political dynamics among Malaysians. They claim that the socio-political dynamics among Malaysians can pose some challenges in practising and teaching multicultural counselling. According to them, the biggest challenge faced by many counsellor educators in Malaysia is to have an open and honest discussion regarding multicultural issues because of fear of invoking racial tension and conflict. They commented that "majority counsellors may refuse to discuss racial issues because they do not want their privileges as a majority to be challenged. On the other hand, minority people may also refuse to talk about it openly to avoid racial conflicts." (Sumari & Jalal, 2008, p. 31). This simply implies that both the Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera counsellors in Malaysia engage little (or maybe not at all) with multicultural issues in their counselling practice or training involving culturally different clients due to ethnic politics. Although this observation is consistent with American counselling as depicted by Sue and Sue (2008) and other American

researchers (e.g., Arredondo, et al., 2008; Cokley, 2005; Constantine, Melincoff, et al., 2004), there is no empirical evidence to validate it.

Based on this discussion, this study assumes that being Malay or Bumiputera carries with it certain privileges and advantages, and being non-Bumiputera or belonging to ethnic minority groups in Malaysia brings with it certain challenges that Bumiputera people do not have to face. Therefore, it is important to investigate whether such power imbalances due to ethnic identification are experienced by professional counsellors when working with clients from different cultural backgrounds. Specifically, this study has incorporated three aspects of power in the counselling process when developing the study instruments for measuring counsellor MCC: the power arising from the roles of counsellor and client ('role power'), the power arising from the structural positions of counsellor and client ('societal power'), and the power arising from the personal histories of counsellor and client with respect to experiences of power (e.g., ethnic politics: being Bumiputera or economic power: being rich) and powerlessness ('historical power') (Proctor, 2002, p. 136).

Besides viewing MCC as a multidimensional construct, some researchers argue that the MCC concept can also be understood from a process-based or performance-based perspective rather than just relying on direct assessment and measurement. For example, S. Sue (2003) argues that cultural competency cannot be easily defined or tested because it is considered as a process, orientation, or approach, and not a technique. According to him, "cultural competency involves the client, therapist [counsellor], and context, as well as the therapeutic technique, because context and culture are also important" (S. Sue, 2003, p.968). This means that the process in which

counsellors successfully engage with culture and diversity when counselling culturally different clients can address questions such as whether the counsellor is a multiculturally competent one or whether the practice can be considered as multiculturally competent.

Previous literature argued that “[i]n order to engage and provide satisfactory services to minority clients, practitioners must have a working knowledge and understanding of the experiences, problems, needs, and concerns that bring them into treatment” (Allen-Meares & Burman, 1999, p. 50). This argument views multicultural competence as the ability to develop cross-cultural therapeutic relationships between clients and counsellors, which is the first stage of having a good working alliance. On the other hand, some scholars and researchers emphasise the ability to culturally conceptualise clients’ problems and concerns as a reflection of counsellors’ multicultural competence (Constantine, 2001b; Neufeldt, et al., 2006). These researchers used the term ‘multicultural case conceptualisation’ to refer to counsellors being aware of and integrating the impact of various cultural factors on clients’ presenting problems and counsellors’ ability to articulate an appropriate treatment plan for working with clients based on this knowledge and skills (Constantine, 2001b; Constantine & Ladany, 2000). Being able to build cross-cultural therapeutic relationships and conceptualise clients’ issues and concerns using a multicultural lens do not guarantee successful and multiculturally competent practice unless the counsellors are able to articulate culturally appropriate intervention strategies and techniques (Arredondo, et al., 1996; Neufeldt, et al., 2006; D. W. Sue, et al., 1992). Sue et al. (1992) stated that a multiculturally competent counsellor is “one who is in the process of actively developing and practising appropriate, relevant, and sensitive

intervention strategies and skills in working with his or her culturally different clients” (p.481). Therefore, the present research also explored the concept of MCC from counsellors’ detailed description of (self-reflection on) their counselling process with culturally different clients in order to have better understanding of how MCC works in a cross-cultural counselling process.

To summarise, the theoretical perspectives of this research were actually based on a dialogue with multiple theoretical perspectives from the West and Malaysia. Reviews and critiques of literature and previous MCC research, which are discussed in the next chapters, are also useful for framing the research. The theoretical framework of the study is presented in Figure 1.

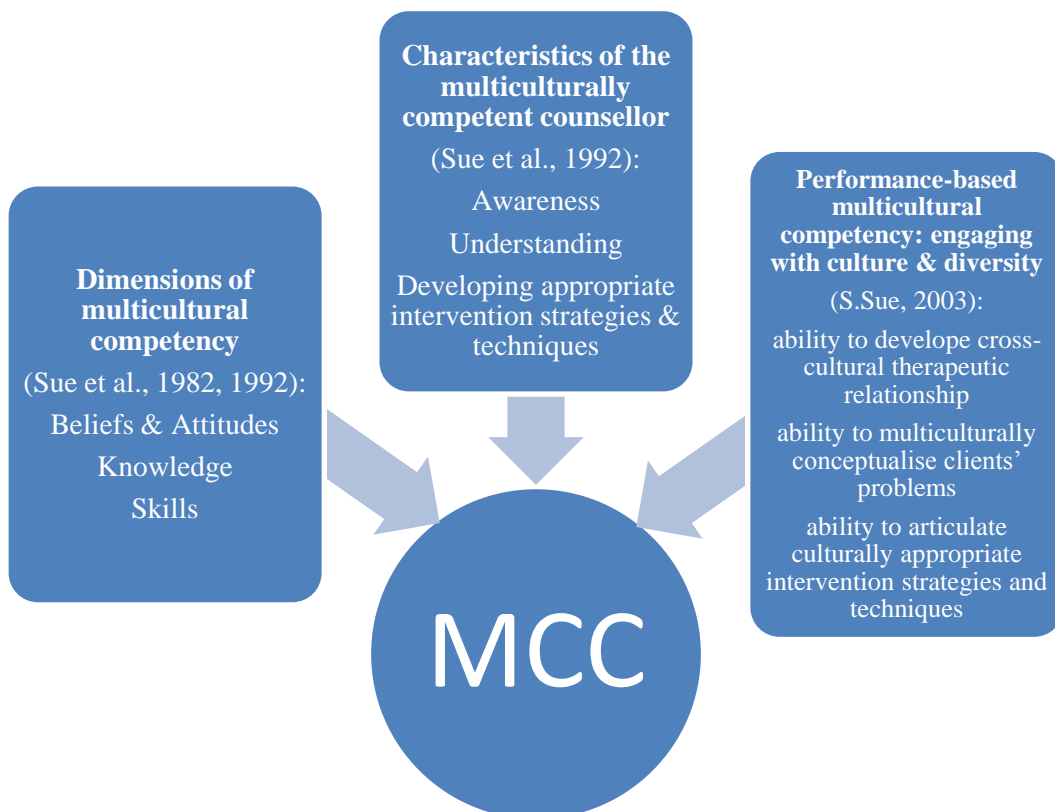


Figure 1. Theoretical framework of the study.

Significance of the Study

This study aims (a) to generate knowledge about multicultural counselling in Malaysia based firmly on Malaysian counsellors' perspective; (b) to contribute to better practices and better counsellor training by suggesting some standards and guidelines for judging the quality of multiculturally competent practices in Malaysia, and (c) to develop a model of culturally competent evidence-based practices for counselling Malaysian clients. In achieving these goals, the target parties that could be expected to benefit from this research are:

1. Policymakers and the decision makers – This research could help them (i) to further their understanding regarding the importance of culture in the educational and professional objectives of counselling/counsellor education programmes; (ii) to review overall policy in counselling, considering the need for a significant number of multiculturally competent counsellors in diverse job settings; and (iii) to formulate appropriate policies to ensure the stated educational and professional objectives for counselling profession/counsellor education programmes incorporate diversity and multicultural aspects of counselling (for accreditation purposes).
2. Faculty (course coordinators/counsellor educators) – This research could help them (i) to develop culturally sensitive/appropriate approaches to teach/supervise counselling students/trainees in their institutions; and (ii) to identify and assess the attitudes/awareness, beliefs, knowledge and skills of graduating students based on their self-reported multicultural competency in order to address the need for a further training, if not sufficiently developed.
3. Practising counsellors – This research could help (i) to encourage them to upgrade their existing knowledge and skills pertaining to multicultural issues in

Malaysia; (ii) to assist them to become more multicultural competent counsellors by attending workshops or conferences on multicultural competencies; and (iii) to encourage them (in a constructive manner) to actively seek practice opportunities with and expand services for culturally different groups under skilled supervision.

4. Researchers – This research could promote many directions for further research in multicultural counselling through: (i) contributing to a more comprehensive model of multicultural counselling; (ii) further developing multicultural counselling competency assessments suitable for the Malaysian context; and (iii) extending experience in the use of qualitative methodologies in the field of multicultural counselling in Malaysia or elsewhere.
5. Counselling students/trainees – This research could encourage students (i) to proactively seek counselling and training experiences to expand self-knowledge concerning their own racial identity, and to develop multicultural counselling competencies; (ii) to engage in open and honest discussion regarding diversity and multicultural issues in the training process; and (iii) to actively engage in a constructive confrontation with themselves in order to develop their awareness of their own cultural values and biases, which is consistent with Sue et al.'s (1992) recommendations.

Thesis Overview

The thesis is organised according to eight main chapters.

Chapter One introduces the research. It briefly summarises background information explaining the rationale and need for the study. The chapter also outlines the purpose of the research, research questions, significance of the study, definition of terms, and the organisation of the thesis.

Chapter Two and Three present the literature reviews. Chapter Two is divided into two parts. The first part discusses the history of multiculturalism, some key concepts in multicultural counselling research such as race, ethnicity, and culture, and the importance of understanding culture when working with clients from different cultural backgrounds and contexts. The second part focuses on a review and critiques of the existing MCC literature and research. The main concern is to highlight the conceptual and methodological issues in conducting multicultural research and evaluating the outcomes of that research in different cultural contexts.

Chapter Three presents a review of the Malaysian counselling profession and highlights the need for a multicultural focus in current counselling policies, services, training, and research in Malaysia.

Chapter Four describes the research methodology. It discusses and provides justification for the selected design, research sites, participants, instruments, data collection methods and procedures, data analyses and procedures used in the study. A

discussion on the validity, reliability, and trustworthiness of the research is also included.

Chapter Five mostly presents the statistical results from the research surveys. In particular, it presents the results of Malaysian counsellors' self-perceived MCCs based on both the descriptive and inferential statistical tests (such as Principal Component Analysis (PCA), t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and standard multiple regressions).

Chapter Six mostly presents the results from the research interviews. Using thematic analysis, participants' accounts on pre-determined topics such as the most challenging multicultural situations, the ways they engage with culture and diversity, the ways they respond to power differential issues in counselling, and the barriers and challenges they encountered in their practices, are clustered and the emergent themes are identified, presented and briefly interpreted.

Chapter Seven presents a discussion of the main findings according to the research questions, and provides some possible explanations based on previous hypotheses, literature and research findings. It discusses the research implications for counsellor preparation in Malaysia, which include implications for MCC theoretical development, implications for better practice, and some suggestions for future research.

To conclude the thesis, Chapter Eight summarises the research and its most notable findings and draws several conclusions to issue a call to the Malaysian counselling profession for immediate action.

Definitions of Terms

The key terms used in this study are discussed and defined as follows:

Multicultural counselling.

Counselling as a field of study originates from the USA, thus its definitions have been taken up by researchers and practitioners from other cultural contexts. For example, according to the APA dictionary of psychology (VandenBos, 2007), counselling refers to “professional assistance in coping with personal problems, including emotional, behavioural, vocational, marital, educational, rehabilitation, and life-stage (e.g., retirement) problems” (p.237). The American Counseling [sic.] Association (ACA) (2005) defines the practice of professional counselling as the application of mental health, psychological or human development principles, through cognitive, affective, behavioural or systematic intervention strategies, that address wellness, personal growth, or career development, as well as pathology. The ACA definition is then further adopted and adapted by other countries outside the USA. For example, in Malaysia, the definition of counselling according to the Counsellors Act (580) 1998 (Lembaga Penyelidikan Undang-Undang Malaysia, 1998) is

a systematic process of helping relationship based on psychological principles performed by a registered counsellor in accordance with the counselling code of ethics to achieve a voluntary favourable holistic change, development and adjustment of the client such that the change, development and adjustment will continue throughout the lifespan of the client. (p.6)

In analysing this definition, it seems that there are two underlying meanings behind the statement. First, this definition bears some resemblance to the definitions put forward by the American counselling experts. Second, this definition fails to include the understanding of Malaysian culture because it does not incorporate culture or diversity

and hence overlooks the existence of the client's multiple cultural identities as a whole person. This suggests that multicultural issues have not been clearly addressed in the Malaysian counselling.

For the purpose of this research, the definition of multicultural counselling stated in the APA dictionary of psychology (VandenBos, 2007) was adopted, which states that:

Psychotherapies [or counselling services] that take into account not only the increasing racial and ethnic diversity of clients in many countries but also diversity in spirituality, sexual orientation, ability and disability, and social class and economics; the potential cultural bias (e.g., racism, sexism) of the practitioner; the history of oppressed and marginalised groups; diversity within diversity; acculturation and issues involving living in two worlds; and the politics of power as they affect clients (p.598).

In addition, Sue and Torino's (2005, p. 4) definition is also referred to:

Multicultural counselling and therapy can be defined as both a helping role and process that uses modalities and defines goals consistent with the life experiences and cultural values of clients, recognises client identities to include individual, group, and universal dimensions, advocates the use of universal and culture-specific strategies and roles in the healing [helping] process, and balances the importance of individualism and collectivism in the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of client and client systems.

Both definitions are very useful to this research because they have incorporated revisions and current thinking in multicultural counselling literature, such as expanding the role of counsellors, adopting a broad culture-centred approach in the counselling process, recognising the multiple identities of clients, acknowledging the differences in culture between societies (e.g., Malay, Chinese, Indian, and others) and also differences in culture within societies (e.g., social class, spirituality, sexual orientation, and etc.),

acknowledging the universal and culture-specific strategies of counselling, and balancing the individualistic approach with a collectivistic reality of individual clients and their systems.

Multicultural counselling competency.

The construct of MCC has been discussed earlier, but for the purpose of this research the term MCC refers to (1) the specific dimensions (or factors) needed to provide effective and ethical counselling to culturally diverse clients, which comprise the generic and culture-specific qualities of a counsellor such as preparedness, confidence, awareness of diversity, understanding regarding multicultural, diversity and socio-political power issues in specific contexts and past experience when working with culturally diverse clients in the Malaysian context, and (2) the ability to engage with culture and diversity and to ethically respond to power differential issues due to ethnic politics in the counselling process involving culturally different clients.

Multiculturally competent counsellor.

In line with the theoretical perspective of MCC discussed earlier and the above definition of MCC, the term multiculturally competent counsellor (previously known as the culturally skilled counsellor) refers to a registered practising helping professional who is prepared and confident to deal with multicultural issues, has specific awareness, knowledge, understanding and skills in the areas of ethnicity, race, and culture, and is able to utilize and transform these qualities to sensitively engage with culturally diverse clients (especially racial/ethnic minority clients) in a manner that is consistent with the

needs of the clients being served in their sociopolitical context (D. T. Robinson & Morris, 2000; D. W. Sue, et al., 1992; D. W. Sue & Torino, 2005).

Ethnic politics.

The term ethnic politics refers to power imbalances or differences in power which result from the politics of inter- and intra-ethnic bias and discrimination between the majority and the minority ethnic groups or between the privileged/advantaged and marginalised/disadvantaged groups in a specific cultural context. In Malaysia, ethnic politics is embedded in the Malaysian Constitution, which gives rise to societal labelling of being Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera among Malaysians.

Summary and Concluding Comments

Multicultural counselling is an important focus in the counselling profession in most multicultural countries such as the USA, Britain, Australia and New Zealand. However, in the specific multicultural context of Malaysia, neither the understanding nor practices of multicultural counselling have yet been explored and empirically studied. Therefore, this research is of paramount importance because it aimed to close a gap and address limitations in the multicultural counselling literature by exploring Malaysian counsellors' perceived MCC and their self-reflections on the practice of multicultural counselling with diverse clients in the specific socio-political context of Malaysia. It is envisioned that the findings of this research will provide meaningful information for policy change, practice modification, program/policy evaluation and modification, and future planning for the betterment of the Malaysian counselling profession.

CHAPTER TWO

Reviewing Multicultural Counselling Literature and MCC Body of Research

Introduction

Scholars from different disciplines have agreed that culture and context are important influences on human lives. For example, in medicine, previous research focuses on providing patient-centred, culturally sensitive health care to patients from diverse backgrounds. In the counselling and psychology literature, much current research centres on understanding the role and impact of culture when working with clients from diverse backgrounds in specific cultural contexts.

This chapter presents a review of multicultural counselling literature and research and highlights the potential theoretical/conceptual and methodological issues relevant to the study. I discuss multicultural counselling literature and research using both cultural universalism and cultural relativism perspectives. The chapter is divided into two parts. Part A discusses a brief history and current controversies of multiculturalism, especially the ongoing debate on how to define and operationalise some key concepts in multicultural counselling research such as race, ethnicity, and culture. These terms are difficult to define, and often used loosely and interchangeably, making attempts to scientifically study them within counselling very challenging. This part also discusses the importance of understanding culture in counselling especially

when working with clients from different cultural backgrounds and contexts. The focus is on the different ways in which culture is being incorporated in counselling research and how these different ways have influenced the process and outcome of counselling, and hence imply that counsellors must be multiculturally competent. Part B focuses on reviewing the existing literature and research pertaining to understanding MCC. The main concern to highlight is the critical conceptual and methodological issues in conducting MCC research and evaluating the outcomes of that research in different cultural context.

Part A: Multicultural Counselling Concepts, Development and Current Debates

In defining the term multiculturalism, some literature advocates the narrow approach focusing exclusively on race, ethnicity and culture as central concepts in multiculturalism. This definition is problematic because it overlooks the importance of diversity factors, which differentiate individuals within a particular group. Hence, the exclusive definition of multiculturalism seems to give the impression that all individuals in the group are the same. Therefore, most current scholars and researchers are inclined towards the broad definition of multiculturalism, which include both culture (race and ethnicity) and diversity factors, which differentiate individuals within a particular cultural group.

Defining multicultural counselling concepts: culture, race, ethnicity and gender.

Culture is the central concept in multiculturalism and yet it is the most misunderstood construct in the field of counselling and counselling psychology. There are hundreds of definition of culture, each showing variation according to the context in which it is used. This variation often depends on whether culture is being defined psychologically (Lehman, Chiu, & Shaller, 2004, p. 251), anthropologically (Gerstein, Rountree, & Ordonez, 2007; Handwerker, 2002), or sociologically (Ahmed & Reddy, 2007; Joseph, 2006); or whether researchers are using traditional, modern or postmodern definitions of culture (Whaley & Davis, 2007). For example, Johannes and Erwin (2004) highlight the difficulty in understanding and defining culture by stating that:

Culture, as considered here, is a fundamentally multidimensional construct, basically referring to the multigenerational, yet dynamic and evolving values and behaviours shared by a group of people, that provide individuals of that group with schemas for understanding and navigating their multiple, interrelated realities. (p.333)

Another important aspect to be considered in defining culture is the ways interconnection between different cultural groups modifies their respective cultures (Whaley & Davis, 2007). Thus, Whaley and Davis defined culture as:

A dynamic process involving worldviews and ways of living in a physical and social environment shared by groups, which are passed from generation to generation and may be modified by contacts between cultures in a particular social, historical, and political context. Cultures vary on a continuum of interconnection from independence (i.e., internally homogenous) to interdependence to complete dependence on other cultures (p.564)

This argument implies that the use of traditional definitions of culture is no longer applicable in modern research. The traditional perspective views cultures as dichotomous, geographically based, and internally homogenous, which fails to acknowledge the globalisation of society in a specific socio-political context. They also argue for the formation of hybrid cultures, which are results of the interconnection of cultures from independence (i.e., internally homogenous) to interdependence to complete dependence on other cultures. The definition seems representative of the Malaysian culture because it appears that the Malaysian society can be considered as having hybrid cultures, in which the three major ethnic groups (i.e., Malays, Chinese, and Indians) are socio-politically and economically interdependent towards one another. The Malays as an ethnic collective exercise political dominance and monopolise the public and government sector. The Chinese as the second largest ethnic collective monopolises the private or corporate business sector, hence exercising economical power. There are groups of politically well-connected Malay tycoons and, to a lesser extent, Indian tycoons, who are extremely prominent on the Malaysian business sector (Joseph, 2006). Unfortunately, the Indians as an ethnic collective have been claimed as lagging behind the Malays and Chinese economically, educationally, and socially (Loh, 2003). Thus, the interconnection of these groups forms the interdependence of political, economical and social powers to contribute to the growth of the Malaysian nation as a whole.

The variation in the way researchers define culture indicates the complexity of such construct in multicultural counselling literature. As a result, there appears to be two perspectives on understanding multicultural counselling as a concept. The first perspective views multicultural counselling as counselling across cultures (Pedersen, et

al., 2008) or cross-cultural counselling (Burner, 1992). This viewpoint is based on the assumption that common universal values are shared across different groups. The second perspective on multicultural counselling involves the notion that ‘all counselling is, to a greater or lesser extent, multicultural’ and exists within a specific context (Arredondo, 1999; Pedersen, 2000, p. 50; D. W. Sue, et al., 1992). This viewpoint is directly influenced by institutional and societal biases and norms (Arredondo, et al., 1996; D. W. Sue, 1990). Within this viewpoint, counselling is unavoidably ‘a culture-bound profession’ (Arredondo, 1999, p. 103; Glockshuber, 2005, p. 292). The meaning of multicultural counselling becomes counselling the culturally diverse (D. W. Sue & Sue, 2008) or culture-match counselling, such as ethnic-matching (Karlsson, 2005). Therefore, it is important to note that understanding culture within counselling is context-based and it lies within the historical and socio-political dynamics of the population being served.

In multicultural counselling, the cultural identity of a client is very important especially in the counselling process. The term ‘cultural identity’ refers to individuals’ psychological membership in a distinct culture (Matsumoto & Juang, 2004). As a psychological construct, culture is a shared system of rules, and therefore a client has not just a single cultural identity but in some cases two or more such identities. In today’s world of globalisation, a multicultural identity is becoming increasingly commonplace because the borders between cultural groups are becoming less rigid, the communication and interaction between people of different cultural groups are increasingly unavoidable, and more intercultural marriages are taking place. According to Matsumoto and Juang (2004), the existence of multicultural identities suggests the existence of multiple psycho-cultural systems of representation in the minds of

multicultural individuals. And if multiple psycho-cultural systems exist in the mind of multicultural individuals, they must have distinctive influences on their behaviour (both internal and external). The development of multicultural identity normally takes place through the process of cultural assimilation or acculturation (Matsumoto & Juang, 2004).

Acculturation is a cultural adjustment or adaptation process whereby people's attitudes and behaviours can be altered as a result of contact with similar or different culture. In other words, it means that when people from one culture move to and stay in a second or third culture for a long time in the context of upbringing, schooling or employment, then a cultural interaction and interchange takes place, thus giving the individual a multicultural identity. Therefore, in the course of acculturation, people adapt to, and in many cases adopt, a different culture from the one in which they were enculturated (see Matsumoto & Juang, 2004 for detail). In multicultural societies such as in the USA, Australia, and the Great Britain, acculturation has become a popular topic in research especially in the field of multicultural counselling (e.g., Hamid, Simmonds, & Bowles, 2009; Kim, 2007; Poppitt & Frey, 2007; Shim & Schwartz, 2007). However, in Malaysia, research on acculturation and its impact on counselling is lacking among researchers in the local context.

Acculturation research indicates that high adherence to one's own culture relates to negative attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help (Hamid, et al., 2009; Kim & Omizo, 2003) and this may lead to underutilisation of counselling services. On the other hand, Kim's (2007) study in the USA context provides

contrasting evidence such that there is no significant relation between acculturation values and professional help-seeking attitudes.

Similar to culture, race and ethnicity have been inadequately defined and understood from a psychological perspective. The definition of race has both a biological and a social dimension but it is, unfortunately, commonly associated with the biological aspects of humans which includes skin pigmentation, head form, facial features, and colour and texture of body hair (Cokley, 2007). The biological definition is problematic because there appear to be many more similarities between groups than differences, and many more differences within some racial groups than between them. The social conception of race, in contrast, retains a great deal of significance in everyday life especially in the ways people treat one another in a social context. Race as a social construct has more appealing effect to counselling researchers because being socialized in a society as a member of a racial or ethnic group has psychological, educational, and political consequences that have largely fuelled the scholarly interest in ethnic and racial identity. From a social scientist perspective, racial identity can be defined as “the collective identity of any group of people socialised to think of themselves as a racial group” (Cokley, 2007, p. 225). Thus far, race continues to be a significant way of differentiating among people, especially in the USA.

On the other hand, ethnicity is commonly argued to have both a broad and narrower definition. The broad definition, according to Sue et al. (1998), includes both cultural and physical features and, as a result, is often used interchangeably with race. However, when ethnicity is restricted to cultural characteristics and differences, the narrow definition is being used. The present research used the term ethnicity in a

narrower sense in order to prevent the interchangeable use of ethnicity and race. On this basis, the present research fully adopts Cokley's (2007) definition of ethnicity which views an ethnic group as "a characterisation of a group of people who see themselves and are seen by others as having a common ancestry, shared history, shared traditions, and shared cultural traits such as language, beliefs, values, music, dress, and food" (p.225). Ethnic identity can be defined as "the subjective sense of ethnic group membership that involves self-labelling, sense of belonging, preference for the group, positive evaluation of the ethnic group, ethnic knowledge, and involvement in ethnic group activities" (Cokley, 2007, p. 225).

In view of the above definitions, it is clear that Malaysians are a multi-ethnic society. Historical and anthropological evidence suggests that Malay culture and tradition has been basically shaped by four sources: geographical (Malay Peninsular versus Malay East Malaysia), early animistic and Hindu traditions, and Islamic values. Westernisation also has an impact on the development of Malay culture especially during the earlier contexts of colonialisation, post-colonialisation, and current waves of globalisation. Among these sources, the Islamic tradition has been the most influential since its institutionalisation in Malay life (Haque & Masuan, 2002). Thus, it is considered as the most important factor in Malay identity and a significant social, political and ideological force influencing the Malay society (Joseph, 2006).

The Chinese (26% of the Malaysian population) are not a homogenous ethnic group because they differ along religious, linguistic and cultural lines. Most of them are descendents of Chinese traders and immigrants who came to Malaysia between the 15th century and 19th century. Among the Chinese, there are Buddhists, Taoists, Confucians,

Muslims, and Christians. Some Chinese can speak Mandarin and write Chinese characters while some others speak different Chinese dialects. A significant portion of the contemporary educated Chinese is also influenced by Western culture. Hence, they prefer English education and Western values and customs rather than the traditional values and Chinese way of life.

Indians constitute about 7% of the Malaysian population. Similar to the Chinese, there is much heterogeneity among the Indians along religious, linguistic and cultural lines. The majority of Indians descended from those who migrated from South India during British colonisation. A significant minority of the Indians are tycoons who are very prominent in the Malaysian business arena and they are greatly influenced by the Western way of life. Most Indians speak Tamil as their first language. The vast majority of Indians (about 80%) are Hindus while some others are Muslims and Christians.

Besides the three major ethnic groups discussed above, there are other minor ethnic groups too. These include the Euro-Asians, Chinese Babas, Melakan Chitties, Malay-Bugis, Malay-Javaness, and so forth. Descendants of these groups came to Malaysia during the colonial period. Each group traces their ancestries through intermarriage and cultural diffusion from inter-ethnic interactions centuries ago (Joseph, 2006). For example, most Euro-Asians Malaysians trace their ancestry to British, Dutch or Portuguese colonists.

The oldest inhabitants of Malaysia are the indigenous groups, who mostly reside in East Malaysia (i.e., Sabah and Sarawak). Some others or Orang Asli are the aborigines of Peninsular Malaysia. The groups constitute about 5% of the Malaysian

population. These groups of people are deeply spiritual and the vast majority of them are animists. Cultural plurality is highly evident among them because there are more than 95 different indigenous and aboriginal groups, and each has their own cultural identities (Sumari & Jalal, 2008). In view of these cultural differences among Malaysians, Joseph's (2006) argument regarding the politics of ethnic identification in Malaysia, which are intertwined with the politics of difference, which in turn is linked with power and inequality, may have importance for counselling. Hence, as part of its objectives, this research explored the subjective experience of power associated with ethnic labelling of Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera in the cross-cultural counselling relationship.

In previous counselling literature and research, race, ethnicity, racial identity, and ethnic identity are among the most popular variables rigorously studied by multicultural experts (Delgado-Romero, Galván, Maschino, & Rowland, 2005). However, it is very challenging to interpret and integrate previous research findings because the researchers may have operated from different general definitions of race, ethnicity, racial identity, and ethnic identity and from different cultural context. As pointed out by Cokley (2007),

The inconsistent and interchangeable use of ethnicity and race and ethnic and racial identity prohibits researchers from identifying psychological mechanisms that differentiate and distinguish the constructs from each other, which ultimately raises more questions than provides answers in the study of ethnic and racial identity (p.225).

Besides culture, race and ethnicity, gender is another one of the visible distinguishing traits that denote group membership. The APA dictionary of psychology (VandenBos, 2007, p. 401) defines gender as “the psychological, behavioural, social,

and cultural aspects of being male or female (i.e., masculinity or femininity)”. Like race, gender also has both a biological and a social component and can be a highly visible and convenient way of judging and grouping people. Although the definition is problematic as it does not allow for gender fluidity and diversity, for example with transgendered people, it is feasible for use in the context of Malaysia, whose legal system recognises individuals as being male or female only. Pedersen’s (2000) Model of Intra-personal Cultural Grid views gender as one of the principal demographic variables besides age, affection orientation, and physical disabilities, whereas he sees ethnicity as belonging to the ethnographic variables which also include nationality, religion and language. The intersection of these variables is the main concern among counsellors and researchers because it has a significant impact on counselling (Constantine, 2002a) and it also becomes one of the aspects of counselling that were investigated in the present research.

Understanding the multicultural counselling movement.

Historically, the study of culture (particularly race) had begun in the 1960s and 1970s following the civil rights movement in the USA. Ponterotto and Mallinckrodt (2007) called this period the “Birth of a Movement” in which counsellors and counselling psychologists expressed a commitment to the study of culture in counselling and began publishing widely on the topic (p.219). During this period, race and ethnicity were often studied as categorical variables, and there was a marked focus on between-group comparisons across various psychological constructs (e.g., Jones, 1978). Between-group differences refer to “the ways that people in diverse groups construct meaning of such concepts as human development, mental health, psychological maturity, and appropriate psychological helping interventions” (D'Andrea & Heckman,

2008a, p. 356). For instance, research on ethnic matching between counsellor and client in counselling provide a better understanding of between-group differences and related concepts among counsellors and professionals in the field (e.g., Cashwell, Shcherbakova, & Cashwell, 2003; Karlsson, 2005; H.-C. S. Liu, 2003; S. Sue, 1998). This body of research has enabled counsellors to broaden their understanding to extend far beyond the culturally encapsulated constructions of such concepts that have dominated the profession in the past (Wrenn, 1962, 1985). Since then, numerous studies started mushrooming and the focus was not only on between-group differences, but also on the within-group psychological differences that are routinely manifested among persons in the same racial/cultural groups (D'Andrea & Heckman, 2008a). For instance, research on racial/ethnic identity, acculturation, and worldview greatly enhanced counsellors' understanding of the different ways individuals in the same groups develop psychologically (e.g., Frey & Roysircar, 2006; Hamid, et al., 2009; Ponterotto & Park-Taylor, 2007).

Some ethnic minority scholars argue that the two main impetuses for the emergence of multiculturalism in counselling are the rapid increase in racial/ethnic minorities of the USA population and the numerous biased practices reported in the delivery of mental health services to clients from the minority groups in the USA (Pope-Davis, Coleman, Liu, & Toporek, 2003; D. T. Robinson & Morris, 2000; D. W. Sue & Sue, 2008). This phenomenon has created an ongoing debate since the 1960s among mental health professionals on how to work best with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds, especially those from the ethnic minority groups. The proponents of contemporary theories of counselling argue that the existing models of counselling are sufficient to be used as a basis in working with these diverse clients because of the

presumed universality of these models (Kinnier, Dixon, Barratt, & Moyer, 2008; MacDougall, 2002). In other words, they argue that the contemporary theories of counselling can allow a multicultural perspective too. Among the three schools of thought, the humanistic/existential theories and approaches hold both promise and concern in terms of diversity issues such as culture and gender (Nystul, 2006). For example, Rogers's emphasis on developing a positive counselling relationship in client-centred therapy helps to foster positive interpersonal relations and overcome conflict at individual or cultural level. Corey (2005), a well-known textbook writer for counselling theories, notes that Gestalt therapy, another example of experiential theory and approach, can also make positive contributions in terms of cultural issues. He describes how Gestalt therapy can be useful in cross-counselling by helping clients work through the conflicts between their culture and the host culture. Its emphasis on nonverbal communication can also help to overcome misunderstandings that results from language or value differences in cross-cultural or multicultural counselling.

However, some scholars disagree with the view that contemporary counselling theories and approaches are suitable for counselling culturally diverse clients, especially those from the ethnic minority groups, because they argue that the underlying assumptions, philosophies and methodologies of these theories have been found to be inadequate to describe, explain, predict, and deal with the richness and complexity of a culturally diverse population (D. W. Sue, et al., 1996; D. W. Sue & Sue, 2008). This argument is based on the assumption that the theories originated from the Euro-American culture, and thus, these theories can only work best for specific target clients such as the clients from the White middle-class group in Western contexts, which may or may not work well when counselling a client with different values and cultures, or

from different contexts such as counselling diverse Malaysian clients. Some of the major critiques of the traditional Western models of counselling made by prominent multicultural scholars concern (a) ethnocentric monoculturalism: the culture-bound nature of contemporary counselling theories and practices (D. W. Sue, et al., 1998; D. W. Sue & Sue, 2008), (b) the culturally encapsulated manner of mainstream counsellors (perhaps including those Western-trained professionals from non-West contexts) (Pedersen, 2000; Wrenn, 1962, 1985); and (c) the ignorance (or lack of integration) of traditional and indigenous healing methods and approach (Constantine, Myers, Kindaichi, & Moore III, 2004).

In the 1980s, the multicultural counselling movement called for ongoing efforts to understand and incorporate culture and diversity issues in the contemporary theories and practices of counselling and psychotherapy to meet the needs of diverse society (Johannes & Erwin, 2004). Since then, this movement has attempted to come up with more culturally sensitive approaches to counselling minority people from diverse cultural backgrounds (Jackson, 1995; Ponterotto & Mallinckrodt, 2007).

Understanding current issues and challenges to incorporate culture and diversity in the contemporary counselling theories and practices.

Current attempts to address and incorporate culture and diversity involve (a) theoretical revision of established theories, (b) theoretical integration or eclecticism (i.e., the process of selecting concepts, methods, and strategies from a variety of current theories which work) and (c) introduction of a theory of multicultural counselling and

therapy or MCT (D. W. Sue, et al., 1996). These attempts are made based on the most recent way to understand culture and view cultural differences. The underlying assumption is that no culture is superior or more desirable than another and to explore the legitimacy and benefits of any differences between cultures. This is the viewpoint from which the current field of multicultural counselling has developed, which also implies a valuing of diversity. However, there are emerging issues and challenges associated with each attempts, which this research has considered.

An exploration of the current thinking and development of the person-centred theory and practice of counselling has demonstrated its effectiveness in working with culturally diverse populations. It has been reported that much of Rogers' work was with disadvantaged clients and in his later work, he provided training throughout the world in how his counselling theory could be used to foster positive interpersonal relations and overcome conflict, and hence foster world peace (Nystul, 2006). Glauser and Bozarth (2001) also support Rogers' theory and claim that the theory provides a rich foundation for multicultural counselling. They argue that counselling in any multicultural context must embody basic elements of effective counselling. Thus, the Rogerian concepts, according to them, play an important role in multicultural counselling which include the importance of the counsellor-client relationship; core therapeutic conditions such as empathy, respect, and genuineness; the emphasis on the client's frame of reference for action implementation; and the phenomenological perspective. These concepts have been considered and can be incorporated within a multicultural framework and counselling to address issues of individual differences and diversity (MacDougall, 2002). In addition, there are also some theoretical supports from the medical field which attempt to develop patient-centred culturally sensitive health care by adopting the

person-centred approach within the multicultural framework (Herman et al., 2007). Do the humanistic and existential issues of relating, meaning making, symbolizing, attending and responding, healing, death, and living, loving and learning belong only to those of the culture that first systematically articulated and proposed theories and concerns about them (i.e., Euro-American)?

In addition, there is growing evidence that suggests a culturally adapted cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) is just as effective as a traditional CBT (Whaley & Davis, 2007). CBT arguably is the most widely used form of empirically supported treatment in the empirical literature. A number of CBT studies, including some randomized controlled trials (RCT) conducted by ethnic/racial minority clinicians and counsellors, have demonstrated efficacy or effectiveness of the intervention after undergoing some type of cultural adaptation (E. T. Liu, 2007; Miranda et al., 2006). For example, Liu (2007) described cognitive-behavioural and cognitive-interpersonal case formulations to develop an effective treatment plan for a Chinese American male client. Her case study highlighted the importance of cultural competency and cultural adaptation of empirically supported treatments when working with clients from diverse backgrounds. Herein, the issue on the culture-bound nature of contemporary counselling theories seems no longer applicable to the current thinking and development in multicultural counselling, thus it opens for further research substantiation.

Kinnier, Dixon, Barratt, and Moyer (2008) argue for the integration of universal values with multicultural principles. They claim that universalism should be prevalent within the counselling profession because it is manifestly prevalent within the world's religious and political realms. Such an argument implies that the current theories and

practices of counselling are still adequate, sufficient, and relevant in a specific cultural context if they are integrated with multicultural principles. For an example, Egan (2007a) has successfully developed a counselling model or approach called ‘the skilled helper’ using an integrative approach. This model is a flexible, humanistic, broadly based problem-management and opportunity-development model which help clients manage problems and develop unused resources. Egan claims that his model is “straightforward without ignoring the complexities of clients’ lives or of the helping process itself” (p.33). Although there are criticisms regarding previous attempts at integrating theories and strategies of counselling, Egan’s model seems to work well for counselling culturally diverse clients because he manages to demonstrate how the skills described in the model apply to situations with people from different cultures (Egan, 2007b). Egan’s work has provided some support to refute claims that attempts at integration can be attributed to ‘confused, inconsistent, contradictory, lazy and unsystematic’ efforts (D. W. Sue, et al., 1996).

Another perspective on theoretical integration as an attempt to incorporate culture and address diversity in counselling involves inclusion and integration of indigenous methods of healing in counselling and psychotherapy (Comas-Diaz, 2006; D. W. Sue, et al., 1996). However, such attempt has been overlooked and received minimal attention from practitioners and scholars in the USA context. Sue and D. Sue (2008) claim that the reason for this negligence is due to counsellors’ heavy reliance on science and on the reductionist approach to treating clients, which has made them view human beings and human behaviours as composed of separate non-interacting parts (cognitive, behavioural, and affective). However, it should be acknowledged that there are attempts and ongoing moves in the integrated approach to counselling such as

Egan's model (2007b). Another plausible reason for a lack of inclusion and integration of traditional and healing practices into counselling could be the counsellors' tendency to use Western mental health approaches in treating clients, which emphasise the universal elements of counselling that all cultural groups are assumed to share (i.e., an etic perspective). However, some people may be uncomfortable with the fundamental values and goals of Western counselling, and hence there is a need to identify and highlight indigenous forms of healing and helping that some of these individuals may use in the face of personal distress. For example, Haque (2008) commented, "while the DSM-IV is widely used in many non-Western countries, the local population [of Malaysia] continues to believe in and practice indigenous methods of healing" (p.685).

Constantine et al. (2004) discuss relevant literature pertaining to the needs, preferences, and tendency for some clients from the minority groups to turn to more informal sources of dealing with problems, such as family members, close friends, indigenous healers (e.g., in the case of some Asian Americans), pastors, ministers, or priests (e.g., in the case of some African Americans and Latino Americans). They also argue that the reason for the underutilisation of mental health services by people of colour could be due to two main factors: (i) the cultural biases in the Western approaches to counselling and (ii) the increased satisfaction and trust in the traditional and indigenous healing approaches. The same phenomena can be observed in the Malaysian context in which the locals are more likely to seek help from the local healers and religious leaders instead of seeking help from professional counsellors especially among the three major ethnic groups of Malay, Chinese, and Indian (Haque, 2000, 2008). There are also many indigenous healing practices in the Malaysian context such as *Bomoh* therapies (i.e., either Quranic therapy or Malay Magic), Islamic therapies,

Ayurveda, Qigong, and many others (Haque, 2000, 2005, 2008). This highlights the need for counsellors to consider integrating indigenous helping practices or resources into their work with diverse clients (Comas-Diaz, 2006; Constantine, Myers, et al., 2004; Moodley & West, 2005; D. W. Sue & Sue, 2008).

The first attempt to provide a comprehensive theory of multicultural counselling as a reaction to the presumed limitations of the current theories of counselling took place in 1996 and was made possible by three leading scholars in multiculturalism - Derald Wing Sue, Allen Ivey, and Paul B. Pedersen – and they named their theory MCT or a theory of Multicultural Counselling and Therapy (D. W. Sue, et al., 1996). MCT is a culture-centred perspective that applies cultural theories to counselling process. This approach is based on six propositions that demonstrate the fundamental importance of a culture-centred perspective. The six propositions proposed by Sue, Ivey, and Pedersen (1996) are:

1. Each Western and non-Western theory represents a different worldview;
2. The complex totality of inter-relationships in the client-counsellor experiences and the dynamic, changing context must be the focus of counselling, however inconvenient that may become;
3. A counsellor or client's racial/cultural identity will influence how problems are defined and dictate or define appropriate counselling goals or processes;
4. The ultimate goal of a culture-centred approach is to expand the repertoire of helping responses available to counsellors;
5. Conventional roles of counselling are only some of the many alternative helping roles available from a variety of cultural contexts;

6. MCT emphasises the importance of expanding personal, family, group and organizational consciousness in a contextual orientation.

Although MCT has significant impact on research, practice and training of counselling, its cultural relevance to specific cultural contexts such as Malaysia is unclear because it was based on the conceptualisation of one Asian American and two Euro-American male scholars.

Understanding current debates in multicultural counselling research.

Some of the current issues and debates related to multicultural counselling research can be summarised as follows:

1. Is multicultural counselling a narrow (i.e., focuses exclusively on race or ethnicity) or a broad (i.e., inclusive focus on race or ethnicity, as well as gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, disability) concept?
2. Do the same basic counselling principles/ techniques apply to everyone regardless of cultural background (i.e., either using a universal/ an etic approach to multicultural counselling or a culture-specific/an emic approach)?
3. Should counsellors adapt traditional counselling to meet the needs of non-traditional clients or examine non-traditional counselling to enlighten traditional approaches (i.e., whether to modify the traditional Western approaches when counselling non-Western clients or conduct cultural anthropology research to come up with a culture-specific non-Western approach to counselling)?

4. Should multicultural training be required for licensure or certification of counsellors in counselling?

Efforts made by previous researchers in the multicultural counselling field have been devoted to addressing these issues but their focus was directed to exploring the state and extent of multicultural training in Western contexts (e.g., Castillo, et al., 2007; D'Andrea, et al., 1991; Dickson & Jepsen, 2007; Ridley, Mendoza, & Kantz, 1994). This trend is due to earlier assertions that previous counsellor education and training programs in the USA had overlooked the clients' cultural needs and expectations (D. T. Robinson & Morris, 2000) and the majority of Western-trained counsellors, as products of these programs, had been claimed to behave in a culturally encapsulated manner (Pedersen, 2003, 2008; Wrenn, 1962, 1985). The term 'cultural encapsulation' was first introduced by Wrenn (1962, p. 445) and it referred to a process in which counsellors cannot see beyond their belief system and fail to address cultural issues with the client (Pedersen, 2000). The danger of being a culturally encapsulated counsellor is enormous because it can lead to misunderstandings and misdiagnosis during a therapeutic process. In light of this fact, Pedersen (2008) suggests some strategies to avoid the dangers of cultural encapsulation in counsellors and these are: (a) to challenge, unmask or deconstruct the values, biases, and assumptions associated with ethnocentric monoculturalism; and (b) to develop a comprehensive perspective that integrates contrasting assumptions from other cultures.

Although previous research had provided some reasons to believe the presence of culturally encapsulated counsellors among Western trained counsellors (e.g., Gill, 2007), current revision and development of multicultural education and training

programs have addressed the issue in order to better train counsellor trainees to be effective and competent counsellors (D'Andrea & Heckman, 2008a; Smith, Constantine, Dunn, Dinehart, & Montoya, 2006). In addition, there is also a growing body of literature and empirical research on MCC which demonstrates the importance of having culturally competent practices and training of counsellors in an effort to provide culturally sensitive counselling to a diverse client population. This growing interest in MCC has led to a proliferation of studies on MCCs (e.g., Holcomb-McCoy, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999) and MCC development has been an important topic in counselling and counselling psychology research since the last three decades. The theoretical development of MCC urges scholars, researchers, and practitioners to come up with, not just culturally sensitive, but more culturally competent approaches to counselling; and to train counsellors to become multiculturally competent in their practice. How can we come up with a more culturally competent approach to counselling? What are the specific guidelines and models to train counsellors to become multiculturally competent? In order to understand the current debates pertaining to MCC, the following section centres on research seeking answers to these two questions.

Part B: Understanding MCC Literature and Research:

Models, Instrumentation, and Current Issues

As discussed in Chapter One, there is a rapid growth in both MCC theory development and research over the last two decades. This section reviews and critiques some of the major accomplishments in the MCC literature and research such as the development of MCC conceptual models, the operationalisation of MCCs, the

development of assessment instruments of MCC, and highlights current issues and debates in communicating research to multicultural contexts other than the USA region.

The development of MCC models and current conceptual issues.

Historically, the term MCC was originally theorised by Sue et al. (1982) who posited MCC as comprising three dimensions, a counsellor's beliefs and attitudes (awareness), knowledge, and skills. Ten years later, Sue et al. (1992) expanded upon this three-pronged conceptualisation of MCC by introducing three core characteristics of a multicultural counsellor, and these are awareness, understanding, and developing appropriate intervention strategies and techniques. This addition resulted in a total of nine competency areas and a set of 31 specific multicultural standards and competencies for judging the quality of multiculturally competent practice (refer to D. W. Sue, et al., 1992, pp. 484-486 for details). Recently, Sue et al. (1992) competency standards have been formally endorsed by the American Counseling [sic.] Association (ACA) and the American Psychological Association (APA), and numerous MCC concepts have been infused into the 2005 ACA Code of Ethics to highlight the importance of becoming a culturally competent counselling professional in today's globalised world (D'Andrea & Heckman, 2008a; Pack-Brown, Thomas, & Seymour, 2008).

Since then, there have been numerous revisions and modifications of the earlier models of MCC by some prominent researchers in the field (Mollen, Ridley, & Hill, 2003; Ponterotto, Fuertes, & Chen, 2000). For example, the revised model proposed by Sue et al. (1998) conceptualizes MCC as comprising three components parts also: awareness, knowledge, and skills. Briefly, awareness involves a counsellors' self-understanding with respect to their 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. The skills component includes the application of knowledge and experience in a culturally sensitive manner. A more comprehensive model of multicultural competence proposed in the literature is called “a multidimensional model for developing cultural competence” (D. W. Sue & Sue, 2008, p. 49). The model attempts to integrate three important elements associated with effective multicultural counselling: (a) components of MCC, (2) specific cultural group worldviews and attributes, and (c) foci of MCC. This attempt resulted in a 3(awareness, knowledge, and skills) x 4(foci of competence: individual, professional, organizational, and societal) x 5(culture-specific attributes: African American, Asian American, Latino American, Native American, and European American) matrix, but the foundational components of awareness, knowledge, and skills proposed by earlier literature remain unchanged.

Through research, these three components of awareness, knowledge and skills have been supported empirically as being core components of MCC (Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Sadowsky, et al., 1994) and several additional components of MCC have also been identified. For example, while developing their MCC assessment scale, Sadowsky et al. (1994) identified an additional multicultural competence factor (i.e., multicultural counselling relationship) that they believed was inherent to effective multicultural counselling. Likewise, other researchers and scholars also propose more than the three foundational components of awareness, knowledge and skills as constituents of MCC even though the proposed models are initially based on prior conceptualisations of MCC. For example, Holcomb-McCoy and Myers (1999) identified two other factors – racial identity development (White racial identity model,

racial/cultural identity development) and multicultural terminology (i.e., race versus culture), in addition to awareness, knowledge and skills. Later, Constantine and Ladany (2001) also formulated a MCC model which consists of the following six dimensions: (1) counsellor self-awareness, (2) general knowledge about multicultural issues, (3) multicultural counselling self-efficacy, (4) understanding of unique client variables, (5) effective counselling working alliance, and (6) multicultural counselling skills. Again, the foundational components of awareness, knowledge, and skills also remain unchanged. Therefore, these three core dimensions inform the development of the survey instrument used in the present research.

Operationalisation of the MCCs.

The introduction of numerous MCC models has sparked ongoing efforts to clarify and operationalise MCCs. In 1996, Arredondo et al. helped clarify and operationalise the MCCs based on Sue et al. (1992) 3 x 3 matrix conceptualisation. Based on Arredondo et al.'s (1996) article, multicultural counselling refers to “preparation and practices that integrate multicultural and culture-specific awareness, knowledge, and skills into counselling interactions” (p.42). However, the focus for discussion is on the five major ethnic groups in the USA context: African/Black, Asian, Caucasian/European or White, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American or Indigenous groups. Thus, it is argued that the 119 explanatory statements that were added to the original 31 competencies of Sue et al. (1992) and the specific strategies and activities for developing MCCs within a training context may or may not be culturally relevant to the specific cultural context of Malaysia.

International researchers put similar effort to operationalise MCCs to suit the personal, cultural, contextual, and universal need, values and norms of both the counsellor and the client from their respective cultural contexts. For example, Canadian researchers and multicultural scholars have introduced a model for developing multicultural competence in practice, counsellor education and continued professional development (Collins & Arthur, 2007, 2010a, 2010b; Collins, Arthur, & Wong-Wylie, 2010). The model, ‘culture-infused counselling’ (CIC), builds on the concept of personal cultural identity to form a conceptual framework for assisting counsellors to effectively infuse culture into all aspects of the counselling process, thus optimizing therapeutic outcomes with a wide range of clientele (Collins & Arthur, 2010a, p. 203; 2010b, p. 217). The model is strongly influenced by Sue et al. (1982) because it provides a detailed description of the attitudes, knowledge, and skills identified as central components to the development of culture-infused counselling competence. The model is organised according to three core competency domains, which is slightly different from Sue et al.’s (1992) matrix model, and these are: cultural awareness regarding self (active awareness of personal assumptions, values and biases), cultural awareness regarding other (understanding of the worldview of the client), and culturally sensitive working alliance.

Although the model looks promising (i.e., the proposed MCCs are more comprehensive, more inclusive, and more specific and operational), the CIC competencies may not be suitable for use in the Malaysian context because they were generated “as if the counsellor is a member of the dominant [white, male, heterosexual, able-bodied] population” (Collins & Arthur, 2010a, p. 221) and they have yet to be empirically tested. Collins and Arthur acknowledged power differences in counselling,

with their construction based on the idea of one dominant group (the so-called powerful) and lots of other minor groups. However, in the Malaysian context, the socio-political dynamics and power differences are more complex because of ethnic politics across political, economic and social dimensions (Joseph, 2006). Thus, there is a need to further explore power differences in multicultural counselling in the specific cultural context of Malaysia. In addition, the models reviewed here are mostly not empirical models and traditionally based on expertise, using a contextual and lived-experiences approach (Arredondo & Toporek, 2004).

MCC assessment instruments and measurement issues.

Multicultural counselling occurs when culture-specific attitudes/beliefs (awareness), knowledge, and skills are incorporated into clinical interactions (Sue et al., 1982). In order to carry out multicultural counselling practice, counsellors must understand the key and related concepts in multiculturalism and diversity and be able to incorporate such concepts in the counselling process. Thus, this implies that assessment of MCC among professionals is necessary to ensure culturally appropriate counselling services to an increasingly diverse clientele. Sue et al.'s (1982) position paper delineating the multicultural competencies of counselling psychologists has served as the foundation for the development of several paper-and-pencil instruments used to measure multicultural counselling competence. Despite the inadequacies of multicultural competency theory and the lack of evidence-based support for its practice, the instrument used to measure individuals' cultural competence continues to grow in number. Multicultural instrumentation is very important because it 'forms a critical part of research investigating multicultural competency development, cross-cultural training

effectiveness, and the influence of cultural variables on counselling process and outcome' (Dunn, et al., 2006, p. 471).

Historically, the development of multicultural competency instruments started in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Since then, researchers are able to assess multicultural competence from the perspectives of the counsellors, clients, and third-party observers and the instruments have become more developed. Some of the pioneering work in developing the instruments were the works of LaFromboise, Coleman, and Hernandez (Cross-Cultural Counseling Inventory – Revised or CCCI-R; 1991), Ponterotto, Sanchez, and Magids (Multicultural Counseling Awareness Scale: Form B or MCAS: B; 1991, August), D'Andrea, Daniels, and Heck (Multicultural Awareness Knowledge Skills Survey or MAKSS; 1991), and Sadowsky et al. (Multicultural Counseling Inventory or MCI; 1994). These earlier assessment instruments are subjected to comprehensive reviews and critiques in terms of description and development, psychometric properties (esp. the reliability and validity), and evaluation (e.g., Catherine, Talbot, Batka, & Anderson, 2001; Dunn, et al., 2006; Ponterotto & Alexander, 1996; Pope-Davis & Dings, 1995).

Based on the subsequent reviews of MCC assessment instruments, several conclusions can be drawn, and several measurement issues and limitations have been identified. It was found that the most widely used instruments in the literature are the MCI, MAKSS, CCCI-R, and MCAS and these instruments have generally acceptable internal consistency reliability across different populations and settings (Dunn, et al., 2006). For example, the MAKSS was first developed in 1991 for use in counselling psychology and it was revised in 2003 (Multicultural Awareness Knowledge Skills

Survey – Counselor Edition – Revised or MAKSS-CE-R) to address its initial limitations. The MAKSS-CE-R is a 33-item (10 items each for the Awareness and Skills subscales and 13 items for the Knowledge subscale). The reported internal consistency was also strong ranging from alphas equal 0.71 (Awareness), 0.85 (Knowledge), 0.87 (Skills) and 0.82 (full scale/total score). It also demonstrates some degree of construct validity, with the three-factor analysis accounting for approximately 30% of the total variance. The two versions have moderate correlations for the three factors ($r = 0.24$ to 0.67), but the MAKSS-CE-R only accounts for one third of the variance that the original MAKSS had accounted for (29.8%) (Hays, 2008). Although there are other existing MCC instruments found in the literature (e.g., Multicultural Counseling Checklist for school counselors; Holcomb-McCoy, 2004; Multicultural Counseling Competence and Training Survey or MCCTS: Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Multicultural School Psychology Counseling Competency Scale or MSPCCS: Rogers & Ponterotto, 1997), these instruments have yet to be extensively empirically reviewed.

In addition, previous researchers have highlighted several measurement issues in the assessment instruments of MCC, especially those related to self-report measures. First, the instruments may be associated with tendencies of participants to respond in socially desirable manners because some evidence in the previous literature suggested that the MCI, MAKSS, and CCCI-R (both self-report and observer-rated versions) were each associated with measures of social desirability (Constantine & Ladany, 2000). In this regard, only the MCKAS was found not significantly correlated with measures of social desirability. To address this issue, it is important that the present research included other measures in addition to the self-report format. A hypothetical scenario,

inspired by Neufeldt et al. (2006), or practice reflection task, inspired by Collins et al. (2010), requiring the generation of appropriate responses might be a better way of doing this without being intrusive.

Second, Constantine, Gloria, and Ladany (2002) have questioned the factor structure of two of these instruments (MCI and MAKSS) because they found that only a two-factor solution was empirically supported. Hence, this provides evidence to dispute the 4-factor and 3-factor structures of MCI and MAKSS, respectively, and to further investigate the factor structure of perceived MCCs. To address this issue, the present research developed a self-report survey instrument based on the reviews and critiques of existing literature on MCC and contextualised it to suit the socio-political dynamics of Malaysian populations.

Third, the interpretation of results of self-reported instrumentation may be misleading because the instruments might actually measure multicultural counselling self-efficacy, not MCC (Constantine, 2001d; Constantine, et al., 2002; Constantine & Ladany, 2000). Recent findings in the literature also indicated theory-consistent relations of Multicultural Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale—Racial Diversity Form (MCSE-RD) scores, which was developed to assess perceived ability to counsel racially diverse clients, with general counselling self-efficacy (Sheu & Lent, 2007). This finding highlights the need for researchers to: (a) be cautious in using self-report instruments as a primary means to assess individuals' multicultural competence, (b) carefully interpret the self-report scores, and (c) include additional methods for collecting data on respondents' MCCs rather than exclusively focusing on participants' perceptions of their own competencies.

Fourth, self-reported instruments of MCC are inconsistently related to observer-rated multicultural competence (Dunn, et al., 2006), but findings from a recent study, which compares the perceived and demonstrated MCC performance, showed that the two measures are significantly different (Cartwright, Daniels, & Zhang, 2008). Overall, these measurement issues reflect the current controversies in the assessment of perceived MCC and the presence of these issues also cautions international researchers to not simply adopt and adapt the current existing instruments of MCC in their specific cultural contexts.

Besides self-report scales, there are also other measures used by previous researchers to assess multicultural competence. For instance, using ratings of counsellor responses to transcribed intake interviews of clients, Constantine (2001a) found that those who had multicultural training were better able to conceptualise a minority client's issues. These rated responses to the written interviews that aimed to measure multicultural case conceptualisation provided an important step beyond self-reported competence. In addition, actual multicultural conceptualisation skills were not found to be related to self-reported MCCs, after social desirability is taken into consideration (Constantine & Ladany, 2000). This finding suggests counsellors' perceptions of their own competencies, as with other self-evaluations, may or may not be accurate. So, there is still a need to know how counsellors actually consider diversity factors as they conceptualise real cases. In other words, further understanding is needed regarding which cultural factors counsellors take into account in relationship building, case conceptualisation, and how they understand and engage with such factors in counselling. This is consistent with Sue's (2003) argument that cultural competency is

also considered as a *process*, orientation, or approach, and not just a technique. His argument provides a different perspective to understanding MCC.

Constantine (2001b) investigated counsellors' case conceptualisation ability but her focus was on the relationship between counsellors' previous multicultural counselling training, among many other variables, and their ability to conceptualise clients' mental health issues from a multicultural perspective. The participants were 130 professional counsellors who were members of ACA. These participants were asked to write a conceptualisation of at least three sentences describing the causes of a client's psychological problems and a conceptualisation of at least three sentences describing effective treatment strategies for the client. Constantine used a case vignette of a gay male Native American stockbroker as an inquiry measure and analysed her data using a quantitative data analytic framework. She found that greater multicultural counselling training was significantly associated with higher scores in the case conceptualisation ($p < .001$) and positively predictive of treatment case conceptualisation ($p < .05$).

A more recent study also explored counsellors' multicultural case conceptualisation ability, as an indicator of MCC, by using an analogue study (Neufeldt, et al., 2006). Seventeen psychotherapists in training were interviewed regarding their use of broadly defined diversity factors in conceptualising clients and cases. Each therapist watched two 5-minute staged videotapes of clients who varied along dimensions of race and ethnicity, age, and gender. Each acting client described problems in an initial psychotherapy interview, and then participant therapists responded to questions. Results revealed varying levels of multicultural competence among the participants. Many exhibited knowledge in the areas of culture-specific

values, and family and gender roles. Moreover, they showed awareness of their own cultural background and its effects on the therapeutic relationship, and skills in treatment planning, including assessment of levels of acculturation and culturally appropriate treatment methods. Although this study has demonstrated an alternative way of assessing MCC to the self-report format, there are concerns regarding the methodology of analogue research. Some of the limitations of analogue studies reported by previous literature include inconsistency in results, failure to account for other potential psychotherapist characteristics such as acculturation level, and limitations in the participants' freedom to choose (Karlsson, 2005).

Lee and Tracey (2008) also investigated multicultural case conceptualisation skills in an analogue study, but they used a quantitative inquiry approach. The purpose of the study was to explore how 91 psychotherapy trainees differed in their general and multicultural case conceptualisation skills across levels of clinical and multicultural training, client cases, and trainee race. Instead of using video vignettes, they developed a three scenarios survey and several rated measures (e.g., multicultural differentiation, integration, expertness) as data collection instruments. The cases varied in the extent to which culture was presented (explicitly or implicitly) in the demographic information and presenting concerns. Results showed that general case conceptualisation skills correlated significantly with clinical training, and multicultural case conceptualisation skills correlated significantly with multicultural training. Across client cases, participant trainees showed similar levels of general case conceptualisation skills, but different levels of multicultural case conceptualisation skills. In addition, ethnicity was not found to influence the general or multicultural case conceptualisation skills. The findings imply that general counselling competence and multicultural competence are two

different set of skills, but their roles in a counselling process are dependent on the role of culture in the clients' cultural background and presenting problems.

Both recent studies on multicultural case conceptualisation skills provide a better understanding of multicultural skills, as a subset of multicultural competence. However, there is a need to advance further research that can systematically generate information regarding counsellors' multicultural competence, perhaps with the use of both hypothetical scenarios (e.g., a case vignette) and lived professional experiences in handling multicultural cases.

Reviewing perceived MCC research.

Several studies have investigated MCC, as well as explored the relationship of demographic, multicultural training, and multicultural experience (personal and professional experiences) variables with the self-perceived MCCs of various professionals and trainees. To date, researchers have assessed the self-perceived multicultural competence of school counsellors (Holcomb-McCoy, 2001, 2005; B. Robinson & Bradley, 2005; Zegley, 2008), American Counseling [sic.] Association members (Constantine & Ladany, 2000; Holcomb-McCoy, 2000; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999), faculty in counsellor education and psychology programs (Lafromboise, et al., 1991; Robles-Piña & McPherson, 2001), counsellors in university counselling centres (Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994; Sadowsky, et al., 1998), rehabilitation counsellors (Granello & Wheaton, 1998b; Wheaton & Granello, 1998, 2002), and graduate student trainees in a plethora of training programs including counselling psychology (Constantine, 2001d; Pope-Davis, Reynolds, Dings, & Nielson, 1995; Sheu & Lent, 2007), social work (Green, et al., 2005), clinical psychology (D. S. L. Lee & Tracey,

2008; Neufeldt, et al., 2006), school counselling and school psychology (Holcomb-McCoy, 2001, 2004, 2005). There is, however, a dearth of literature pertaining to the self-perceived multicultural counselling competence of professional practising counsellors (Whitney, 2006). Most of relevant studies that used professional counsellors (or mental health practitioners) were conducted in the Western contexts such as the USA (Holcomb-McCoy, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999), Britain (Glockshuber, 2005), Australia (Khawaja, et al., 2009; Pelling, 2007), and New Zealand (Selvarajah, 2006). Thus, their findings may or may not be meaningful to professional counsellor populations in other cultural contexts such as Malaysia. The knowledge garnered from this research will have direct implications for the training and professional development of practitioners' multicultural competence in the field of professional counselling in the Malaysian context.

Holcomb-McCoy and Myers (1999) conducted a national survey, with the aid of a questionnaire named the Multicultural Counseling Competence and Training Survey (MCCTS), to assess perceived MCCs among 500 professional counsellors who were members of the ACA. They found five factors – awareness, knowledge, definitions, racial identity development, and skills – as constituents of MCCs. According to them, ‘this finding suggests that the Multicultural Competencies comprise more than the three dimensions proposed in the literature’ (Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999, p. 299). Other studies have also found more than three dimensions of MCC (Constantine & Ladany, 2001; Sadowsky, et al., 1994). Further examination of professional counsellors' perceptions of their multicultural competence and found that these American respondents perceived themselves to be most competent on the multicultural definitions and awareness factors. In contrast, the respondents perceived themselves to be the least

competent on the racial identity and knowledge dimensions. This pattern of results are similar to results from subsequent studies, which used 76 elementary school counsellors, 510 professional school counsellors, as study participants, respectively (Holcomb-McCoy, 2001, 2005).

Among a list of demographic variables (i.e., professional counsellors' work setting, educational level, ethnicity, gender, and age) examined in the American study, only ethnicity was found to be statistically significant and influenced the knowledge, awareness, racial identity, and skill factors of MCCs. Overall, although this research was conducted a decade ago in the USA context and the psychometric properties of the study instrument, the MCCTS, are largely untested, the findings are very relevant to inform the development and interpretation of the current research because relevant empirical studies on multicultural counselling in a specific cultural context other than the USA have been limited.

Correlates of perceived MCCs.

Previous studies have found support for the significant effect of differences in gender (Carter, 1990), ethnicity (Granello & Wheaton, 1998a, 1998b; Pope-Davis & Dings, 1995; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994), completion of multicultural courses (Castillo, et al., 2007; Holcomb-McCoy, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999), and participation in multicultural training activities (Sodowsky, et al., 1998) on perceived MCC. Although Carter (1990) found gender contributes to significant differences in perceived MCC, a more recent study by Robles-Piña and McPherson (2001) did not yield any statistical difference between gender, work setting, work credentials, ethnicity, age, language spoken, and years of experience and the MCI total score ($p < .05$). The

results were based on responses from 86 licensed psychologists (response rate of 34%) from a large metropolitan area in the USA context. This inconsistency in findings invites further examination between gender and perceived MCC.

Several studies conducted also in the USA context found that trainees and counsellors from ethnic minority groups (people of colour) in various professional fields generally perceived themselves to be more multiculturally competent than their peers from the dominant group (Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994; Pope-Davis, et al., 1995). However, in Lee and Tracey's (2008) study reviewed earlier, there were no significant differences in the general or multicultural case conceptualisation skills between trainees of colour and White trainees. The mixed findings invite further investigation of ethnicity as a factor in MCC research. Further examination of the predictive ability of ethnicity also generated mixed findings. For example, Pope-Davis et al. (1995) found ethnicity to significantly predict competence on the Awareness ($p < .01$) and Relationship ($p < .001$) subscales of the MCI for counselling psychology trainees. However, among the clinical psychology trainee sample, ethnicity was found to significantly predict competence on the Knowledge ($p < .01$) and Awareness ($p < .001$) subscales. This shows that the influence of ethnicity is less clear and in need of further research, especially when transporting knowledge to other cultural contexts.

Research studies exploring the relationship between multicultural education and training activities and self-perceived MCCs also generated inconsistent findings; even though in general most of these existing studies found multicultural training activities to significantly increase perceived MCCs (Holcomb-McCoy, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy &

Myers, 1999; Robles-Piña & McPherson, 2001; Sadowsky, et al., 1998). For example, Robles-Piña and McPherson (2001) found a moderate statistically significant relationship between completion of college semester courses (single course training) ($r=.39, p<.05$), participation in less than 4-hour workshops ($r=.40, p<.01$) and the total MCI score. In contrast, findings from Holcomb-McCoy (2001) revealed no significant differences between the perceived MCCs of counsellors who had taken multicultural counselling course and those who had not. Further examination of multicultural education and training variables revealed a moderate statistically significant relationship between participation in 2-day workshops ($r=.32, p<.05$), in less than 4-hour workshops ($r=.36, p<.05$) and Multicultural Awareness subscale of MCI (Robles-Piña & McPherson, 2001). In addition, infused courses (or courses integrated into curriculum) ($r=.35, p<.01$) were found to significantly relate to Multicultural Skills.

In term of multicultural experiences, training activities and counsellors' perceived MCCs, several studies found such experiences and training to significantly increase perceived multicultural competence (Constantine, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c; Holcomb-McCoy, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999). For example, Holcomb-McCoy (2005), who examined the perceived MCCs of 209 professional school counsellors by using the revised version of MCCTS (MCCTS-R; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999), found that there was a significant differences in participants' perceived MCCs in terms of whether they had taken an entry-level multicultural course or not. In particular, those who had taken and completed the multicultural course had significantly higher perceived MCCs on the Multicultural Knowledge, $F(19, 184)=2.81, p<.01$, and Multicultural Terminology, $F(4, 203)=2.42, p=.05$, two of the three subscales of MCCTS-R. Similar results were obtained by Constantine (2001c), whose findings

indicated that the number of formal multicultural courses completed contributed to significant positive variance to CCCI-R ratings ($p < .001$).

Surprisingly, in contrast, Holcomb-McCoy (2001), in her surveys with 76 elementary school counsellors using the MCCTS, did not find multicultural training or experience to significantly relate to counsellors' perceived MCCs. This finding raises concern regarding psychometric properties of the MCCTS, which have yet to be tested, and the use of small sample size in her study, which limits the generalisation of findings. In view of the inconsistency of findings in the previous studies, the contribution of training and experience to multicultural competence is still open for further examination.

Reviewing Multicultural Counselling Research in Contexts Other Than the USA

As mentioned earlier, empirical studies on multicultural counselling in a specific cultural context other than the USA have been limited. Only a small number of relevant studies have been found from Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. A comparative cross-cultural study exploring the nature of counselling in selected countries, including Malaysia, is also relevant to the current research (Bond et al., 2001), but the findings have been presented and interpreted using developed and developing countries as broad categories. Hence, it lacks emphasis on the role of culture and specific contexts. A study which evaluated the effectiveness of incorporating socio-cultural and religious aspects (i.e., religious-cultural psychotherapy or RCP) in the management of anxiety among Malay-Muslim patients was also relevant to the present research (Razali, Kassim, &

Khan, 2002), but it was in the discipline of psychiatry, which differs markedly from the Malaysian counselling profession in terms of practices, policies, ethics, governing Ministry and professional body. However, the results indicated that clients with a strong religious background gained benefits from RCP, suggesting a possible culture-match intervention for effectively working with Malaysian clients/patients in the Malaysian context. Is culture-match counselling the most effective approach for working with a diverse population of Malaysia?

In Britain, Glockshuber (2005) aimed to develop a UK instrument to measure counsellors' MCCs based on the American operationalisation of MCCs (Arredondo, et al., 1996). The study also aimed to investigate to what extent MCCs has an influence in counselling processes and interventions. The study used a mixed-methods design. The qualitative part of the study (semi-structured interviews) addressed the second aim, whereas, the quantitative part (surveys) hypothesised that participants who perceive themselves to be multiculturally competent would score high on cultural beliefs, cultural knowledge, and cultural skills. The participant counsellors were professionals who work at various organisations in UK, such as private practice, GP surgeries, counselling agencies, charities and young offenders/prison services. Grounded theory analysis identified 16-questions for the UK instrument: five items for assessing cultural beliefs and actual competence, 5 items for assessing cultural knowledge and cultural competence, and 6 items for assessing cultural skills and cultural competence. The main themes emerging from participants' responses on what is multicultural counselling were social classes, religion, patriotism and wealth. The findings from questionnaire data analysis partially supported the hypothesis because the data appeared to indicate that most of the participant counsellors were aware of the cultural ramifications with the

experiential context, which was based on their own socio-normative influence. This study is of paramount importance to the present research because it was also exploratory in nature using a mixed methods approach. However, the presence of a number of methodological limitations cautions international researchers to carefully address them in future research. Some of these limitations are:

1. The use of a small sample size in the survey part of the research (n=56), which limits the generalisation of the findings to the UK counsellor community and lacks statistical power;
2. the use of two different scales of measurement (i.e., 10-50 points for scoring cultural beliefs, cultural knowledge and cultural skills and 1-10 points for scoring cultural competence), which may have some difficulties in analysing and interpreting statistical data; and
3. The pre-selection of only three thematic areas (factors) as constituents of multicultural competence, which might have restricted some other important emerging factors from being identified.

These limitations have been considered and addressed in the present research.

Other research on culture-sensitive counselling has also gained considerable attention by British researchers and professionals in the field. Loewenthal and Rogers (2004) investigated how such counselling works and what its strengths and difficulties are in practice. They aimed to provide detailed descriptive material on the aims, functioning and achievements of culture-sensitive support groups, using four sources: (1) a key informant from each targeted group; (2) potential users; (3) users; and (4) professionals. The focus of the study was on groups that provide psychological and social support, either as a primary or secondary service, to the orthodox-Jewish

community in London. The methods used were semi-structured interviews and the interview schedule asked about the aims of each group organisation, how such aims are achieved, and in which respects they are being achieved. Their thematic analysis revealed seven themes and concerns, which were: admiration for the work of the groups; appreciation of the benefits of culture-sensitive services; concerns over confidentiality and stigma; concerns over finance and fund-raising; concerns about professionalism; the importance of liaison with rabbinic authorities; and the need for better dissemination of information. These themes represent the strengths and difficulties of providing culture-sensitive services in one community in a specific cultural context. This research is very relevant to the present study because it provides some insights pertaining to some of the potential challenges faced by professional counsellors when providing culture-sensitive services to a specific group of people in a specific cultural context. Although these findings cannot be generalised to other populations, because of the qualitative nature and cultural context of the study, and its primary focus on group counselling, it is expected that some of these themes might emerge in the present research as potential challenges in the provision of multicultural or culture-sensitive counselling to a Malaysian population. For example, concerns about confidentiality and stigma and concerns about professionalism might be some of the challenges faced by counsellors who practise multicultural counselling in Malaysia.

Another relevant study in the British context which has an impact on developing the methodology of the present research is the study on ethnicity and religious coping for mental distress in the field of psychiatry. Bhui, King, Dein, and O'Connor (2008) investigated the patterns of religious coping among six ethnic groups using a combination of a quantitative epidemiological survey with qualitative follow up in-

depth interviews. They argue that in order to provide religiously sensitive consultations, professionals need to know about and understand what constitutes religious coping, and then be able to identify which coping patterns and styles are helpful and why. Their methodology is relevant to the present research because it provides an alternative perspective and research approach to understand counsellors' multicultural competence based on patients' or clients' perspectives. Recent and previous studies on MCC have also used clients' perspectives but they used either a quantitative (i.e., surveys) or a purely qualitative (qualitative interviews and grounded theory) approach (Owen, Leach, Wampold, & Rodolfa, 2010; Pope-Davis et al., 2002, respectively).

In Australia, three relevant studies have been identified to inform the development of the present research (Khawaja, et al., 2009; Pelling, 2005, 2007). Pelling (2007) conducted a national survey which aimed to describe psychologists who advertised themselves in the Australian Yellow Pages as counsellors, thus providing a snapshot of advertised counselling psychologists in Australia. As part of her survey objectives, she aimed to explore Australian counsellors' self-perceived competence in working with (i) depression, (ii) anxiety, (iii) substance use, (iv) clients from non-English speaking backgrounds and Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander individuals, (v) clients who are same sex attracted (gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals), and (vi) clients using electronic mail and instant messaging. According to Pelling, self-perceived competence refers to 'psychologist self-identified comfort when working with the stated issue or population' (p.217). Her use of multiple mailed questionnaires to ensure a high response rate seems to be a creative method to collect data from a large sample size because she managed to increase the response rate of her surveys from 35.7% to 62.2%. Of particular interest to the present research is the findings on self-perceived

competence of the Australian counsellors in dealing with culture and diversity issues: Australian psychologists indicated only moderate comfort with counselling the non-English speaking background (NESB) and Indigenous and Torres Strait Island (TSI) individuals ($M=3.5$, $SD=1.2$) but a higher level of comfort was reported with counselling sexual orientation issues ($M=4.0$, $SD=1.1$). This finding indicates that Australian counsellors, as a group, perceived themselves to be multiculturally competent when working with minority populations. However, Pelling's (2007) commentary statement highlights the need for specialised multicultural training, especially in dealing with ethnic minority client populations. She stated, "Given that psychologists are not likely to have received training regarding such minority populations and their unique needs, the comfort level indicated may reflect a lack of awareness regarding the distinct needs presented by various multicultural groups" (p.223). This finding is consistent with previous research findings presented by Constantine (2001a, 2001b) and thus provides support for the importance of multicultural training for counsellors in a multicultural context. Counsellors' multicultural education and training will be further investigated in the present research.

The most recent study found in the Australian context is a scale development study by Khawaja et al. (2009). This study argues for the limitations of existing MCC instruments, and hence cautions other international scholars to contextualize Western-based instruments even for use in other Western contexts. It aimed to develop a culturally relevant scale named the Multicultural Mental Health Awareness Scale (MMHAS) to assess the multicultural competencies of 268 mental health professionals in Australia. The study was theoretically based on previous literature on multicultural competency (D. W. Sue, et al., 1992; D. W. Sue, et al., 1982). In order to validate the

instrument under development, the MAKSS was chosen based on its psychometric properties (D'Andrea, et al., 1991; Ponterotto, Rieger, Barrett, & Sparks, 1994).

Previous researchers have addressed the issue of cultural relevance when involving assessment instruments developed in different contexts (Andary, Stolk, & Klimidis, 2003; Lonner & Ibrahim, 2008). Although Australia is still predominantly in the Western region and the vast majority of its people are Anglo-Celtic, significant demographic changes have happened since 1901 which make Australia a unique multicultural context. This study highlights the need to explore the self-perceived multicultural competence of professionals in specific cultural contexts using a culturally relevant assessment instrument. Results from factor analysis using principal components analysis with oblimin rotation revealed a three-factor structure of MCCs as 'the most meaningful and parsimonious' model (Khawaja, et al., 2009, p. 72) and the extracted components were

1. multicultural counselling awareness (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$), focuses on the professionals' awareness of the impact that culture has on psychotherapy with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) individuals;
2. multicultural counselling knowledge (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$), focuses on the professionals' knowledge and understanding of Australia's policies and services for various CALD individuals; and
3. multicultural counselling skills (Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$), focuses on the professionals' abilities to develop a culturally sensitive treatment plan, especially with CALD individuals.

These components were in line with Sue et al.'s (1982) model of MCC and addressing the needs of CALD populations has become the focus of current major textbooks in multicultural counselling (e.g., Cornish, Schreier, Nadkarni, Metzger, & Rodolfa, 2010;

Pedersen, et al., 2008). Thus, it is anticipated that similar results would be observed in the present research.

In New Zealand, Selvarajah's (2006) study on the perceptions of 140 mental health professionals (response rate of 35%) in Auckland is highly relevant to the present research, especially in developing the theoretical/conceptual framework of the study. The study set out to examine several dimensions that relate to cross-cultural counselling in New Zealand such as the nature of existing counselling services, perceptions of mental health professionals regarding cross-cultural counselling, the relationship between professionals' perceptions on cross-counselling and other factors (i.e., professional status, ethnicity, and ability to speak a second language), and the nature of such relationship in its attempt to address the need for cross-counselling in the 'mental hospital' system (Selvarajah, 2006, p. 57). The study is exploratory and highlights the issues and concepts regarding cross-cultural counselling in an increasingly multicultural society in Auckland. The study utilised a single survey questionnaire which sought mental health professionals' perceptions on issues and concepts of cross-cultural counselling. The questionnaire was administered in the nine public psychiatric units in Auckland. Results revealed that the New Zealand mental health professionals (i.e., 73.4% were New Zealand Europeans) perceived cross-cultural relationships as being important to their clients, but they also perceived counsellors to be culturally encapsulated. Professional status, ethnicity, and ability to speak a second language may have influenced the participants' desire to learn more about cross-cultural counselling. Although the study is located in the discipline of medicine (psychiatry), used various mental health professionals (i.e., psychiatrists, psychologists, counsellors, nurse practitioners, and social workers) as study populations, and focussed on the need for

cultural awareness primarily within the mental hospital system; it provides a valuable empirical framework on how to seek answers for the present research questions.

However, the use of a single survey questionnaire as the only data collection method in the study may limit the collection of descriptive information such as why the New Zealand mental health professionals perceived cross-cultural relationships are important and how they engage with culture and diversity in the cross-cultural counselling practices in New Zealand.

To summarise, some international researchers have investigated the adequacy, acceptance, challenges, and future needs of the existing multicultural counselling services, while others have explored the practice details and self-perceived competence in several practice areas. There are also some studies that have explored the dimensions and constituents of cultural variables such as ethnicity and religion. These context-specific studies are relevant to the present research because they not only help to refine the research topic but help to develop the most appropriate methodology by taking into consideration the reviews, critiques, and limitations of previous literature and research.

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the theoretical development, practice, and potential challenges regarding multicultural counselling, it is necessary to review Constantine, Melincoff, Barakett, Torina, and Warren (2004), who gave a significant insight into the first-hand experiences and thoughts of multicultural counselling scholars. Their study, which is qualitative in nature, aimed at uncovering the critical elements of effective counselling for all clients, by examining the experiences and perceptions of 12 multicultural counselling scholars with regard to the field of multicultural counselling in the USA context. The study adopted Hill,

Thompson, and Williams' (1997) consensual qualitative research (CQR) methodology, which had been used to explore other topics in counselling. This approach involves the development of a semi-structured interview protocol based on a thorough review of the literature related to multicultural counselling. Pilot interviews were conducted in order to modify and refine the interview protocol. Based on a qualitative analysis, the results revealed that many of the participants noted that aspects of being a multiculturally competent counsellor included open-mindedness, flexibility, a commitment to the field, active listening, knowledge and awareness of cultural issues, skilfulness in making cultural interventions, commitment to social justice issues, self-awareness, and exposure to broad and diverse life experiences. Most of the participants also stated that a challenge associated with being a multicultural counsellor was colleagues', institutions', and others' resistance towards and lack of support for multicultural counselling issues. These findings are highly relevant to the present study because it is predicted that some of the themes on defining multicultural counselling, competency of multicultural counsellors, and potential challenges of being a multicultural counsellor might be further elucidated in the present study. Indeed, Sue and D. Sue's (2008) argument on the role of socio-political power in counselling would be a powerful tool for explaining some of the findings discussed earlier and emergent findings in the present research.

A cross-cultural study, which informs the development of the present research, is a comparative study exploring the nature and process of counselling in 15 selected countries including Malaysia (Bond, et al., 2001). The study was specifically conducted to explore various aspects regarding counselling in specific cultural contexts such as the kinds of help available and the nature of counselling activities. This study adopted a survey design using questionnaires in a semi-structured interview format. The interview

questions revolve around a presented vignette regarding a series of stressful events confronting an average income family in an urban area. The results suggest that counselling as an activity and a process may be taking place under different names in the different cultures in the study. The findings cast some light on our understanding regarding counselling across cultures and give a glimpse of the nature of counselling between developing and developed countries. The way the data have been categorised restricts understanding regarding the true nature of multicultural counselling in Malaysia because the context-specific findings on Malaysian counselling have been grouped under developing countries. This methodology limits the richness of the data and ignores the uniqueness of specific cultural contexts.

In view of the overall discussion thus far, it seems that not only counselling and counselling psychology disciplines are interested in a multicultural perspective, but current research in medicine also focuses on providing patient-centred culturally sensitive health care to patients from diverse backgrounds (Herman, et al., 2007). This development indicates that the concept and practice of multicultural counselling have gained considerable importance among researchers and practitioners across disciplines (Egan, 2007a, 2007b) and across borders (Pedersen, et al., 2008). In Malaysia, there are efforts towards providing culture-sensitive counselling to Malaysian clients. However, such efforts have not gained momentum due to the presence of context-specific issues in the Malaysian counselling profession, which will be reviewed in the next chapter. However, a substantial number of studies on culture and diversity have been done in the field of Malaysian psychiatry.

For example, Razali et al. (2002) investigated the effectiveness of incorporating socio-cultural and religious aspects into the psychotherapy of generalised anxiety disorder (GAD) among Muslim patients (with different religious backgrounds) of ethnic Malay origin. They adopted a randomised controlled study to compare the relative efficacy of religiously oriented psychotherapy for religious and non-religious patients for a 26-week period of progress monitoring. Eighty-five religious and 80 non-religious patients with GAD were randomly assigned to the study or control group. Both groups received a standard treatment for GAD, but the study group received additional religious-cultural psychotherapy. Treatment outcomes were monitored and assessed periodically for six months. Results revealed that religious patients receiving religious-cultural psychotherapy showed significantly more rapid improvement in anxiety symptoms than those in the control group at the fourth and twelfth week. The difference, however, became non-significant at the end of six months. The findings of the study suggest that Malay Muslim patients with a strong religious background experience the efficacy of religious-cultural psychotherapy in addition to the standard treatment of GAD. This finding has implications for counselling Malay-Muslim clients, which are the ethnic-religious majority group in Malaysia.

However, the findings of Razali et al.'s (2002) study may not be generalised to the Malaysian counselling profession because the nature of both types of helping is perceived differently in Malaysia. Psychiatry and psychotherapy are mostly offered to clients in the hospital settings, focus on serious problems associated with intrapsychic, internal, and personal issues and conflicts, and generally use a medical model rather than growth-developmental model. On the other hand, counselling is generally perceived as an interpersonal relationship between the counsellor and the client, a

theory-based process, handled professionally by trained people, guided by ethical and legal standards, and focused on helping or giving care to people who need to resolve developmental and situational problems (Gladding, 2000; Salim, 2004; Salim & Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2005). In Malaysia, counselling tends to happen in outpatient settings such as in schools, rehabilitation centres, and universities, whereas psychotherapy tends to take place in both inpatient and outpatient settings. In addition, there are other distinct differences between the two types of helping in terms of the service providers, policies, ethics, governing Ministry and professional body. Therefore, there is an urgent need to generate knowledge of Malaysian counsellors' understandings related to multicultural counselling and the state of their perceived MCCs when working with a diverse client population.

Methodological Issues in MCC Research

There are also some issues and concerns regarding the appropriate methodology and methods for the present study. As the development of multicultural counselling as a specialty area follows a historical path, so too does the nature of scientific progress in multicultural counselling itself (Ponterotto & Mallinckrodt, 2007). Worthington et al.'s (2007) 20-year content analysis showed that the vast majority of empirical research in multicultural counselling were quantitative (90.1%), whereas, qualitative and mixed-methods designs each accounted for only 4.9 % of the studies in total. One plausible reason for this is because most counselling psychologists and counsellors were trained in the post positivist research paradigm, associated with quantitative methods (Cokley & Awad, 2008; Ponterotto, 2005). However, since the late 20th century, there was a growing interest among researchers to use a purely qualitative or a mixed-methods design (Constantine, Anderson, Berkel, Caldwell, & Utsey, 2005; Haverkamp, 2005;

Haverkamp, Morrow, & Ponterotto, 2005). Since then, qualitative methodology in multicultural research has proliferated and among the significant evidences of its development is the growth in publications using such an approach and the increased acceptance of its value (e.g., Berríos & Lucca, 2006; Chang & Berk, 2009; Constantine, Melincoff, et al., 2004; Pope-Davis, et al., 2002; Shelton & Delgado-Romero, 2011).

There are some supports regarding the need for this paradigm shift, that is, from a quantitative perspective to a qualitative and mixed method perspective in current counselling research. For instance, in view of the scarcity of qualitative research methods in the previous literature, Berríos & Lucca (2006) highlight the visibility of qualitative research methodology in counselling studies since the past 10 years. Results from a content analysis of articles published between 1997 and 2002 in 4 professional journals in the field (i.e., *Counseling and Values*, *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *Professional School Counseling*, and *The Counseling Psychologist*) reveal that qualitative research represents 1/6 of all the articles published. The findings from both Berríos and Lucca (2006) and Worthington, et al. (2007) imply that more research in qualitative or mixed methods in nature is highly recommended in the current counselling research, especially in the field of multicultural counselling. Similarly, when outlining a future research direction for the multicultural counselling movement based on a 40-year (1967 to 2007) review of multicultural counselling outcome research, D'Andrea and Heckman (2008a) stated, "it is recommended that multicultural counseling researchers consider the utility of combining quantitative and qualitative research strategies when conducting future outcome research with persons from diverse cultural groups and backgrounds" (p.361). Therefore, communities, faculty, students, policymakers, administrators, and practitioners are encouraged to do more qualitative or

mixed-method research and should explore the means to collaborate in ways that may contribute to the advancement and development of the field (Yeh & Inman, 2007).

Due to the pressing need for more qualitative research and mixed-method paradigms in the recent and current multicultural counselling research literature, this research has elected to use a mixed methods approach. The reasons for choosing such an approach is because (1) it matches with the research questions of interest; (2) the nature of such approach can generate not only a general picture of the phenomenon under study but also meaningful and detailed description of the process of translating knowledge into practice; (3) it helps to expand my knowledge and skills regarding both quantitative and qualitative data analysis and interpretation of both types of data in a context-specific culture; and (3) it suits the current trend in multicultural counselling research.

Summary and Concluding Comments

To summarise, major empirical studies reviewed were from the USA context and these studies have used samples among the counsellors, trainees and community from the ethnic majority/minority groups (i.e., Euro-American or White, African American, Latino American, Asian American, Native American, and others) or International students in the USA educational programs, and immigrants. Only a small number of studies were found from other multicultural countries that provide context-specific findings on multicultural counselling other than those from the USA. Most studies are from counselling or counselling psychology fields and some others are from psychiatry, health care, and social work. Topics discussed in the previous literature were quite diverse but they address the issue on how to better address diversity and

multicultural issues in the service delivery and how to better educate and train counsellors to be multiculturally competent. Research designs mostly used in the previous studies on MCC are surveys. However, some scholars and researchers have highlighted the need for more purely qualitative or mixed methods designs in the current and future multicultural counselling research.

Despite the rapid development in MCC, existing empirical studies on MCC have notable limitations including lack of external validity, small sample sizes, heavy reliance on surveys for collecting data, on convenience samples such as trainees as study participants, and the use of MCC instruments with potentially weak psychometric properties. In addition, some findings from previous research are not definitive. For example, studies that explore the influence and predictive ability of gender, ethnicity, and multicultural training and experiences, and perceived MCCs generate inconsistent results. Therefore, studies that explore the contribution of demographic, training, and work-related variables on the perceived MCCs of counsellors are still needed.

Previous literature has demonstrated that the context where counsellors and clients live and the socio-political factors influence the way they view themselves and the world. However, the majority of previous studies have been directed to develop MCC scales that can generate information on the dimensions of MCC, and to further explore the predictive abilities of counsellors' demographic, training, and work characteristics on their perceived MCCs. Only a very small number of studies explored the ways counsellors address and incorporate culture and diversity in the counselling process with culturally different client. Unfortunately, these studies' primary focus was on counsellors' case conceptualisation ability. Therefore, there is a need to investigate

how a multiculturally competent counsellor works. In particular, how do multiculturally competent counsellors engage with a culturally different client in counselling sessions, how do they engage with issues on culture or diversity, and how do they respond to power issues associated with ethnic politics. However, there are questions regarding how much is cultural knowledge/information needed and how much is skills and process that need to be updated in order to be multiculturally competent in working with diverse clients. This issue calls for research in the area of MCC in specific cultural contexts which has implications for counselling practice and training.

Since counselling occurs in a specific cultural context, increased awareness and understanding of clients' cultural context can also promote ethically correct behaviours such as avoid doing harm to clients, prevent making mistaken assumptions about clients' problems, and promote culturally competent practice. Although it is not always possible to have a theory that is workable to all populations in a multicultural context, it is always possible to investigate counsellors' understanding and practice of multicultural counselling in a specific cultural context. Therefore, this study adopts a multicultural perspective with the assumption that some aspects of counselling are universally shared but some others are culture-specific and worth exploring in a specific cultural context such as Malaysia. Although current development in contemporary counselling theories and practices have considered the importance of culture when conceptualizing theory, and conducting research and practice, one might still question the external validity and the application of the existing multicultural counselling models in the specific cultural context of Malaysia. Therefore, it is very important to explore the understandings and practices regarding multicultural counselling in Malaysia to ensure their effectiveness when working with culturally diverse Malaysian clients. The next

chapter reviews the development in the Malaysian counselling profession to identify the current issues and problems in the practice of counselling, particularly multicultural counselling, in the specific cultural context of Malaysia.

CHAPTER THREE

Understanding the Malaysian Counselling Profession, Literature and Research: The Movement towards Multiculturalism

Introduction

As the field of Malaysian counselling moves further into the 21st century, cultural issues in counselling have increasingly gained recognition as important considerations in a counselling process (See & Ng, 2010; See, et al., 2009; Sumari & Jalal, 2008). Despite some attempts to incorporate cultural variables in the counselling approach, there are still current challenges and context-specific issues in the contemporary Malaysian counselling that need to be considered and carefully understood. This chapter reviews some Malaysian-related literature and empirical research to understand the current status and development of Malaysian counselling in meeting the needs of culturally diverse Malaysian clients. The main objective is to highlight the need to research multicultural counselling in Malaysia so that the education and training of counsellors and current practices can be improved. The chapter will first present a brief overview of the Malaysian counselling profession to determine its current status. Then, the development of policies, regulations, governmental legislation, services available, and the education and training of counsellors in Malaysia will be reviewed using a multicultural lens. The important aspects to highlight in this review are the emergence of several specialties (areas of

practice) in counselling, and the minimal focus on diversity and multicultural issues in the counselling policies, practice and training of counsellors. Current issues and problems regarding the practice of counselling and the training of counsellors are also discussed in the hope of identifying some aspects of counselling that need improvement via research substantiation. Lastly, this chapter highlights current attempts to incorporate multicultural issues when counselling diverse Malaysian clients and the challenges arising from these attempts.

Overview of Malaysian Counselling Profession: Then and Now

More than 20 years ago, Scorzelli (1987a) and Lloyd (Lloyd, 1987b) observed that counselling was a rapidly emerging profession in Malaysia. The former argued that the only impetus behind the professionalism of Malaysian counselling was the existence of the Malaysian Counselling Association (Persatuan Kaunseling Malaysia or PERKAMA), which was founded in 1980 by a group of college and school counsellors (Malaysian Counselling Association, 2008). They also reported that the counsellor education and training programs showed a promising future because of their commitment to offering suitable counselling courses to meet the needs of the Malaysian populations at that time, such as the need to tackle the country's growing problem of drug abuse, academic and psychosocial problems in school, college and university settings. Of particular importance to this research are four of their observations.

The first states that "most of the faculty attached to...counselling programs were educated in the United States and have doctorates in counsellor education. Thus, the

counselling courses that are offered bear a striking resemblance to the counsellor education programs in the United States” (Scorzelli, 1987a, p. 239). This highlights concerns on the culturally relevant model of counselling in Malaysia.

The second involves a comment that all psychological tests available in Malaysia are Western in origin and lack local norms. This highlights issues on language and cultural bias when adopting and adapting these tests in Malaysia.

The third lies in the notion that there was a lack of local textbooks used in the counsellor education programs because most counselling textbooks are imported from the West. This highlights some concerns regarding a lack of context-specific resources to help counsellors and trainees to understand and meaningfully practice counselling in Malaysia.

Lastly, there was a great challenge to develop a “Malaysian” counselling approach due to the religious and racial diversity of the Malaysian population. This highlights the need to explore the current understanding and practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia so that the knowledge garnered from the research can contribute towards generating Malaysian counselling theory and practice for working with diverse Malaysian clients in the specific socio-political context of Malaysia.

At present, counselling as a profession is no longer an issue in the Malaysian context (R. Ismail & Othman, 2001; Salim & Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2005; See & Ng, 2010). The availability of key defining criteria of a profession – specialised knowledge, intensive and continuous training, professional bodies, licensure and certification, and

ethical standards (Feit & Lloyd, 1990; Johari, 2001) - justify that Malaysian counselling is indeed a profession. In Malaysia, there are more than 20 counsellor education programmes developed since the 1980s that provide specialised education and training to guidance teacher-counsellors, in-service non-school counsellors, or pre-service counsellors (Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2008; Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia, 2008). There are also three major professional bodies, which help to improve the status of mental health and counselling services in Malaysia: The PERKAMA, the Malaysian Psychological Association (PSIMA), and the Malaysian Mental Health Association (MMHA). There is also a code of ethics set by the PERKAMA as a hallmark of a profession because of the self-regulating aspect for practising counsellors (Malaysian Counselling Association, 2008). The first PERKAMA Code of Ethics was introduced in 1994 and the revised version was published in 2008. In addition, since the introduction of the Counsellors Act (580) in 1998 (Lembaga Penyelidikan Undang-Undang Malaysia, 1998), there is a specialised body called the Malaysia Board of Counsellors or *Lembaga Kaunselor Malaysia* (LKM), which functions as a registrar and an accreditation body for the licensing and certification of counsellors, and accreditation of counsellor education programmes in Malaysia (Lembaga Kaunselor Malaysia, 2010a). Therefore, Malaysian counsellors do have a strong professional identity (Othman, Che Din, & Sipon, 2000) and counselling has been widely recognised as a profession in Malaysia and in the Asia-Pacific region.

Now that the field of counselling has established the structure of professional standards, the debate for the next several years should concern clarifying the behaviours that individual counsellors must exhibit to be part of the profession and to work effectively and ethically with culturally diverse Malaysian society in the specific socio-

political context of Malaysia. These include addressing issues concerning the awareness and understanding of culture and diversity, the state of multicultural competency of Malaysian counsellors, and their individualised approaches when working with culturally diverse Malaysian clients. These issues have tremendous impact on the service delivery of counselling practice and the education and training of counsellors in Malaysia because they imply a set of standards and guidelines for judging the quality of multiculturally competent practices among Malaysian counsellors when working with diverse Malaysian clients. Unfortunately, as discussed in Chapter One, such guidelines have not yet been formulated for use by the Malaysian counselling profession. I argue that counselling services cannot achieve their professional standards in the eyes of multicultural society unless counsellors conform to the code of ethics and become multicultural trained professionals who can deliver multiculturally competent counselling services to clients. Therefore, this study is important to generate quality information for improvement and to contribute to the literature on multicultural counselling in specific cultural contexts. The following highlight the need for a multicultural focus in the current counselling policies, regulations and governmental legislations, the service delivery, and the education and training of counsellors in Malaysia.

Malaysian Counselling Policy, Regulations and Governmental Legislations

Counselling in Malaysia, like many other countries such as the USA, Philippines, and Japan, has its root in education, especially in the guidance movement (Othman, 2001a; Salim & Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2005). Therefore, the vast majority of its

policies, regulations and governmental legislations were first introduced and enforced by the Ministry of Education (MOE). One of the starting historical events for the profession of counselling in Malaysia was the MOE 1963 policy to have guidance (whose definition includes counselling) in schools. With continuing efforts and support from the MOE, guidance and counselling in schools became more transparent as it was translated in various circulars, official reports, and educational documents. So, during the 1960s and 1970s, counselling became more recognised in the Malaysian education system. At that point in time, it seemed that counselling was still not fully understood in Malaysia because it was still embedded in the education orientation and there had been no documented evidence that place more emphasis on culture and diversity in the provision of counselling services in the school settings.

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed several historical events that led to the emergence of counselling as a profession. Besides the formation of PERKAMA in 1982, PSIMA in 1988 and MMHA in 1967, the first issue of the Malaysian counselling official journal, titled *Jurnal PERKAMA* was published in 1984. This had encouraged counsellors to branch out their areas of services to not only include counselling practice but also research and training. The launch of a national mission called *Vision 2020* (Malaysia Economic Planning Unit, 2009c) in 1991 placed more emphasis on the role of counsellors, among other mental health professionals, in nation building and its implementation encourages a consideration for multiculturalism. The vision is a plan to build a fully developed, knowledge-rich nation by the year 2020 by taking into consideration the complexity of its own socio-political dynamics and cultural aspects. With this framework, Malaysia envisions to become a fully developed country in a holistic manner: economically, politically, socially, spiritually, psychologically, and

culturally. This has significant implications for the Malaysian counselling profession and the present research because the nine strategic challenges centre on nation building. The most obvious implication for counsellors and other mental health professionals is to help Malaysia in overcoming its second challenge (i.e., creating a psychologically liberated, secure and developed Malaysian society) and fifth challenge (i.e., establishing a matured liberal and tolerant society). In particular, the fifth challenge was elaborated further by the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, His Excellency YAB Dato' Seri Dr Mahathir Mohammad, in a speech to the Malaysian Business Council. He said, "the fifth challenge that we have always faced is the challenge of establishing a mature, liberal, and tolerant society in which Malaysians of all colours and creeds are free to practice and profess their customs, cultures and religious belief and yet feeling that they belong to one nation" (Malaysia Economic Planning Unit, 2009b; Prime Minister's Office of Malaysia, 2009). This highlights the need for all mental health professionals to be culturally sensitive and multiculturally competent when working with culturally diverse Malaysian clients across gender, ethnicity, religion, age, and other diversity factors. The Vision also indicates the government's support for multiculturalism.

Kod Etika Kaunselor (1994).

In 1994, the first ethical principles and standards of practice was developed by PERKAMA (and its revised version was published in 2008) and was known as *Kod Etika Kaunselor* [Counsellors' Code of Ethics]. This code became the first documented evidence that highlighted the need for MCC in the service delivery of counselling in Malaysia. For example, in Part A (Counsellors' responsibilities towards clients) item 3 and 7 clearly stated that counsellors must understand and respect the socio-cultural backgrounds of their clients, and avoid discrimination of clients based on their race or

ethnicity, gender, religion, status, ideology, physical disability, mental or other discriminating factors (Persatuan Kaunseling Malaysia, 1994). Even in research, the code requires counsellors to ensure that the use of certain techniques match with the clients' cultures, scientific values, and education. These requirements imply that Malaysian counsellors should be multiculturally competent, but there were no specific documented guidelines and standards for judging multiculturally competent counsellors in the practice and training aspects of counselling in Malaysia. This differs from the USA context, where the guidelines and standards for cultural competence in the practice and training aspects of counselling had been extensively developed and revised for several times and made readily available to American counsellors (American Psychological Association, 2003; Arredondo, et al., 1996; D. W. Sue, et al., 1992). In fact, these standards have been formally endorsed by the American Counseling [sic.] Association (ACA) and the American Psychological Association (APA), and numerous MCC concepts have been infused into the 2005 ACA Code of Ethics to highlight the importance of becoming a culturally competent counselling professional in today's globalised world (American Counseling Association, 2005; American Psychological Association, 2003, 2010; D'Andrea & Heckman, 2008a; Pack-Brown, et al., 2008; Watson, Herlihy, & Pierce, 2006). Therefore, there is a need to investigate the understanding and practices of multicultural counselling in Malaysia in order to assist in the development of Malaysian guidelines and standards for evaluating multiculturally competent practices.

In 1996, the importance of counselling services became more obvious when the MOE issued several circular letters to ask the principals and headmasters to appoint full-time counsellors at their schools and to strengthen the functions of guidance and

counselling services at school levels. The MOE (under the leadership of the former Minister of Education who is currently the Prime Minister of Malaysia, His Excellency YAB Dato' Seri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak) requested every school to appoint a number of counsellors to make a counsellor-student ratio of one counsellor for every 500 students. However, this ratio has become a great challenge to the Malaysian counselling profession because there is a lack of “qualified counsellors in the schools, hence not all full-time guidance counsellors appointed are adequately trained for their job functions” (R. Ismail & Othman, 2001; Othman, 2001a, p. 20; Salim & Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2005).

In 1997, the Malaysian government implemented a national level affirmative action on Mental Health Policy, which led to the birth of mental health counselling as specialty in Malaysia. The Ministry of Health developed the National Mental Health Policy (1997) that is quite comprehensive and provides policy guidelines on mental health issues. The objectives of the policy are three-fold: (a) To provide a basis in developing strategies and direction to those involved in any planning and implementation towards improving mental health and well-being of the entire population; (b) To improve mental health services for populations at risk of developing psychosocial problems; and (c) To improve the psychiatric services for the mentally disordered in the provision of care and protection by the family, community and relevant agencies (Haque, 2005). This policy sparked efforts to promote mental health education from 1997 to 1998 to the general public. One of the major impacts of the affirmative action on mental health was to raise the status of counselling and to bring professionalism into the practice of counselling.

Counsellors Act 580 (1998).

In 1998, The Ministry of National Unity and Community Development, with the help and cooperation of higher educational institutions, government agencies and professional organisations such as the PERKAMA and PSIMA, forwarded a memorandum to the cabinet minister proposing that the counselling profession to be recognised as a professional service. This resulted in the enactment of the Counsellors Act (580) 1998 which came into effect on 1st December 1998. This Act also marks the recognition of Malaysian counselling as a profession in Malaysia, which place more emphasis on the ethical-and-legal responsibility of counsellors in their service delivery and training.

The Counsellors Act (Act 580) 1998 was a significant milestone in the Malaysian counselling profession. The act provides the legal and social framework for the registration and practice of counsellors in Malaysia. It covers rulings on the Malaysian Counsellors Advisory Council, the Board of Counsellors functions and operations (registration, certification and licensure), disciplinary proceedings for violation of rules, offences and penalties, and miscellaneous issues such as premises inspections and examination. The Counsellors Act has three main objectives. The first objective is to maintain professionalism as well as to guarantee a high professional standard. The second objective is to protect clients and the general public from malpractice counsellors. The last objective is to regulate the qualifications of counsellors to determine whether a person is fit to be registered and to hold a practising license. According to this Act, ‘counsellor’ is defined as a person who provides counselling services for a prescribed fee or any other consideration. With this definition, people who identified themselves as counsellors and would like to practise counselling

must fulfil certain requirements. The requirements for registration and practising certificates (i) states that no person shall practice or take up employment as a counsellor, use the title ‘registered counsellor’, or display any sign, card, unless he is registered (section 22, subsection (1) in Part IV); and (ii) requires a counsellor to have a practising certificate (section 23, subsection (1)). The requirement has one exception, that is, it does not apply to any health professional or any company, society or local authority providing healthcare services.

In order to ensure the Counsellors Act (580) is understood and complied with by the Malaysian counsellors, the Board of Counsellors was established with the following functions:

1. To oversee the provision of counselling services;
2. To evaluate the need for counselling services in Malaysia;
3. To regulate the training of counsellors and determine the types and levels of counselling to be made available in Malaysia;
4. To determine the qualifications entitling a person to be registered under this Act;
5. To determine the standard of counselling training programmes;
6. To make recommendations to the Government in relation to the standard of counselling services;
7. To register qualified counsellors;
8. To regulate the fees which can be charged by a registered counsellor for his counselling services;
9. To appoint members of the Board to sit on any board, committee or body formed for any purpose affecting the counselling profession;

10. To regulate the conduct of the counselling profession, including prescribing the code of ethics for the counselling profession, and
11. To do such other things as may be necessary to enable it to carry out its functions effectively.

Malaysia was one of the first nations in the South-East Asian and Australasian region to have an act to regulate the profession. Act 580 may be well developed and clearly written legislation, but its implementation has not only overlooked the importance of multicultural competence in service and training delivery of counselling in Malaysia but also has much room for improvement (to speed up the process of registration and licensure of counsellors, to provide continuous ‘add-on’ training to those counsellors who are less qualified to be registered, to develop comprehensive guidelines on multicultural education, training, research, practice, and organizational change for Malaysian counsellors, among many others). Ironically, the Malaysian counsellors’ code of ethics has implied the need for this competency since 1994. However, such a requirement has not yet being translated in the government regulations for registration and licensure. This reflects a lack of commitment of the Malaysian counselling profession to promote multiculturalism and upgrade the quality of counselling practice. This also poses great challenges for counsellors because they do not have specific standards to engage in self-assessment and self-reflection to regulate their practices.

Mental Health Act (2001).

Since the Act does not apply to practising psychiatrists and clinical psychologists, or other health professionals providing healthcare services, programs and

activities related to mental health, which were developed and further accelerated in the late 1990s and early part of the new millennium, were not well-communicated and centralised among these professionals. Another reason lies on the notion that psychiatrists, psychologists and counsellors have different professional governing bodies, ministries, and policies. As a result, the vast majority of the Malaysian public were unaware of the existence of such programs (Haque, 2005; Salim, 2004) and this could be due to a lack of interdisciplinary collaboration among mental health professionals in Malaysia because mental health is associated with medical community agencies only (Haque, 2005). This led to the introduction of Mental Health Act in 2001 which encompasses detailed policy guidelines for the delivery of mental health services in Malaysia, which includes counselling services (Haque, 2005). The Act has 12 parts (94 sections) which mainly include administrative procedures, rules and regulations of hospital-related (includes public and private hospitals, psychiatric hospitals, psychiatric nursing homes, and community mental health centres) management, facilities, services, care, treatment and rehabilitation of patients especially those mentally disordered people. This development, along with the existing policy of the Counsellors Act, has upgraded the status of mental health professionals and mental health literacy in Malaysia. However, with this rapid development, the profession of counselling faces more pressing challenges for advocacy and effective implementation of the existing policies.

Standards and qualifications for counsellor training (2003).

In 2003, LKM published a booklet on the ‘minimal’ standards for counsellor training to monitor the adequacy of the counsellor education curriculum for the purposes of counsellor registration and licensure. The contents resemble the 2001

American-based standards formulated by the council for accreditation of counselling and related educational programs (CACREP). The curriculum for the Malaysian counsellor education programme has eight common core areas, which resembles the USA model: (1) Human growth and development; (2) social and cultural foundation; (3) the helping relationship; (4) group theory and application; (5) lifestyle and career development; (6) appraisal of the individual; (7) research and evaluation; and (8) professional orientation. The social and cultural foundation provides guidelines for developing multicultural counselling courses. The objective is to determine whether the counselling programme has helped the students recognize the effect of the following six specific issues on clients in their particular counselling setting: (i) Gender roles and factors influencing role development and change; (ii) changing economic roles and implications for a changing society including sources of conflict and methods of conflict resolution; (iii) differing lifestyles; (iv) racism; (v) ageism; and (vi) major societal concerns such as stress, person abuse and alcohol and drug abuse. These multicultural courses are *included* in the counsellor education programs in Malaysia. Yet, the vast majority of counsellor education programs in the USA, Australia, and other multicultural contexts have included and infused multicultural principles in the training of counsellors (Arredondo & Arciniega, 2001; Castillo, et al., 2007; Smith, et al., 2006). The fact that the allocated credit hours for these courses are 6 (out of 120) and 3 (out of 48) hours for each Bachelor and Masters programs, respectively (Lembaga Kaunselor Malaysia, 2003) confirmed the comments made by one Malaysian counselling scholar (Emeritus Prof. Dato' Dr Amir Awang, private communication, December 8, 2009),

1. Counselling programs in Malaysian universities have not addressed adequately and deliberately multicultural aspects;

2. Other degree programs too seem to overlook the importance of multiculturalism and the need to ‘educate’ every students in this aspect;
3. An urgent need to look into the matter and to rectify the deficiency in light of 1Malaysia. (Note: 1Malaysia or ‘One Malaysia’ is the current national mission to unite the culturally diverse people of Malaysia and its main motto is “1Malaysia: People First, Performance Now”)

To address these comments, therefore, it was timely to conduct this research.

Counselling continued to get the government support via the Ninth Malaysian Plan or RMK9 (Malaysia Economic Planning Unit, 2009a). RMK9 is the first of three five-year blueprints for the National Mission, encapsulating policy direction and programmes, which are aimed at delivering the mission’s philosophy and thrust for 2006-2010 period. Among the five thrusts outlined in the Mission, thrust two has a direct implication for counsellors and the counselling profession: To raise the capacity for knowledge and innovation and nurture a ‘first class mentality’ (Malaysia Economic Planning Unit, 2009a, p. 13). To translate this objective into a plan of action, RMK9 emphasises the quality of the nation’s human capital as the determinant of Malaysia’s future success as a knowledge-based economy. This means that the government attempts to promote balance between material growth and societal development. As urged by the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato’ Seri Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi, in the Foreword to RMK9,

Malaysia will need to move away from the notion that it is a nation with ‘first class infrastructure, but third class mentality’. We will need to adopt a holistic approach to human capital development, encompassing not only knowledge and skills, but also ethical values, progressive mindset, and cultural awareness (p.2).

This highlights the need for a planned and systematic development of counselling services. RMK9 also has become a national framework to train counsellors to be multiculturally competent to contribute to enhancing human capital, women and development, empowering youth for the future, and fostering family and community development.

To summarise, the policies, regulations and governmental legislations reviewed above have shown that counselling as a profession has strong governmental support in Malaysia. The ongoing support from the government and continuous efforts made by the mental health professions has led to the emergence of several areas of practice in the counselling profession such as career guidance, academic and career counselling in schools, mental health counselling, and professional counselling. Although these practices have not been governed and regulated by individual professional bodies as practised by most developed countries such as the USA, their contribution to the growth and development of the community was deeply rooted in the evolution of services that they offer. The following section reviews the development of counselling services in Malaysia and highlights the need for multicultural competence in the service delivery.

Development of Counselling Services

The history of counselling services in Malaysia is deeply embedded in the history of guidance and counselling in the schools. Since British colonial days, guidance and counselling in schools have traditionally been practiced informally, through the system of classroom teachers, housemasters, and hostel masters (Othman & Aboo Bakar, 1993). According to Hashim (1994), guidance services were first introduced in the schools when the British colonial administrators suggested that school children were

given such services in 1938. The services formally started at the secondary schools when a booklet entitled *Panduan Kerjaya di Tanah Melayu bagi Ibu Bapa, Guru-guru dan Murid-murid* [Career Guidance in Malaya for Parents, Teachers, and Students] was published in 1939.

A more structured guidance and counselling service was first formally introduced in secondary schools in 1963 (i.e., following the visit of Russel K. Mackenzie, a Colombo plan consultant from Canada). As a result of that visit, a book entitled *Perkhidmatan Panduan di Sekolah* [Guidance Services in Schools] was published by *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* in 1966 and was distributed to all schools (Ee, 1997). Formal guidance and counselling services in schools also began in 1963 when the MOE formulated a policy that secondary schools initiate guidance and counselling services (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 1993; Othman & Aboo Bakar, 1993). Therefore, it is assumed that the school counselling services were also formally introduced in 1963.

School counselling services: Vocational guidance, academic and career counselling.

Vocational guidance, academic and career counselling continued to be the primary duties among school counsellors from then until the 1980s. There were two important aspects of school counselling services. First, these services were mainly performed by teachers or guidance teachers in addition to their teaching responsibilities. Second, the major duties performed by these teachers, apart from teaching, were vocational guidance. The emphasis on vocational guidance can be attributed to the country's post-independence needs and educational system. After Malaysia gained its

independence in August 1957, the government had to restructure and govern its people and land autonomously. This led to the emerging needs for vocational aspirations and guidance and sparked off efforts to train and educate the people for their manpower to rebuild the country (Salim & Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2005). The need for an organised vocational guidance services in schools became apparent due to the school assessment system. Specifically, children were required to pass a series of examinations to continue their secondary education or to qualify for college entrance. For example, students in Forms 3 (year 9) and 5 (year 11) have to sit for two major examinations to determine their academic achievement and qualification for higher education. Therefore, school counsellors were needed to prepare students for any possibilities based on their results. The need for counselling services in schools were further felt with the growing incidence of drop outs and mismatch between the manpower needs of the country and the occupational choices made by school leavers. The need for and growth of vocational guidance and counselling services in schools has shaped the history of career counselling in Malaysia (Hwa, 2000; Pope, et al., 2002).

University counselling services: Academic and career guidance and counselling.

Career guidance and counselling services also started being made readily available in the university settings during the late 1960s and early 1970s. For example, the Institute of MARA Technology or currently known as the University of MARA Technology Malaysia (UiTM), was the first university that offered career guidance and counselling services to tertiary students with the establishment of a special unit called Guidance and Advice Unit with a collaboration with Asian Foundation in 1969 (Counselling Unit UiTM, 2009). In the same year, the University of Malaya (UM) also

established its own Career and Counselling Section to offer career guidance and counselling services to UM students. Other universities followed this lead and started establishing their own guidance and counselling units or sections. Currently, almost all Malaysian public and private universities and colleges have special units or divisions that offer career guidance and counselling services to their students and some of them have expanded their services to needy staff based on referrals from the human resource department. Most of the counselling service providers in the universities during the 1960s and 1980s were generally known as student affairs officers rather than counsellors. This is because there was no specific post of ‘counsellor’ created by the Malaysian public service department (MPSD) during that time. The post ‘counsellor’ was first introduced by the MPSD in 1998 after the introduction of the Counsellors Act and in the government sector; it has two different but related titles with similar job functions and specifications: psychology officers and counselling officers. Since then, most counselling service providers are mainly registered counsellors who have a practising license from the LKM and earned at least a first degree qualification in counselling and psychology.

Drug rehabilitation centres: Addiction and rehabilitation counselling services.

Drug abuse is a global phenomenon affecting many countries in the world including Malaysia. The geographical location of Malaysia near the Golden Triangle, which is composed of Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos, makes Malaysians more vulnerable to drug abuse and gives them access to different kinds of illegal drugs in the country. The government of Malaysia considers drug abuse as one of the most serious problems and has undertaken various measures to eliminate drug abuse such as the enactment of the

Dangerous Drugs Act in 1952, the introduction of National Drug Policy, the establishment of the Central Narcotics Bureau in 1973, the declaration that drug abuse problem was a national emergency and a threat to national security on February 19, 1983, and the establishment of the Anti-Narcotics Task Force and the National Drug Council in 1996 (Abdur Rashid & Abdul Rahman, 2005; Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2007; Scorzelli, 1987a, 1987b). This opens up an era of substantial drug prevention, enforcement, treatment, and rehabilitation. The society's perception of counselling services during this era was no longer attached to school settings. The emergent needs to combat the drug problem in the country has led to the assignment of special officers by the MOE to monitor drug situations in schools and the introduction of newly developed positions for drug counsellors in hospitals and rehabilitation centres (Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2007; Glamcevski, 2008). During this period, the Malaysian community even considered counselling as a panacea for all social evils, including drug use and abuse. The rapid increase of drug abusers has sparked off efforts to make counselling services more readily available at most drug rehabilitation centres (Scorzelli, 1987b), and hence marked the birth of rehabilitation counselling as another area of practice in Malaysia.

Scorzelli (1987a) reported that the roles of counsellors in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s were in general rather limited, that is, either as school or university counsellors or drug counsellors in hospitals, government drug rehabilitation centres and prisons or non-government rehabilitation centres. Except for the universities and some of the private schools, these drug counsellors rarely had the job title of counsellor, but instead they held a post as officers from the various governmental ministries (Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2007; Scorzelli, 1987a). So, they were perceived as officers and problem-solvers by the community and this led to the misconception of counsellors and

counselling and the social taboos around mental health. Unfortunately, the social stigma and taboos attached to mental health problems is very prevalent among the Malaysian general population regardless of their educational backgrounds (Haque, 2005; Sumari & Jalal, 2008).

Mental health and counselling services.

The early 1980s saw a surge in mental health and counselling services offered in Malaysia. Haque (2000) reported that, in 1980, the Malaysian Psychiatrists Association (MPA) and other mental health groups acknowledge the importance of counselling for mental health in Malaysia. This awareness has sparked off collaborative efforts among mental health professionals in Malaysia and psychiatrists started referring clients to counsellors (Glamcevski, 2008). Although there was a high demand for mental health and counselling services in Malaysia during this period of time, multicultural issues were still not the focus in the service delivery. This is because there is no documented evidence that highlights the specific guidelines for multicultural practices in schools, universities and mental health and counselling organisations.

The development of counselling services, particularly mental health counselling services, gained momentum from 1997 onwards in response to the National Mental Health Policy. Haque (2000) and Glamcevski (2008) provide comprehensive discussion on this topic. According to them, one of the recent major developments in the area of mental health in Malaysia is the launching of the Healthy Lifestyle Campaign by the Ministry of Health in 1991. Since then, numerous promotional activities such as seminars, programs, and training have been carried out to increase mental health awareness among the general public and the specific groups such as children,

adolescents, parents, working adults, and the elderly. To date, besides this campaign, mental health services are currently provided in the general, district, and psychiatric hospitals. Some examples of services provided are psychosocial-rehabilitation, vocational training and preparation, daily skills, mental health and life skills training.

This development signals the emergence of mental health counselling as a specialty in Malaysia. However, mental health services are not directly governed under the Counsellors Act but they are under the Mental Health Act 2001 (Haque, 2005). As a complication, there appears to be a divergence of mental health services from the mainstream counselling profession in Malaysia and this creates some challenges to (a) monitor the delivery of mental health services across different mental health professionals (counsellors, psychologists, and psychiatrists); and (b) collaborate with other mental health professionals and medical community agencies as two different government ministries and professional bodies for mental health services and providers are involved: clinical psychologists and psychiatrists are governed by the Ministry of Health and their respective bodies of PSIMA and the Malaysian Psychiatry Association (MPA); and professional counsellors and counselling psychologists are governed by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and both the PERKAMA and PSIMA.

Non-school career counselling services.

The late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed the emergence of career counselling (i.e., non-school related) as a specialty in Malaysia (Pope, et al., 2002). Prior to this, career guidance and vocational duties had been an early role of school counsellors during the 1960s and 1980s. As Malaysia headed progressively towards becoming a

modern and more industrialised country, career counselling became a significant service in Malaysian business, trade and industry, and private practice (Hwa, 2000). Malaysia's rapid economic development since independence had an impact on society and even prompted private and government enterprises to start utilising counselling (and mental health) services in the industrial setting. However, these services are generally directed at personnel selection, organisational development and employee motivation, with little interest in the overall counselling needs of employees (Pope, et al., 2002). For example, organisations such as Telekom Malaysia has hired counsellors as part of their human resource and training departments, and manufacturing bodies such as Motorola and Matsushita began to provide counselling services to help employees' human potential and productivity (Salim & Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2005). This development indicates that career counselling has achieved its professional identity as a specialised area of practice for both school and non-school settings in Malaysia. However, there is still a need to better train counsellors in the area of career counselling, perhaps with a focus on catering diverse vocational needs of Malaysians, 'following standards of practice', and 'enhancing professionalism' (Hwa, 2000, pp. 7-8).

Professional counselling services in various government and non-government sectors.

By the late 1990s, counselling as a profession had expanded into most institutions, offering services in schools, in industry, in health systems and to the public. This includes training in hospitals, mental health clinics for the public, nation-wide counselling centres and information campaigns. Salim and I (2005) discuss the current development of counselling services in Malaysia, not just focusing at schools and drug rehabilitation settings as discussed earlier by Scorzelli (1987b), but including

organisations such as the public (e.g., MPSD, department of community welfare, public universities, and other government agencies and departments as well) and private sectors (e.g., industrial and manufacturing bodies, private colleges and universities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private practice centres). The high demand for counsellors in non-school related settings creates the need to train and educate counsellors who are competent and able to work at various employment settings other than schools and rehabilitation centres. For instance, See and Ng (2010) observed that community counselling services have gained considerable attention from the general public and have become the latest focus of counselling practice in Malaysia. However, among the three major ethnic groups in Malaysia, there are comparatively fewer agencies and services targeting Tamil-speaking Indian Malaysians. In view of the pressing need for more counsellors in the country, many unqualified and non-counselling professionals started labelling themselves as counsellors, and the quality of their practices are questionable (Abdullah, 2003). This creates some disturbing problems in the Malaysian counselling profession and it also becomes one of the reasons why the Counsellors Act was introduced in 1998, hence marks the birth of professional counselling practice as practice specialty in Malaysia.

There have been clear signs from 2000 onwards that Malaysia as a society is taking counselling services more seriously. Some examples of this current development are the emergence of (a) official websites of PERKAMA, as a one stop centre for sharing information and activities among Malaysian counsellors, clients, and prospective clients; and LKM, for monitoring the development of the counselling profession and its registered members; and (b) interactive portals to access a cyber counselling service using email such as the MPSD *Siber-Kaunseling*, which is an

interactive facility for all public servants wanting advice and counselling. The MPSD is the main public organisation that caters for the counselling needs of all public servants. Besides counselling, the department also offers psychological testing to help clients understand themselves better. A closer observation on the psychological tests used by the MPSD counsellors revealed that the vast majority of these tests are the imported versions mainly from the USA. Only a small number of psychological tests are locally developed (www.jpa.gov.my/docs/pnerbitan/bpanduan/Psikologi/01ujian.doc). This indicates that even after 22 years of development, as initially observed by Scorzelli (1987a), Malaysian counselling is still heavily dependent on the use of Western assessment tools, which may not be culturally relevant to the local values, norms and context.

Summary of counselling services.

Table 1 presents the development of counselling services in chronological order since its first documented services began in 1960s to the present. Most of the information in the table was generated from previous literature and some documented sources from the public resources such as the official websites and public documents.

Table 1

Development of Counselling Services in the Public and Private Agencies Since 1960s

Year	Organisation	Main services	Target clients
1960s – 1980s	Secondary schools	Vocational guidance	School students (mainly secondary)
1969	MARA Institute of Technology (ITM)	Career guidance and counselling services	ITM students and staff
1969	University of Malaya (UM)	Career guidance and counselling services	UM students
1973	National University of Malaysia (UKM)	Career guidance and counselling services	UKM students
1980s	Psychiatric Hospitals	Mental health counselling	In-patients and out-patients
1980s	Private colleges and universities (e.g., INTI college, UNITEN, etc.)	Career and counselling services	Mostly students but some also include staff.
1980s	Private companies (e.g., Motorola, Matsushita, Telekom Malaysia)	Career counselling Human resource development	Prospective Employees/Staff
1980s	NGOs (e.g., Women's Aid Organisation, The Befrienders, and Agape Counselling Center)	General counselling (or community counselling) Supports and advocacy, esp. for domestic violence cases	General public esp. women
1981	Guidance and Counselling Section in EPRD, MOE	Preventive drug abuse counselling and educational programs in schools	School students
1983	Governmental rehabilitation and aftercare centres	substantial preventive, drug counselling rehabilitation efforts and the establishment of the Anti-Dadah (Drug) Task Force	Drug abusers in rehabilitation centres and volunteers with chronic drug abuse problems
1990s	Malaysian health institutions (e.g., health clinics and general hospitals)	Mental health counselling	In-patients and out-patients
1992	Public Services Department (PSD)	Professional counselling services	PSD staff and other staff from government bodies.
1997	PSD Cyber counselling	Online counselling	Public servants
1998-1999	Mental health counselling centres	Psychosocial-rehabilitation; vocational training and preparation	General public
1999*	Public agencies or departments (e.g., ministries, government bodies (federal and state), statutory bodies, local enforcement bodies.	Professional counselling services	Government servants
2002 - present	Kompleks KASIH Keluarga	Family-related skills training, Couples and family counselling, and community counselling	General public

Note: (*) – The Malaysian government issued a circular (PP1-99) on guidelines to establish counselling services in public agencies in 1999.

Based on information from the table, it can be seen that guidance and counselling services have been made available in Malaysian schools from the mid-1960s. The small scale beginning and limited services offered in schools in the 1960s extended and increase significantly over the decades under the Ministry of Education. Initially, the role of the counsellor was counselling deviant behaviour and career guidance. The 1980s saw a wider range of services and acceptance in the community and led to the emergence of several counselling specialties other than school counselling such as the emergence of drug education and rehabilitation counselling, career guidance and counselling, and mental health counselling. The role of the counsellors since the 1980s period is also diverse and not limited to one employment setting only. This development indicates that counselling services have become one of the major solutions to tackle social problems and also help the development of Malaysian society (Salim & Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2005); and counsellors are being considered the 'cure' for all social ailments (Salim, 2004).

As the field of counselling moves further into the 21st century, there are pressing needs to make the services readily available and accessible to all members of Malaysian society regardless of ethnicity, religion, gender, social class, and other cultural variables. In other words, it calls for effective implementation of multicultural counselling in the practice and training aspects of counselling in Malaysia. Hence, it is timely to re-think and re-assess the status of counselling in Malaysia to ascertain whether its current services have taken into consideration the multicultural aspects of the clients' backgrounds. Since Malaysia is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-cultural country, it implies that multicultural counselling, with its focus on culture and diversity, should be the current practice. Therefore, there is a need to explore the current

understanding and practices of multicultural counselling among professional practising counsellors in the Malaysian context. It is expected that the present study will have some implications to the current counsellor education programs in Malaysia. Therefore, the following reviews the development of counsellor education and training in Malaysia.

Development of Counsellor Education and Training Programs

As with the previous section, this review also draws on Glamcevski's (2008) paper as a framework. The history of counsellor education and training is closely related to the history of counselling services in Malaysia.

MOE programs for guidance teacher training.

Since school counselling services were generally performed by teachers, a lot of efforts had been made by the MOE to equip these teachers with the necessary skills for guidance and counselling. The first series of training programs and workshops began in the late 1960s under the organisation of the Guidance and Counselling Section. The training for school counsellors, or widely known as guidance teachers during this period of time, was categorised into two groups: pre-service teacher training and in-service teacher training. In 1967, pre-service teachers training in guidance and counselling were first offered to teachers (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 1968) but in 1972 all short courses for in-service teachers were terminated due to budgetary issues (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 1979; Othman & Awang, 1993). In 1968, the first seminar on guidance and counselling for guidance teachers or teacher-counsellors (i.e., teachers

appointed in schools as guidance teachers) in Selangor, Pulau Pinang, and Kedah was held for three days, over three weekends (Othman & Awang, 1993). In 1969, MOE approved and conducted the first In-Service Course, a six-day course designed to expose active service teachers to guidance and counselling skills, and theories (Glamcevski, 2008; Scorzelli, 1987b). Many guidance teachers were given the opportunity to attend this awareness course for a week during the school break. By the end of the 1960s, counselling had gradually become a well-understood concept to teacher-counsellors because they were receiving continuous training in the education system. This awareness course had become an annual activity and was continuously conducted throughout the year until the year 1982, but the focus was solely on understanding counselling concepts rather than on the role of culture and context in counselling.

The education and training of counsellors for school settings became more structured as the 1980 organisational shifting of the Guidance and Counselling Section led to a more comprehensive and systematic implementation of programmes to train in-service teachers to become guidance counsellors and counsellor-teachers. As a result, a specialist training certificate program in guidance and counselling was being offered by the Specialist Teacher Training Institute (Othman & Awang, 1993). In 1981, Teacher Education Division, which was governed under MOE, produced a Guidance and Counselling curriculum (Rahman, 1987). However, this curriculum was for an introductory course for the trainee teachers at the teachers training college and it did not include multicultural aspects in counselling.

Counsellor training programs in the Malaysian universities.

In the 1970s, counsellor training programmes started to take place in the university setting. However, these programmes were focusing on the training of guidance teachers with education emphasis. The University of Malaya (UM) was the first tertiary institution to offer guidance and counselling training as an elective for its Diploma in Education students in the Department of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy (Othman & Awang, 1993; Scorzelli, 1987a). In 1975, guidance and counselling vocational theory courses started at the National University of Malaysia (UKM) and final year undergraduates in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities were offered these courses. In 1977, the Centre for Educational Services at Science University of Malaysia (USM) started guidance and counselling courses too. These courses were offered under USM Teacher Education Training Program. In 1979, the first Department of Psychology was established in UKM and this department was later upgraded to the Centre of Psychological Studies and Human Development in 2002. Hence, the government universities systematically introduced guidance and counselling education but it lacks multicultural focus (Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2008; Othman, 1984; Othman & Aboo Bakar, 1993).

In the early 1980s, a more concerted attempt was made by the Malaysian government to upgrade the status of counselling and training of counsellors for both school and non-school settings. In 1981, UKM and the Agricultural University of Malaysia (UPM or now known as *Universiti Putra Malaysia*) proposed separate programmes approved by the Ministry of Education. With this approval, formal and systematic counsellor education programmes were introduced in the Malaysian tertiary education system. The first university to offer formal counsellor education programme

at undergraduate level was UPM. As for postgraduate level, UKM was the first university to offer counsellor education programme at postgraduate diploma level, whereas UM was the first university to offer counsellor education program at both master and doctorate levels.

UPM launched a Bachelor of Education in Guidance and Counselling programme in 1981. This programme was a four-year Bachelor programme offered for the first time by the Faculty of Educational Studies in 1982 (Fakulti Pengajian Pendidikan, 2002). The main objective of the programme is to train competent guidance teachers for secondary schools. Students are primarily teachers who have obtained the Certificate of Education and have attended courses in guidance and counselling either at the Specialist Teachers Training Institute or other courses conducted by the Ministry of Education. According to Scorzelli (1987a), the courses offered in this program were similar to traditional counsellor education programs in the USA. Nonetheless, a previous program evaluation study, which compared two undergraduate counsellor education programs from two public universities in Malaysia, revealed that students in this programme were satisfied with the quality of teaching and they had positive perceptions in terms of their evaluation of the overall programme, the facilities and services in the institution, and the adequacy of the curriculum (Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2003a). The finding implies that the UPM counsellor education program is a well-developed program because it meets the needs of its students. However, it provided minimal attention to multicultural aspects as there were only three multicultural courses offered in the program (multicultural counselling, Islam civilization, and Asian civilisation) with total credit hours of 7 out of 130 hours (5.38%). UPM also offers a counselling programme at master level and the programme is known as Master of

Science in Guidance and Counselling (UPM, 2009). Unfortunately, there appear to be no studies which evaluate the effectiveness of the program in creating multicultural awareness and promoting multicultural competence in practice.

UKM first introduced its counsellor education programme in November 1980. The programme, the Diploma of Counselling Psychology offered by the Department of Psychology, is a post-Bachelor's degree which has a broad focus. The Diploma courses were taught by lecturers primarily educated in the USA psychology and counselling programs. Scorzelli (1987a), a Fulbright professor at UKM in 1986, reported that the programme was the most developed counselling programme available. The programme requires one full-time academic year of course work, supervised experience, and research, and it culminates with a counselling 'practicum' that extends 3 months beyond the academic year (Lloyd, 1987a). The term 'practicum' is defined as supervised clinical experience aimed for the students' development of basic counselling skills as well as their integration of professional knowledge (Lembaga Kaunselor Malaysia, 2003). The lecturers of the programme viewed their counselling graduates as practitioner-scientists (Othman, 2001b; Othman & Aboo Bakar, 1993). Thus far, there is no record of studies evaluating the multicultural components in the program. To date, other counsellor education programmes were introduced by UKM in two different orientations (education: Master of education in guidance and counselling, and psychology: master of social science in counselling psychology) at two different faculties (faculty of education and faculty of social science and humanities).

UM offered its first guidance and counselling major to the master of education programme in 1976. The programme was developed and taught by lecturers in the

Department of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy (currently known as the Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling). The Masters programme at that time had been primarily research-oriented. The programme, however, did not attract many candidates who aspired to be practising counsellors in schools (Othman & Aboo Bakar, 1993). However, it has recently become sensitive to new needs and demands, and constructive changes have continued to be made to improve the programme. Thus, in 1997, two counsellor education programs (Bachelor of Counselling and Master of Counselling) were developed, which are coursework-based and meet the standards specified by the LKM (6 and 3 credit hours for multicultural courses in each program, respectively). From the 1980s onwards, foreign trained graduates with Master and PhD degrees in counselling started to play their academic role as research supervisors in Malaysia (Glamcevski, 2008; Scorzelli, 1987a). Thus, UM was the first to offer guidance and counselling programmes in its Doctor of Philosophy programme. To date, there are three course-work-based counsellor education programmes offered by UM (Fakulti Pendidikan, 2008a, 2008b).

As part of the requirement for completing my Masters' program, I conducted a program evaluation research with the aid of a survey questionnaire (The Counselling Programme Evaluation Survey) to compare 150 counsellor trainees' evaluation of the UM Bachelor of Counselling and the UPM Bachelor of Education in Guidance and Counselling across different areas of assessment: the programme, facilities and services provided in the institution, the adequacy of the curriculum, the quality of teaching, career aspiration, and professional orientation (Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2003a). Results showed that there were significant differences in students' evaluations of the programme (e.g., *Overall, I would rate the programme as very good*), facilities and

services provided in the institution (e.g., *The library facilities were satisfactory*), and the adequacy of the curriculum (e.g., Adequate understanding of the helping relationship), with UPM students (n=86) consistently rated significantly higher than UM students (n=64) across different aspects of the program evaluation. There were also some differences observed in terms of students' career aspiration and students' professional orientation. The findings imply that the quality of counsellor education programs may vary from one university to another. This is consistent with one of the counselling issues discussed in the Malaysian counselling literature, which highlights the need for standards in practice and counsellor training (Hwa, 2000; R. Ismail & Othman, 2001; See & Ng, 2010). The study suggests that continuous revisions and evaluations of the program are necessary, especially in meeting new needs and demands from diverse students, the Malaysian counselling profession and a multicultural society.

As the field of counselling continues to grow in Malaysia, the development of a detailed set of selection standards for accreditation has been somewhat slow because these standards were developed, agreed upon, and made readily available to counsellor education providers in 2003, after 40 years of documented history (Lembaga Kaunselor Malaysia, 2003). Previously, every institution that offers counselling programmes has their own models and methods (Lloyd, 1987a). For example, in UKM, the counselling programme was established within the field of psychology (e.g., Diploma in Counselling Psychology), while in UPM, counselling was located in education (e.g., Bachelor of Education in Guidance and Counselling). Thus, Othman and Aboo Bakar's (1993) suggestion for counselling to establish its own identity, to be recognized as a distinct profession by its history and its emphasis rather than being incorporated in other fields, led to the emergence of 'pure' counselling programmes in several universities

such as in UM (i.e., Bachelor of Counselling and Master of Counselling in 1997), UNIMAS (i.e., Bachelor of Counselling in 2000), and UMT (i.e., Bachelor of Counselling in 2003). As a result, counsellor education programmes in Malaysia have now become more diverse. This raises a concern: do the counsellors graduating from these programmes have the ability to work effectively and ethically with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds and contexts?

As the needs and demands for counsellors and counselling services continue to grow in Malaysia, other universities have started to offer counsellor education programmes too. For example, the University of Technology Malaysia (UTM) began offering Master of Education (guidance and counselling) in 1983; the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) in 1980; and USM in 1988, whereas, University of Malaysia Sabah (UMS) started to offer a Master of Counselling programme in 1997.

Specialised counsellor training programs in the government agencies and universities.

The drug problem in the country provided the need for the development of counselling programs in a specialised area of substance abuse and addiction. However, the career prospects for non-school related counsellor education programmes started slowly. Although employment demands during the 1980s was somewhat low, the demand for professional trained rehabilitation counsellors steadily increased as the economy continued to grow and prosper. Therefore, the training of counsellors in the government agencies and universities was accelerated to meet the demand. In 1985, the in-service training for the Ministry of Social Welfare (counselling services), the Ministry of Home Affairs (drug rehabilitation), and the Department of Prisons was

conducted by teams of consultants from the United States. This training was directed at those who counsel drug abusers (Scorzelli, 1987a). The first university that offered a drug rehabilitation counselling programme in Malaysia was the Islamic Science University of Malaysia (USIM) in its Master of Counselling programme with a substance abuse major. USIM also offers a Master of Counselling program with a family counselling major, another specialised practice area in counselling (See & Ng, 2010).

In summary, the history of education and training of counsellors in Malaysia started with the need to train guidance teachers in the school settings in the 1960s and 1970s. The types of training offered were mainly short courses conducted during seminars and workshops by the MOE. A more structured and systematic training for this purpose then took place in some universities and specialised teacher training institutes. Then, the focus started to shift to the training of rehabilitation counsellors or officers who worked mainly in the rehabilitation centres, hospitals, prisons, and other governmental agencies. This marked the beginning of training and education for counsellors in non-school related settings. Since then, numerous counsellor education programmes have been offered by the local universities at certificate level, leading to doctorate level.

Current Issues and Problems in the Malaysian Counselling Profession

Indeed, the Malaysian counselling profession has made substantial progress since 40 years ago. Despite this long standing history and current accomplishments,

however, there are still some issues and concerns with regard to counselling diverse clients in the Malaysian context. This section discusses current issues and challenges faced by the Malaysian counselling profession. It is argued that the prevalence of these issues is embedded in the theory, practice, education and training, and also research aspects of Malaysian counselling, which have overlooked the importance of addressing culture and diversity in counselling.

Counselling theory or model.

Currently, there is a critical question of whether the contemporary Western-based counselling theories that most practising Malaysian counsellors use to guide their practice, most counsellor educators use to train their trainees, and most researchers use as a theoretical framework in their study do actually work with the diverse needs of the Malaysian clients (Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2008; Salim & Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2005; Sumari & Jalal, 2008). Previous literature on multicultural counselling and cultural values has argued that these theories may or may not be culturally relevant to specific cultural contexts (Cheung, 2000; Pedersen et al., 2008; Sue & Sue, 2008). Culturally relevant theory is the foundation of effective counselling practice (Griner & Smith, 2006) and successful training of counsellors (Smith, et al., 2006). However, Malaysian counsellors have not yet developed good and culture-sensitive models for counselling the Malaysian clients (Salim, 2004; Salim & Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2005).

Another important issue in the Malaysian counselling profession is related to the need to modify the counselling models imported from abroad. Many Western-trained counsellors are concerned regarding the extent of modification needed to culturally adapt the counselling process that they learnt abroad in order to be consistent with the

clients' diversity and multicultural issues in the Malaysian context. In view of the religious and racial/ethnic diversity in Malaysia, it seems that the development of a truly "Malaysian" counselling approach would not be possible (Scorzelli, 1987a). Therefore, most experts believe that counsellors trained in Western countries must be able to adapt the theories, skills and techniques to suit the social and cultural norms of their clients (R. Ismail & Othman, 2001; Othman & Aboo Bakar, 1993; Pope, et al., 2002). However, it is necessary to determine what is working or useful in these Western models for Malaysian clients and what is not working and needs to be modified. Therefore, research exploring Malaysian counsellors' counselling practices is of paramount importance.

Counselling practice and research.

The current status of counselling practices in Malaysia is yet to be determined. Although knowledge about counselling theories are the foundation for guiding practices, it is possible to develop an individualised theory of or approach to counselling based on practice experiences and reflections in counselling (Constantine, Melincoff, et al., 2004; Dickson & Jepsen, 2007). As Malaysia is a multicultural context, it is possible that the current practices of Malaysian counsellors are based on the principles of multicultural counselling. Unfortunately, little is known about the current understanding and practices of multicultural counselling among the Malaysian counsellors because there is a dearth of empirical literature exploring such topics in the Malaysian context. In particular, there are no empirical studies exploring the nature and extent of MCCs of the current practising counsellors in Malaysia. Yet, MCC literature and research have proliferated in other multicultural contexts because such competency is needed in the service delivery, especially when counselling clients from different cultural

backgrounds, gender, and ethnicity (e.g., Glockshuber, 2005; Pelling, 2007; Selvarajah, 2006; Whaley & Davis, 2007).

A decade ago, counselling research in Malaysia was considered to be still in its 'early stages' (R. Ismail & Othman, 2001, p. 21) even though Malaysian counselling began 40 years ago. There are three possible explanations for this limited amount of research in Malaysian counselling. First, counselling research is normally carried out by counsellor educators and postgraduate students in the universities because it is required in their work (R. Ismail & Othman, 2001; Salim, 1993; See, et al., 2009). Among practitioners, doing research is entirely up to them and their organisational policies, and most organisations, such as schools, do not require them to conduct research. Second, a lack of professionally trained counsellors in the country has contributed to a heavy workload among those who are currently working as full-time practising counsellors (for example, psychology and counselling officers) in various work settings, especially in schools, hospitals, and welfare agencies in the government and non-government sectors. These overworked counsellors do not have much spare time and effort to do research because most of their work time and efforts have been directed to carry out primarily counselling duties. Third, a lack of enforcement regarding research conduct among the practitioners by the PERKAMA could be another contributing factor. According to the PERKAMA, members of PERKAMA are not required but simply encouraged to do research.

Although most research studies were conducted by student-researchers in the local universities (who conducted their research to fulfil their degree or diploma requirements in counselling), they have a limited focus, that is, 'on the areas of career

and guidance and also on general psychology' (R. Ismail & Othman, 2001, p. 21).

Therefore, there is a need for research regarding counselling services for a diverse population.

Counsellor education and training.

Recently, there have been an increasing number of Malaysian-Malay-Muslim practising counsellors in the Malaysian counselling profession (75.1%) (Lembaga Kaunselor Malaysia, 2009) and trainees in the Malaysian public universities enrolment database (more than 75%) at each public institution (Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia, 2008). This raises several issues regarding the state of multicultural education and training of these practising counsellors in the local context. Since there is a lack of empirical evidence regarding the state and extent of multicultural education and training in the counsellor education programmes in Malaysia (Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2003a, 2008; See & Ng, 2010), so the adequacy of multicultural education and training of counsellors is yet to be determined. How to better educate these trainees and effectively train professional counsellors to become more multiculturally competent counsellors, who can work effectively and ethically with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds, ethnicity, gender, religion, social class, and other diversity factors? Therefore, there is urgent need for research to generate information for better practice and training of counsellors in Malaysia.

In addition, there has been a trend in most public Malaysian universities that the majority of the counsellor educators are Malaysians but Western-trained professionals (See & Ng, 2010). Thus, there is a concern regarding the quality of teaching and supervision provided by these Western-trained professionals to the local students: Have

they addressed local culture and diversity in their teaching and supervision? Have they localised their theory and practice to suit the needs, values and norms of diverse Malaysians? This issue highlights the need for Malaysian guidelines on multicultural education, training, research, and practice.

In summary, the issues and problems discussed above have great impact on counsellor education programmes. They imply a need for quality counsellor education programs to educate and train counsellors who are multiculturally competent in working with a diverse population in various work settings. In preparing such counsellors who are accountable and able to act as professionals, the state of counsellors' perceived multicultural competence must be determined and their multicultural counselling practices must be explored to see whether they incorporate sensitivity and responsiveness to diversity and multicultural issues.

Multicultural Movement in the Malaysian Counselling Profession and Its Challenges

Previous discussion has provided some evidence that multicultural issues tend to be overlooked in the Malaysian counselling profession (policy implementation, practice of counselling, training of counsellors, and research). However, current Malaysian counselling literature is starting to address multicultural issues in counselling practice and training (e.g., Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2003b; Amit & Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2005; A. Ismail, 2007; Md. Nor, 2008; Ng & Stevens, 2001; See & Ng, 2010; See, et al., 2009; Sumari & Jalal, 2008). For example, a colleague and I (Amit & Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2005) have highlighted and discussed the competency aspect of a multicultural

counsellor in the practice of counselling in Malaysia. We argue for the need to develop guidelines and standards for multicultural competence in the service delivery of counselling in Malaysia. Our argument is based on the American guidelines and standards developed by Arredondo et al. (1996) and Sue et al. (1992) in the USA and hence, it is still open for empirical investigation in the local context.

Similarly, recent literatures also argue for counsellors to be multiculturally competent when working with diverse Malaysian populations, while maintaining ethics and professionalism in service delivery (R. Ismail & Othman, 2001; Ng & Stevens, 2001; See & Ng, 2010; See, et al., 2009). For instance, See et al. (2009), a group of Malaysian leading scholars in counselling, have highlighted the need for a multicultural focus in training and practice of counsellors in Malaysia, which addresses ethnic and professional issues as well as indigenous practices. Specifically, they commented that, “Malaysian society is culturally diverse, but multicultural counselling competence training in the counselling training programs is still lacking or not given due attention” (p.231). Their further comments highlight the pressing need to advance the present research:

Therefore, counsellors and counsellor educators must establish culturally relevant, responsive, and effective theoretical and treatment competencies along with a coherent framework of counselling that is contextualized and empirically based for the different races in Malaysia (p. 231).

In line with See et al.’s argument, this research used Malaysian counsellors as a study population in order to gain better insights regarding their understanding of, current practices of, and the challenges and barriers associated with their practices of multicultural counselling in Malaysia.

Some Malaysian counsellors have understood the importance of culture in counselling and have increased multicultural awareness regarding the need to incorporate multicultural issues in their practice and training. As a result, the most recent and notable development in the Malaysian counselling profession was the PERKAMA national seminar on cross-cultural counselling, which invited professional counsellors from various work settings to share their professional experiences in dealing with issues on culture and diversity in counselling practice, training, and research. The seminar was held for two days (24 – 25 May 2011) and the topics for the three keynote addresses were: counselling and cross-cultural in Malaysia: issues to be addressed, the development of multicultural counsellors, and cross-cultural counselling: counsellor issues, competencies and readiness. A total of 46 papers were presented during the two-day seminar.

Some of the current attempts to develop a Malaysian counselling approach are documented in the literature on Islamic counselling. This includes my own work (Aga Mohd Jaladin & Amit, 2007) and other Muslim counsellors (A. Ismail, 2007; Md. Nor, 2008). Islamic counselling refers to counselling in which Islamic values and principles are the guiding force for the service delivery. This is an emerging approach to counselling that is increasingly recognised by Malaysian counsellors and trainees, and practised by a significant number of Malay Muslim counsellors and psychologists. The steady increase in its popularity among the local practitioners and researchers has resulted in a specialised national seminar conducted in 2003, titled “National Seminar on Islamic Counselling”, and devoted to discussing and sharing issues related to the practice of Islamic counselling in various settings. Although Islamic counselling is the

most popular topic for counselling discussion in the local context, the effectiveness of this approach in counselling diverse Malaysian clients is still unknown.

The attempt to increase the multicultural awareness and knowledge of the Malaysian counsellors is directed at discussing issues and problems when counselling Malaysian lesbians, a specialised minority group of clients (Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2003b). I (Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2003b) discuss several critical issues commonly faced by the lesbian clients in the local context such as social rejection and discrimination, excessive worries and guilt regarding lesbian lifestyle, and coming out issues. Although lesbians are among the minority groups in Malaysia and their existence is 'ignored' in the local context, their needs for counselling have also been considered by the Malaysian counsellors. As a result, in the PERKAMA 10th Convention (theme: Managing gender identity problems: Collective responsibility) that was held on 12th - 13th May 2001 at the Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya, Malaysian counsellors and psychiatrists shared their individualised approaches to counselling clients who have sexual identity related problems. Among the approaches discussed were traditional and non-traditional approaches (Ninggal & Abdullah, 2001; Omar, 2001), object-relations therapy (Mohd Ishak, 2001), and the Islamic approaches (Amat, 2001; Mohd Sidek, 2001). The availability of these universal and culture-specific approaches shows that Malaysian counsellors do consider multicultural issues in their practice. However, little is known about the extent of their multicultural counselling understanding and practices to determine whether these practices have incorporated the latest version of multicultural counselling approach.

Another attempt at incorporating multicultural issues in counselling has been discussed by myself and Amit (2007). We discuss the key issues and challenges faced by many Malaysian counsellors and psychotherapists in counselling spiritually or religiously inclined clients. In Malaysia, the majority of its people have religious values either affiliated with Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity or minority others. These values are significant aspects of Malaysians' lives and development. Thus, exploring these values with Malaysian clients may help them find alternatives and solutions to their struggles. In view of the sensitivity of clients' religious background, Corey, Corey, and Callanan (2010) recommend counsellors to consider the referral dilemma (to refer or not to refer) when dealing with clients with religious inclination. In order to address this dilemma, counsellors have to prepare themselves with sufficient knowledge, skills, and competency pertaining to diverse spiritual and religious values. Without sufficient multicultural preparation and training, counselling spiritually or religiously inclined clients in accordance with the code of ethics and the legal acts would be very challenging. However, little is known regarding the multicultural competency of current Malaysian counsellors, especially when counselling religiously different clients. It is anticipated that a detailed documentation of current practices of multicultural counselling among Malaysian counsellors can help to generate knowledge regarding cross-cultural counselling pertaining to religion and spirituality. Therefore, the present research is necessary.

Some potential challenges in addressing multicultural issues in the practice and training of counsellors in Malaysia have also been extensively discussed in recent literature (Sumari & Jalal, 2008). In view of the complexity of the socio-political context of Malaysia, it seems almost impossible to develop truly Malaysian models of

counselling – culture-sensitive models of counselling that work for counselling Malaysian clients. It is also very challenging to incorporate multicultural issues in the counselling practice and training of counsellors because of the ethnic politics among Malaysians (Joseph, 2006). According to Sumari and Jalal (2008),

These socio-political dynamics are challenges for counsellors and counsellor educators in Malaysian universities. Perhaps the biggest challenge or issue for counsellor educators is to have honest and open discussions on multicultural issues, even in the Multicultural Counselling class because such discussion is not encouraged to avoid racial tension. (p.30)

Although most Malaysian counsellors realized the importance of having honest and open discussion on multicultural issues in counselling, they tend to avoid it to prevent racial conflict and tension between them and their racially or ethnically different clients. This is the cultural ramification of ethnic politics which underlies the Malaysians' way of thinking and behaving in their local context. Therefore, it is clear that Malaysian counsellors need a specialised competency in order to assist them in their practice with clients from different cultural backgrounds, ethnicity, religion, gender, and other cultural variables which may influence the ways they engage with such issues in the counselling process.

The existence of this body of Malaysian counselling literature indicates that there is a steady movement towards multicultural counselling in practice, training and research in the Malaysian counselling. Malaysian counsellors have become increasingly aware of the important role that culture plays in service delivery and training. Therefore, Malaysian counsellors' understandings and practices regarding multicultural counselling, especially their level of multicultural counselling competency, must be ascertained and their current practices with culturally different clients must be richly

documented and further explored in order to gain better insight into their counselling theories and practices. These are the necessary ingredients for developing (a) specific guidelines and standards for judging multiculturally competent practices in the Malaysian context and (b) Malaysian models of culturally sensitive counselling – context-specific models that can be applied when counselling diverse Malaysian clients, and used to better educate and effectively train counsellors and trainees for professional development in Malaysia. It is in this context that this research was conducted. It is expected that the findings generated from the research will have direct implications for the education and training of counsellors in the local context.

Summary and Concluding Comments

The history of Malaysian counselling from a multicultural perspective can be understood through three chronological historical moments. The first moment, which I have described as “Presumed Neglect” (pre-1980s), was characterised by a virtual absence of policy or counselling services that specifically address the multicultural issues. The formation of the PERKAMA, the launching of Vision 2020, the introduction of the first counsellors’ code of ethics, and the introduction of the Counsellors Act (580) during the period between the 1980s and 2000 was the second moment, which I have called “Birth of a Multicultural Movement,” in which Malaysian counsellors started to pay some attention to diversity and multicultural issues in order to fulfil their ethical and legal obligation to the counselling profession and national mission. During this second moment, multicultural counselling courses were first introduced and included in the counsellor education programmes, especially those offered by the public universities. In the third moment, titled here “Gaining momentum and establishing a specialty,” which began in the 2000s, there was a steady increase in the Malaysian-

based literature on issues related to multicultural counselling. However, research on multicultural counselling in Malaysia is still very limited. Therefore, there is a pressing need to conduct this research in order to generate knowledge regarding multicultural counselling in Malaysia.

General Conclusion, Revisiting the Aims of Current Study

In both literature review chapters, I have presented a number of theoretical perspectives with which to understand culture within counselling and to examine the research data in the later stage. This includes the understanding of culture within the contemporary Western counselling theories (i.e., psychodynamic, humanistic-existential, and cognitive-behavioural) and the emergent multicultural theory or MCT as proposed by Sue et al. (D. W. Sue, et al., 1996). The opposing arguments of these understandings have also been discussed. The current development and issues in MCC movement which has recently become the focus of multicultural research has also been discussed. In particular, the conceptual debate surrounding its definition, the past and future challenges which underlie its movement, and the current issues and controversies in the theoretical development, practice, training, and research of MCC.

I have also discussed the history, current development, and issues in the practice, training, and research of counselling in Malaysia. This enables me to identify the theory-practice gap and also the practice-research gap in the current counselling practice and training of counsellors in Malaysia which requires further investigation. Previous literature and research findings from the West have shown that having MCCs improve the effectiveness of counselling service delivery and outcome in most multicultural countries. However, since the Malaysian counselling profession has not yet formulated

specific MCC guidelines and standards for practice and training of counsellors, there are great concerns regarding the quality of counselling practice (especially with diverse clients) among professional counsellors in Malaysia. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the current understandings and practices of multicultural counselling among Malaysian professional counsellors in the Malaysian context. In particular, the study investigated the self-perceived MCCs of Malaysian counsellors using a self-report measure and explored the ways they engage with culture and diversity using practice reflection inquiry strategies. The following chapter will describe the research framework of the study in more detail.

CHAPTER FOUR

Designing the Research Study

Introduction

The ultimate goal of this research was to generate a better understanding of the practices of multicultural counselling among professional counsellors in the specific cultural context of Malaysia, which few previous research studies have directly investigated. Existing literature reviewed in Chapter Two has highlighted some conceptual and methodological issues associated with multicultural counselling research, especially in measuring MCC. There was considerable variation in defining multicultural counselling and multicultural competence concepts as discussed earlier. For the purpose of this research, self-perceived multicultural counselling competence was operationally defined as counsellors' preparedness, awareness of diversity, level of understanding regarding multicultural issues in specific contexts, and perceived ability and practice reflections when working with culturally diverse clients in the Malaysian context.

Among the main methodological issues discussed in previous chapters were the limitations of existing MCC instruments. Previous researchers had recommended that these issues had to be addressed in order to make multicultural counselling research more meaningful and culturally relevant to a specific cultural context (e.g., Cheung, 2000; Lonner & Ibrahim, 2008). This chapter describes the methodology of the present research, which carefully addresses some methodological issues discussed earlier. I

begin this chapter with a discussion of the research approach and the specific design, setting, participants' selection and characteristics, instrument, data collection methods and procedures, data analysis and procedures, and conclude with a discussion of the validity, reliability and trustworthiness of the research.

Research Approach and Specific Design

This research used a mixed methods approach. Mixed methods research collects, analyses, and uses both quantitative and qualitative data in a study in order to understand a research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Plano Clark, Creswell, Green, & Shope, 2008). A more comprehensive definition of mixed methods is derived from that used in the 'Call for Papers of the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*':

Mixed methods research is defined as research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or program of inquiry.

This research adopted a mixed methods approach because it had the potential to provide a better understanding of the problem being studied, fitted the research questions of interest, and was feasible for the researcher to carry out within the PhD timeframe.

In particular, the current research used an embedded mixed methods design. This design refers to mixing the qualitative and quantitative data at the design level, with one type of data embedded within a methodology framed by the other data type (Plano Clark, et al., 2008). Another term used by previous literature to reflect the same meaning is 'concurrent nested design' because it highlights the simultaneous timing for data collection between the quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell, Plano Clark,

Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003, p. 220; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008, p. 181). In other words, this research was predominantly quantitative but the qualitative aspects of the research were needed to ‘enhance/supplement’ or further explore the quantitative data (Plano Clark, et al., 2008, p. 372). The embedded approach was chosen because the study sought to explore not just the extent of the MCCs among professional counsellors in Malaysia, but included details on how their understandings were translated into multicultural counselling practices. A survey questionnaire was chosen for use, as it was capable of providing me with general and specific information regarding current opinions on multicultural concepts, perceived multicultural competencies, barriers and challenges associated with the practice of multicultural counselling among registered practising counsellors in Malaysia. The use of open-ended questions in a survey questionnaire helps to enhance the interpretation of the survey scores from the quantitative part. Then, in order to further explore information and materials not easily accessed through the survey format, and which do not fit within usual theorisation, this research also used semi-structured interviews. These interviews provided ‘corroborative evidence’ on some of the quantitative results and in-depth understanding regarding the practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia (Bazeley, 2004, p. 4).

Research Sites

The research was conducted in Malaysia. The survey covered all states in Malaysia (i.e., Kedah, Pulau Pinang, Perak, Selangor, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Johor, Pahang, Terengganu, Kelantan, Sabah, Sarawak, and both the federal cities of Putrajaya and Kuala Lumpur). The interviews were conducted mainly in Peninsular Malaysia, that is, the Klang Valley which is the surrounding area near Sungai Klang, located in the state of Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. Specifically, the interview locations involved in

the study were Petaling Jaya, Kuala Lumpur, Cheras, Putrajaya, and Kuching, Sarawak, in East Malaysia. The Klang Valley was selected because it was the most strategic and accessible place for meetings with counsellors. Besides being the most densely populated area in Malaysia, most Malaysian registered counsellors reside and work in this area (i.e., 37.1% out of the counsellor population of 1833) (Lembaga Kaunselor Malaysia, 2010b).

Participants

The study population of this research were Malaysian counsellors who were registered with the Malaysia Board of Counsellors, that is, LKM, and had practised counselling with Malaysian clients. Prior to the study, written approval was obtained from the LKM to conduct the study (Refer to Appendix A) and use the mailing list that has the contact details (i.e., name, address, and work contact numbers) of all the registered counsellors in Malaysia. In total, there were 1833 registered counsellors in the mailing list provided whose names, personal details and work locations were recorded in the registered counsellor database system at the LKM headquarter office in 2009. However, to date, there are 2224 licensed counsellors' names and work locations published in the counsellor directory tab of the LKM official website (<http://www.lkm.gov.my/>). This indicates an increased number of registered and licensed counsellors in Malaysia.

According to the LKM database statistics, the registered counsellor population consists of: (gender) 50.9% males and 49.1% females; (ethnicity) 75.1% Malays, 15.5% Chinese, 3.8% Indians, 0.38% indigenous Bumiputera, and 5.2% other ethnic. Regarding work location, 37.1% of counsellors work in Klang valley (i.e., Kuala

Lumpur, Putrajaya, and Selangor), 21.5% work in the northern states (Perlis, Pulau Pinang, Kedah, & Perak), 20.3% work in the eastern states (i.e., Kelantan, Terengganu, & Pahang), 14.4% work in southern states (Johor, Melaka, & Negeri Sembilan), and 13.2% work in East Malaysia (i.e., Sabah, Labuan, & Sarawak). The majority of them are school counsellors (38.0%) and government officers (35.6%).

Survey participants.

Selection of participants.

Approximately 1500 registered counsellors were invited as potential participants from the mailing list provided by the LKM. This sample size was considered after careful examination of the LKM mailing list. Besides having the contact details of counsellors, the mailing list included information on their gender, ethnicity, and religion. Only those with complete mailing addresses were selected and included. Overall, 538 participants responded to the research invitation, either via a mailed or online survey format depending on participant preference (a return rate of 36%). These participants' responses were then collected, entered into a SPSS datasheet, screened and checked for errors to prepare them for data analysis (refer to data analysis section for details).

Demographic characteristics of the survey sample.

The participants in this study were 508 registered practising counsellors from all states in Malaysia who had completed either the pen-and-paper version of the survey questionnaire and returned them back to the researcher by mail, or the electronic version of the survey questionnaire in the web or online survey using the Survey Monkey application tool. Demographic characteristics of the survey participants refer to their

gender, ethnicity, religion, age range, highest education level completed, and socioeconomic status (SES). Table 2 presents the details of the sample's characteristics, and Table 3 displays the relationship between three of these demographic factors (i.e., gender, ethnicity, and religion). The detailed data of the survey participants' demographics, education and training background in multicultural counselling, and their work-related information are presented in Chapter 5 and Appendix L.

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Survey Sample Compared to the Malaysian Counsellor Population (n=508)

Characteristic	<u>Sample</u>		<u>Malaysian Counsellor Population</u>	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Gender				
Male	259	51.0	933	50.9
Female	249	49.0	900	49.1
Ethnicity				
Malays	378	74.4	1376	75.1
Chinese	74	14.6	285	15.5
Indians	21	4.1	69	3.8
Others	35	6.9	103	5.6
Religion				
Islam	403	79.3	NA	NA
Christian	36	7.1		
Buddhism	48	9.4		
Hindu	14	2.8		
Other	7	1.4		
Age group (years)			NA	NA
20 - 29	66	13.0		
30 – 39	160	31.6		
40 – 49	166	32.7		
50 – 59	104	20.5		
60 and more	11	2.2		
Highest education			NA	NA
Diploma	34	6.9		
Bachelor	242	47.6		
Master	205	40.4		
PhD	27	5.3		
Family income (monthly)			NA	NA
RM10K and more	39	7.7		
RM8K – RM9999	52	10.3		
RM6K – RM7999	103	20.3		
RM4K – RM5999	141	27.8		
RM2K – RM3999	166	32.7		
Less than RM2K	6	1.2		

Note: 'NA' stands for information not available.

Table 3

Frequency Distribution of Participants' Gender, Ethnicity, and Religion (n=508)

Religious identity of the participant			Sex of the participant		
			Male	Female	Total
Islam	Ethnic identity of the participant	Malay	214	163	377
		Chinese	2	1	3
		Indian	2	0	2
		Other	14	7	21
	Total		232	171	403
Christian	Ethnic identity of the participant	Malay	0	1	1
		Chinese	2	18	20
		Indian	2	3	5
		Other	3	7	10
	Total		7	29	36
Buddhism	Ethnic identity of the participant	Chinese	10	38	48
	Total		10	38	48
Hindu	Ethnic identity of the participant	Indian	8	6	14
	Total		8	6	14
Other	Ethnic identity of the participant	Chinese	0	3	3
		Other	2	2	4
	Total		2	5	7

In order to identify the frequency distribution of participants' gender, ethnicity, and religion, a crosstab table with frequencies of these variables is presented in Table 3. The table indicates that only Chinese participants were Buddhist and only Indian participants were Hindu. However, among the Muslims, while the vast majority of them were Malays (n=377), a minority of them were Chinese (n=3), Indians (n=2), and other ethnic groups (n=21). On the other hand, among the Christians, most of them were Chinese (n=20) followed by other ethnic groups (n=10), but only one was from the Malay ethnic group.

Overall, based on the information in Table 2 and 3, it was clear that a majority of the participants were male-Malay-Muslim counsellors (42.13%; $n = 214$), aged between 30 to 49 years old (64.3%; $n = 326$) and in the medium level of socio-economic status (RM4000 – RM7999: 48.1%, $n = 244$). The overall percentages of the survey participants in terms of gender and ethnic background showed similar patterns to those of the research population. As stated earlier, the majority of registered practising counsellors in Malaysia were males in the Malay ethnic group. Hence, the sample is representative of the overall population and the results can be generalised to the whole study population.

Interview participants.

Selection of participants.

The 1500 potential survey participants were also invited to take part in the semi-structured interviews. This was done by asking them to provide their contact details and sign the consent form, which were attached in the last two pages of the survey booklet (refer to Appendix C for details). A total of 101 registered counsellors responded to this invitation. Out of these 101 potential interview participants, 55 were from the mailed survey sample, and 46 were from the online survey sample. These participants were then selected according to the following inclusion criteria: (a) state address (i.e., In ‘Selangor and KL’ versus ‘Other States’). Those who were in the Selangor and KL list were then selected according to their; (b) gender, (c) ethnicity, (d) religion, and (e) employment setting, in order to recruit participants who were diverse in their cultural backgrounds. There were 16 potential participants who were in the shortlist group. After telephone calls were made to these counsellors, only 12 finally agreed to be interviewed at the date and time possible for the researcher-interviewer.

Table 4

Demographic Characteristics of Interview Sample (n=12)

Characteristic	<u>Sample</u>	
	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	5	41.7
Female	7	58.3
Ethnicity		
Malays	6	50.0
Chinese	3	25.0
Indians	3	25.0
Religion		
Islam	7	58.3
Christian	2	16.7
Buddhism	2	16.7
Hindu	1	8.3
Age group (years)		
20 - 29	1	8.3
30 - 39	3	25.0
40 - 49	2	16.7
50 - 59	6	50.0
Highest education		
Bachelor	4	33.3
Master	5	41.7
PhD	3	25.0
Workplace		
University	3	25.0
School	2	16.7
Government department	2	16.7
Uniform unit	2	16.7
Hospital	1	8.3
Private sector	1	8.3
NGO	1	8.3
Practice experience (years)		
1 - 5	4	33.3
6 - 10	4	33.3
11 - 15	1	8.3
16 - 20	1	8.3
No information	2	16.7

Demographic characteristics of the interview sample.

Participants taking part in the semi-structured interview were 12 registered-and-licensed practising counsellors from the states of Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, and Kuching; and the federal cities of Putrajaya and Kuala Lumpur. Details on their demographic characteristics are presented in Table 4.

There were 5 males and 7 females ranging in age between 25 to 55 years old. Regarding their ethnic identity, six were Malays (four females and two males), three Chinese (one male and two females), and three Indians (one female and two males). Among these, two participants (one male-Chinese-Muslim and one female of Chinese and Malay-Muslim origins) claimed that they had multicultural identities. These participants worked in various work setting such as universities (n=3), schools (n=2), government departments (n=2), uniformed unit (n=2), hospital (n=1), private manufacturing company (n=1), and NGOs (n=1).

Instrument

A 55-item survey – Multicultural Counselling Survey (Malaysian Version) – was the questionnaire developed specifically for this research. It comprised three sets of instruments: demographic questionnaire in Section A, Multicultural Counselling Competency Scale for Malaysian Counsellor Edition (MCCS-MCE) in Section B, and reflection on counselling understanding and practice in Section C. The MCCS-MCE was the most important measure in the research because it aimed to collect information on participants' self-perceived MCCs when counselling clients in the Malaysian context. Although this research was not a scale development study, the development of the survey, especially the MCCS-MCE, was guided by existing literature on scale development (e.g., Dawis, 2000; DeVellis, 2003; Khawaja, et al., 2009). This was done to ensure that the MCCS-MCE was culturally-relevant for use in the Malaysian context. The process in developing the MCCS-MCE is discussed in more details in the later sub-section.

Development of the MCCS-MCE.

The MCCS-MCE was developed based on sound theoretical perspectives on MCCs (Arredondo, et al., 1996; D. W. Sue, et al., 1992; D. W. Sue, et al., 1998) and findings of previous research (e.g., Glockshuber, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Khawaja, et al., 2009). It draws on two existing scales (i.e. the MAKSS-CE-R: Kim, et al., 2003; and the MCKAS: Ponterotto, Gretchen, Utsey, Rieger, & Austin, 2002), with some item-deletion, item-modifications and item-additions. The two scales were carefully selected among others as source of references after taking into consideration the mixed findings and earlier criticisms of the existing MCC instruments discussed in Chapter Two. These scales were chosen because they were revised in response to earlier criticisms of MCC instruments, have recently undergone ‘extensive’ and ‘promising’ revisions (Dunn, et al., 2006, pp. 479, 477, respectively), and have a list of items in the public domain (i.e., published journal articles). For example, the MAKSS has recently been revised using exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses to develop the revised MAKSS-CE-R. A recent validation study has reviewed the MAKSS-CE-R and provided evidence of a greater degree of reliability and validity (Kim, et al., 2003). In addition, Hays’ (2008) recent critique and recent literature on MCC assessment were also incorporated in the development of the current survey questionnaire for the Malaysian context.

Initially, a pool of 65 items covering the three theoretical sub-domains of MCC – counsellor’s multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills – was generated. Using the reviews and critiques of the literature on multicultural counselling and MCC, and my own professional experience as a practising counsellor, counselling lecturer, and research supervisor in Malaysia for more than 10 years, these items were carefully

reviewed and selected. The detailed process of selecting the culturally relevant items, modifying some selected items to make them culturally relevant to the Malaysian context, and adding some self-developed items was carried out in a systematic manner using a table with headings such as proposed item, original item, source of reference, and rationale for use. This process resulted in a total of 32 items. In line with the specific response formats used in the MAKSS-CE-R (which is a 4-point scale) and MCKAS (which is a 7-point scale), a Likert scale was the specific type of response format chosen for the MCCS-MCE. A five-point scale of various types of responses was used.

Description of the MCS-Mal.

The questionnaire comprised 15 items on demographics (Section A: Demographic Information), 32 items on self-perceived MCC (Section B: Multicultural Counselling Competency), and 8 items consisting of multiple choice and open-ended questions on general understanding of key concepts and perceived practices regarding multicultural counselling (Section C: Reflection of Counselling Understanding and Practice).

Section A involved completing 15 personal background, education and training, and work-related items. The personal background items asked about participants' gender (i.e., item A1), ethnicity (i.e., item A2) and religion (i.e., item A3), age range (i.e., item A4), and monthly family income (i.e., item A9). Items on education and training background included questions on highest education level (i.e., item A5), the institution they graduated from (i.e., item A6), whether they had taken and completed the courses on multicultural counselling before (i.e., item A10), and whether they had

attended any professional development workshops or seminar on cultural diversity or multicultural counselling in the past five years (i.e., item A11). In addition, the work-related information included items on the current job title of participants (i.e., item A7), their current employment setting (i.e., item A8), number of years practising counselling (i.e., item A12), the types of counselling services they mostly provided to clients (i.e., item A13), and their clientele information such as client social group, for example, students, employees, among many others (i.e., item A14) and ethnic background (i.e., item A15). Item A7 is an open-ended question. Items A13, A14, and A15 are multiple choice questions with multiple responses (MCQ-MR), whereas all other items are multiple choice questions with single response (MCQ-SR).

In Section A, the construction of items A1 (gender), A2 (ethnicity), A4 (age group), A5 (highest education), A6 (institution graduated from) and A8 (current job title) were inspired by the MAKSS-CE-R, whereas items A3 (religion), A7 (current job title), A9 to A15 (mostly work-related information, e.g., *what is your current employment setting?*) were developed based on previous literature and my professional experience to address the research questions.

As noted earlier, Section B was the most important part of the survey questionnaire. This section was designed to identify the participants' perceived MCCs based on their self-reported multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills domains of the MCC conceptual models (D. W. Sue, et al., 1992; D. W. Sue, et al., 1982). In Section B, items 1 to 8 (e.g., *Being born a Bumiputera or majority in this society carries with it certain privileges and advantages*) were specifically developed to assess counsellors' perceived multicultural awareness, items 9 to 22 (e.g., *Differences exist*

between my clients and myself regarding ethnicity and beliefs) were used to measure their perceived multicultural knowledge, and items 23 to 32 (e.g., *How would you rate your ability to effectively treat a client whose ethnic background is significantly different from your own?*) were purposely constructed to assess their perceived skills when counselling clients from diverse cultural backgrounds (refer to Appendix C for a copy of the actual survey questionnaire). Eleven items (i.e., items number 1, 2, 3, 5, and 16 to 22) were modified from the MCKAS, 13 items (i.e., items number 5, 7, 9, 10, 13 to 15, and 26 to 32) were modified from the MAKSS-CE-R, and eight additional self-developed items (i.e., items number 4, 6, 8, 11, 12, and 23 to 25) were included to address the research questions. These additional items were necessary to address the complexity of the socio-political context of Malaysia and the power differential issues that could be assumed to influence the counsellors' perceived multicultural competence when working with Malaysian clients.

A 5-point Likert scale was used for all items in Section B. Specifically, items 1 to 8 were assessed using scales 1 for 'Strongly Disagree' to 5 for 'Strongly Agree', to reflect the multicultural awareness of the participants; items 9 to 15 used scales 1 for 'Very Limited' to 5 for 'Very Good', to reflect multicultural knowledge; items 16 to 22 used scales 1 for 'Totally Not True' to 5 for 'Totally True' to reflect other aspects of multicultural knowledge; whereas, items 23 to 32 used scales 1 for 'Very Limited' to 5 for 'Very Good' to reflect the perceived multicultural skills of the participants. The scoring of these items followed the indicated numerical choices. A high mean rating score gives an indication of a high level of multicultural competency among the participants. In addition, this section also provided four open comment boxes for participants who would like to make a general comment or comment on specific items

in the questionnaire. All these comments were treated as secondary qualitative data.

They were included to enhance the overall findings on perceived multicultural competencies from this section.

For Section C, all the items were self-developed. They were added predominantly in response to reviews and critiques of the previous literature. The first four of the questions were open-ended to generate information regarding definitions of key terms (i.e., ‘multicultural counselling’ and ‘multicultural competency’), characteristics of a multiculturally competent counsellor, and some challenges associated with multicultural counselling, which could cast some light on perceived MCC scores. The other four questions were generated based on a hypothetical case vignette and they used a multiple-choice response format. This vignette was important because it required the generation of appropriate responses which gave a better indication of counsellors’ understanding of how to actually deal with the multicultural issues when counselling a culturally different client. The generation of this vignette was inspired by selected literature on culture and multicultural counselling (i.e. Arredondo, et al., 1996; Constantine, 2002a; Joseph, 2006; Neufeldt, et al., 2006; D. W. Sue, et al., 1992, p. 482; and Sumari & Jalal, 2008). It was purposely developed to (a) illustrate the existence of client’s multiple identities in counselling; (b) address one of the current situations regarding the socio-political dynamics among Malaysians in the Malaysian context; and (c) operate from a broad view of multicultural counselling concepts (i.e., not limited to race/ethnic issues only). Thus, unlike Neufeldt et al.’s (2006) research which used a videotape of clients who varied along dimensions of race and ethnicity, age, and gender, this research used a case vignette to understand how counsellors conceptualised a case with a culturally different client, who suffers some culturally

sensitive issues, and whose cultural identity is a result of an interplay of gender, age, social class, and life experience.

The questionnaire draft was finalised to also include the Malay translation because the use of both languages in questionnaires can help to better communicate the meaning to the non-English background study population (Malay is the national language and English is the second language used by most Malaysians in their workplace). The initial version of the questionnaire was presented using a bilingual format. This questionnaire was thoroughly reviewed by 2 bilingual experts in the field of Language and Literacy from Malaysia to check for clarity, accuracy, and ‘semantic equivalence’ of translation (Mallinckrodt & Wang, 2004, p. 368). However, after it was pilot-tested and reviewed by local experts in the Malaysian counselling profession, it was decided to revise the questionnaire to use two separate questionnaire booklets (i.e., by splitting the Malay-translated version and English) instead of the bilingual format.

Data Collection Methods and Procedures

This research used several methods for collecting data, namely mailed and online surveys and interviews. These methods and the respective procedures for collecting survey data and interview data are discussed in the following sections.

Mailed and online surveys.

A mailed survey was the main data collection method. However, as an alternative method to increase participation, online surveys were also used. Heppner et al. (2008) reported that the most frequent way of collecting data in survey research is

through self-report questionnaires, particularly mailed or online questionnaires. The mailed survey questionnaire method has been one of the most widely used designs in the previous research literature on MCC (Glockshuber, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Worthington, et al., 2007). There are many advantages of mailed questionnaires discussed by previous researchers; they are easy to use, particularly when the sample size is large and covers a wide geographic area (Heppner, et al., 2008), can be completed relatively quickly (perhaps 15 to 30 minutes), may be quickly returned (often in as little time as 6 weeks from the first mailing to the conclusion of data collection), and economical (involves only duplication and mailing expenses) (Creswell, 2005). On the other hand, one of the biggest potential disadvantages of this method is the difficulty of getting participants to respond and return the completed questionnaires. In view of this, most researchers reported that often the return rate from a first mailing was approximately 30% (Creswell, 2005; Heppner, et al., 2008). In order to address this major concern, the research adopted several strategies as recommended by previous literature such as keeping the survey short (within 20 minutes to complete it), including a reply-paid, self-addressed return envelope, using multiple mailings as reminders (e.g., Heppner, et al., 2008; Pelling, 2007), and providing an alternative data collection method for those who preferred an electronic version of the survey.

An online survey was used as an alternative method to collect data: (1) to make it easy for participants both to complete the questionnaire (by clicking and typing) and return it (by clicking a 'Done' button), and thus increased the return rate; and (2) to provide freedom to choose between the mailed and online surveys based on participants' preference. Although the online survey is 'a more recent method of data collection' (Heppner, et al., 2008, p. 230), its popularity and use are limited to certain

categories of participants, such as only to those who have access to internet facilities. The use of online surveys in the Malaysian context is still in its infancy, so it is difficult to ascertain the representativeness of those participants who completed the survey if this method was the main data collection method.

Procedure for conducting surveys.

After approvals from respectively, the Monash University Standing Committee on Ethics in Research involving Humans (SCERH) and the LKM were obtained (refer to Appendix B and A, respectively), the procedure for conducting surveys began. The first mailing involved sending 1500 survey packages to all the targeted participants. These survey packages comprised two split-booklets of the questionnaire (i.e., both the English and Malay-translated pen-and-paper versions); an addressed reply-paid envelope; a pen and a mini notebook (as small gifts and materials to complete the survey); a cover letter containing information on the purpose of research and the two web survey addresses (i.e., the survey web page link for the English and the Malay-translated electronic versions of the questionnaire) on the internet; and the Explanatory Statement (refer to Appendix D), which contained information regarding ethical approval from Monash University and study permission from the LKM, researcher contact information, and a reminder note to inform them to return the completed survey within two weeks of receiving it. In line with the strategies to encourage high response rate discussed in previous literature (Heppner, et al., 2008; Pelling, 2007; Pelling, et al., 2006), two sets of reminder letters were also used. The first reminder letter was sent to all participants in the fourth week after the initial mailing (refer to Appendix E for details), and the second reminder letter was sent to all participants after two weeks of the second mailing (refer to Appendix F for details). As an alternative strategy to

encourage return of the surveys, follow-up emails and electronic reminders were also used in this study. A total of 541 surveys (initial response rate of 36%) were returned to the researcher. The collected surveys were a combination of responses from those who completed and returned the surveys via the reply paid envelopes (n=372) and those from the Survey Monkey data collection site at www.surveymonkey.com (n=169).

Semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were used because these allowed the collection of information that was not accessible through the survey format and which might be perceived as somewhat more complex and sensitive issues. The collection of interview data not only helped to generate theory about the understanding and practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia, but it also helped to enrich and substantiate the quantitative and qualitative findings collected from the survey methods. The development of the interview topics was guided by the reviews and critiques of the literature on multicultural counselling (e.g., Constantine, Melincoff, et al., 2004; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Selvarajah, 2006; Sumari & Jalal, 2008). The major topics included in the interview concerned participants':

1. personal cultural and professional background;
2. general opinions regarding multicultural counselling concepts (i.e., 'multicultural counselling' and 'multicultural competence');
3. practice experience in multicultural counselling, particularly relating to the process of engaging with diversity and the way counsellors respond to power differential issues when counselling culturally different clients in the socio-political context of Malaysia;

4. practice self-evaluation strategies; and
5. recommendations for improving the education and training of counsellors in Malaysia.

Based on these topics, specific interview questions were generated and then systematically organised and listed in the form of an Interview Protocol sheet (refer to Appendix G for details).

Procedure for conducting interviews.

The procedure for conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews involved several stages. Firstly, 20 potential participants from survey respondents (the first part of this research) who had provided their contact details for follow-up participation in the research were selected. These potential participants were then contacted to arrange for the date, time, and venue for face-to-face interviews. A total of 12 interviews were conducted. Eleven interviews were in-depth, face-to-face, exploratory and interactive based on the topic guide developed prior to the study, whereas due to interviewee's workload and work commitment, one interview was email-based and so more limited. After the Explanatory Statement (refer to Appendix H for details) was understood and the consent form was signed during a face-to-face meeting, the interviews were conducted and recorded. Among the 12 interviews, eight were conducted mainly in English while the remaining four were in Malay. It was important to note that most participant counsellors preferred to mix the languages of Malay and English during parts of the interviews. For example, when trying to describe some culture-specific terms, most English-speaking interviewees tended to switch to Malay language. A mixed language, or locally known as 'bahasa rojak' was commonly used among

Malaysians regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religion, age, or education. (Note: The term ‘Rojak’ is a Malay word for mixture. It also refers to a traditional fruit and vegetable salad dish commonly found in Malaysia and its neighbouring countries).

Each interview took between 45 minutes to one and a half hours, with an average time of about one hour. All interviews were transcribed verbatim using Microsoft Word 2007 and later analysed mostly using NVivo 8. To protect the identity of the interview participants in this study, pseudonyms were used in the transcripts and citations of the selected quotes in Chapter Six.

Data Analyses and Procedures

This section describes the preparation and organisation of data, procedures to analyse specific data, and specific tools for data analysis according to the types of raw data collected through various methods. Collected raw data were divided into three main categories: (1) quantitative data from the survey; (2) qualitative data from the survey; and (3) interview data. The following describes these data sets in more detail and the stages involved in analysing and interpreting each of these datasets.

Analysing quantitative data from surveys.

The analysis and interpretation of the quantitative data from the survey occurred in two stages: (1) data screening and cleaning and (2) actual data analyses to address specific research questions. In stage one, scores from the survey questionnaire were entered in the SPSS version 17 spreadsheet by following a specific codebook (Refer to Appendix I for details). These scores were screened first to check for errors (Pallant,

2007). After these errors were located and corrected, preliminary analyses were conducted to inspect the data file and to explore the nature of the variables in an attempt to address the research questions (Coakes, Steed, & Ong, 2009; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The specific objectives for conducting preliminary analyses were (1) to check for missing data; (2) to assess the normality of the distribution of scores; (3) to check for outliers; (4) to describe the characteristics of the survey sample (as presented in the 'Participants' section of this chapter and in Chapter Five); and (5) to check the reliability of the instrument of which results were presented in the final section of this chapter. The results from these analyses are briefly presented in Chapter Five.

In the actual data analyses, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the scores on MCC (i.e., Section B of the questionnaire), but only descriptive statistics were used to analyse the scores from the reflections on the understanding and practice of multicultural counselling (i.e., Section C of the questionnaire). The 32 items of the MCCS-MCE were first analysed using means and standard deviations to describe the perceived MCCs of the Malaysian counsellor sample. Then, these items were subjected to exploratory factor analysis to determine the number of extracted factors of MCC (Costello & Osborne, 2005; Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010), and hence address research question 2. In this analysis, principal components analysis (PCA) with oblique rotation was selected as the factor extraction method, which is consistent with the method used in previous MCC studies (Holcomb-McCoy, 2000; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Kim, et al., 2003; Sadowsky, et al., 1994).

For research question 3, the MCC variables were defined as the extracted factors from the factor analysis. The mean scores were computed for each extracted factor by

summing the mean scores of relevant items within each factor and dividing by the number of items on the factor. Means and standard deviations of the factor scores were used to determine in which factors the participants perceived themselves to be most competent and least competent.

For research question 4, a series of independent-samples t-tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to examine the statistical significance of mean differences of participants' perceived MCCs across selected participants' characteristics: gender (male and female), ethnicity (Malay, Chinese, Indian, and Other), highest education (diploma, bachelor, masters, and PhD), completion of multicultural courses (yes and no), and participation in multicultural professional training.(yes and no).

For research question 5, a series of standard (simultaneous) multiple regressions were conducted to examine how well a set of participants' selected characteristics predict perceived MCC dimensions. Nine out of 15 participants' characteristics from Section A of the MCS-Mal were selected as independent variables (predictors) and these were gender, ethnicity, age group, highest education, employment setting, monthly family income, completion of multicultural courses, participation in multicultural professional training, and years of practice experience. They were selected based on previous studies' selected predictors (e.g., Robles-Piña & McPherson, 2001; Sadowsky, et al., 1998; Whitney, 2006) and hence the findings from these studies could be revisited.

A summary of data collection methods, data description and data analyses according to specific research questions are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Summary of Data Collection Methods, Data Description and Data Analyses According to Specific Research Questions

Research Question	Collection Method	Data Description	Data Analysis
1	Survey questionnaire (15 items in Section A and selected items in Section C)	Demographic data: MCQ-SR/MCQ-MRs Perceived training needs (5 5-point Likert-scale Qs); & One comment box (text data).	Frequency test/Multiple dichotomy analysis (Coakes, et al., 2009) Descriptive statistics Coding: Assign codes using NVivo and then generate themes
2	Survey questionnaire (32 items in Section B; and Item 1 and 2 in Section C)	Total scores of each items based on 5-point rating/Likert scales. Text data	Principal Component Analysis (PCA) Coding: Assign codes using NVivo and then generate themes.
3	Survey questionnaire (32 items in Section B)	Total MCC scores and total scores of each factor	Descriptive statistics were performed on total score of each factor.
4	Survey questionnaire (32 items in Section B)	Quantitative data (e.g., Total MCC scores)	DV: Total MCC scores For (a): Independent-samples t-test For (b): One-way ANOVA between-group For (c) and (d): Independent-samples t-test
5	Survey questionnaire (Section A and B)	IV: Categorical data from Section A; and DV: Continuous data (Total MCC scores)	Standard (simultaneous) multiple regression analysis (Field, 2009, p. 253) 15 predictors from demographics (9), education & training (2), and work-related characteristics (4).
6	Survey question (item 1 and 2 in Section C) Interview	2 open-ended questions Text data	Coding: Assign codes using NVivo and then generate themes. Thematic analysis
7	Survey question (item 3 in Section C) Interview	One open-ended Q; and Text data	Coding: Assign codes using NVivo and then generate themes. Thematic analysis.
8	Survey questionnaire (item 4 in Section C) Interview	1 open-ended survey question on challenges and barriers Text data/Interview transcripts	Coding: Assign codes using NVivo → generate themes.
9	Survey questionnaire (items 5-7 in Section C)	Quantitative data (Case vignette: 2MCQ-SR, and 1MCQ-MR) Qualitative (Comment box) Text/Interview transcripts	Thematic analysis. 2MCQ-SR: frequency test 1MCQ-MR: frequency test and multiple dichotomy analysis (Coakes, et al., 2009) Coding: Assign codes using NVivo and then generate themes; Thematic analysis
10	Interview Semi-structured interview	Qualitative data (Text data/Interview transcripts)	Thematic analysis

Note: 'MC' stands for 'multicultural counselling'; 'MCC' stands for 'multicultural counselling competency'; 'MCQ-SR' stands for 'multiple choice question with single response'; 'MCQ-MR' stands for 'multiple choice question with multiple responses'; 'IV' stands for 'independent variable' and 'DV' stands for 'dependent variable'.

Table 6

Summary of Qualitative Data from Survey

Item Location & No.	Item Description	Participants Responses		
		Mailed	Online	Total
Four comment boxes in Part B (MCCS-MCE)	Comments for items 1 to 8	81	31	112
	Comments for items 9 to 15	55	29	84
	Comments for items 16 to 22	50	21	71
	Comments for items 23 to 32	48	14	62
Four open-ended questions in Part C	Multicultural counselling definition	331	118	449
	Multicultural competence definition	327	117	444
	Perceived characteristics of a multiculturally competent counsellor	334	118	452
	Challenges and difficulties in multicultural counselling	326	113	439
Four comment boxes in Part C	Explanation for item C6.	316	114	430
	Clarification for 'Other' in item C7.	41	10	51
	Details for counsellor training needs.	197	64	261
	Overall comment	150	77	227
Total		2256	826	3082

Analysing qualitative data from surveys.

Participants' feedback to the open-ended questions and open-ended comments were first typed in a Microsoft Word document. There were a total of 3082 collected responses from the survey participants who provided their answers and comments in the open-ended options (i.e., 2256 from the mailed survey and 826 from the online survey). Table 6 provides details of participants' responses in each section of the survey questionnaire.

Data were analysed using frequency of occurrence, as outlined by Pallant (2007), or also known as coding analysis. The procedure involved reading through all individual responses given by participants and then assigning suitable codes for each of these participant responses. The objective of such a procedure is to get the pattern from a large scale set of responses. NVivo 8 was used as a tool to store data, organise data, and enable the researcher to assign labels or codes to the data. Coding analysis was used to generate answers for research question 6 (perceptions of multicultural counselling

concepts), 7 (perceived characteristics of a multiculturally competent counsellor), and 8 (barriers and challenges in multicultural counselling practice) based on survey participants' responses on the four open-ended questions in Section C of the MCS-Mal.

Analysing text data from semi-structured interviews.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the interview data for particularly addressing research question 9 and 10 (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is defined as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). This analytic qualitative method is widely used within psychology (e.g., Cinnirella & Loewenthal, 1999; Loewenthal & Rogers, 2004; Tierney & Fox, 2010) because it provides “an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 77). Although this method can be perceived as a ‘poorly demarcated, rarely acknowledged’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 77), ‘non-recipe’ (Potter, 1997, pp. 147-148), and also positivist empiricist in terms of paradigm (Boyatzis, 1998), its theoretical freedom has been argued as compatible with both essentialist and constructionist paradigms within psychology. Thus, it can be seen as not only as a process performed within major analytic traditions (such as grounded theory) (Ryan & Bernard, 2000), but also as “a method in its own right” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78).

This research adopted a step-by-step guide for conducting thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006, p.87), but with some adaptation to suit the functions of NVivo 8 (Bazeley, 2007; Richards, 2009). The procedure mainly involved three phases: in the first cycle (initial or preliminary) analysis (Saldana, 2009), an inductive or bottom-up method (which is somewhat similar to grounded-theory analytic

method) was used. The objective is two-fold: to familiarise with the data and to generate initial codes. This means that the data were coded without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher's analytic preconceptions. The process involved (1) transcribing (verbatim) data using Word 2007, (2) reading and re-reading the transcripts, (3) initial categorising of data with the use of headings in the transcripts, (4) pre-coding, that is, noting down initial ideas or concepts, (5) assigning codes using the free nodes function in NVivo 8, and (6) re-coding to merge redundant codes, delete unwanted/not suitable codes, or rename some codes to better capture the meaning of the data.

In the second-cycle analysis, a deductive or top-down method was used. This phase was somewhat more challenging because it requires "such analytic skills as classifying, prioritising, integrating, synthesizing, abstracting, conceptualising, and theory-building" (Saldana, 2009, p. 45). The procedure involved (1) generating thematic clusters using the tree nodes function in NVivo 8 to categorize the data, (2) transferring or collating relevant free nodes into suitable/potential tree nodes (i.e., thematic clusters) as categories (child nodes) and sub-categories, (3) gathering all data relevant to each thematic cluster, (4) writing an analytic memo for each thematic cluster to summarise the categories and sub-categories in the data, (5) searching and reviewing potential themes in each thematic cluster, and (6) generating an initial thematic map of the analysis.

In the final cycle of analysis, the objective was to define and name the emerging themes. The procedure involved (1) ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, (2) writing an analytic memo regarding the overall story the analysis tells, (3)

generating clear definitions and names for each theme, (4) developing and refining the thematic map by merging or omitting some themes, and (5) selecting the best extract examples by relating back to the overall analysis based on the research questions and literature.

Validity, Reliability, and Trustworthiness of the Research

Validity is an important aspect of a scale or any measures used in quantitative research. According to Field (2009, p. 11), “validity refers to whether an instrument measures what it was designed to measure”. The validity of the questionnaire was carefully addressed during the scale development stage. Firstly, by the use of sound theory on MCC and two highly developed instruments on MCC as the main sources of reference to ensure that the questionnaire measured what it was designed to measure (DeVellis, 2003). Secondly, the final questionnaire was also reviewed by five Malaysian experts in the area of Malaysian counselling, comprising three senior counsellors (a professor who had more than 25-year experience in counselling practice, training, and supervision; an associate professor in counselling who had more than 20-year experience in counselling and also taught the multicultural counselling course for more than five years, and the head of the educational psychology and counselling department in one public university in Malaysia whose expertise was in the area of psychological assessment and evaluation) and two registered practising counsellors, who are life-time members of the PERKAMA. These experts were specifically asked to rate how relevant they thought each item was to what the researcher intended to measure and to evaluate the items’ clarity and conciseness. Thirdly, the questionnaire was also pre-tested with a total of 26 participants from three relevant groups. These were: registered practising counsellors (n=8), academic staff in a counselling

department (n=10), and graduate trainees who were enrolled in a multicultural counselling course (n=8). The pilot test was conducted to check for the clarity of language used, clarity and readability of survey items. According to Creswell (2005), “a pilot test of a questionnaire or interview survey is a procedure in which a researcher makes changes in an instrument based on feedback from a small number of individuals who complete and evaluate the instrument” (p.367). The pilot test was necessary to check for both validity and reliability of instruments used in the research (D.-g. Lee & Lim, 2008). After the pilot test was conducted, the questionnaire was then revised after carefully considering the thoughts, comments, and suggestions made by the expert reviewers and some pilot study participants. The revision was very minor and involved formatting of some items (to make them more readable), changing the scoring for item B5 (from a reversed scored item to a direct scoring item) and splitting a bilingual format into two separate monolingual-questionnaire booklets (to make factor analysis possible). Thus, it appears that the instrument was a valid measure to collect information on participants’ perceived MCC.

In order to ensure that the characteristics and appearance of the survey were otherwise kept the same (with the only difference the modality), a template of the survey questionnaire for use in both the mailed and online survey was first constructed. The process involved constructing all items using the Create Survey function in the Survey Monkey application tool. Once this was done and carefully checked, a copy of the survey questionnaire was printed out in a pdf format using the Print option in the Survey Monkey (see Appendix C). This printout was the Master Copy or the template for preparing the mailed survey questionnaire. By doing this, the questionnaire style,

format, font size, and contents were kept the same for use in both mailed and online survey.

Another important characteristic of a good psychological measurement is reliability. 'Reliability means that a measure (or in this case a questionnaire) should consistently reflect the construct that it is measuring' (Field, 2009, p. 673). In this exploratory research, Cronbach's alphas were used to compute the internal consistency of the items. Internal consistency reliability refers to "the homogeneity of the items within a scale" (DeVellis, 2003, p. 27). Previous literature has reported that existing MCC scales have good internal consistency ranging from alphas equal 0.71 to 0.96 (e.g. Kim, et al., 2003; Ponterotto, et al., 2002; Sadowsky, et al., 1994). This range is consistent with the recommendation made by most scholars in multivariate data analysis, who preferred the use of Cronbach's alpha values of .7 and above because the values of less than .7 deemed the lower limit of acceptability (Hair, et al., 2010; Pallant, 2007; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). However, Sekaran and Bougie (2009) argued that the use of alpha values of .5 and above for subscales is somewhat acceptable for exploratory kind of studies such as the present research.

In the pilot study, three Cronbach's alpha values were computed from the three samples. Reliability analysis of the overall items in the MCCS-MCE from registered practising counsellors, academic staff, and graduate trainees yielded a Cronbach's $\alpha = .72$, $\alpha = .47$, and $\alpha = -.12$, respectively. This analysis provided evidence that the questionnaire was suitable for registered practising counsellors study population because it showed acceptable internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .70$ and above). In fact, in the actual study, the reliability analysis of the overall items in the MCCS-MCE yielded a Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$, indicating an improved and acceptable reliability

instrument (Field, 2009; Pallant, 2007; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The actual factor structure of the MCCS-MCE and its associated alpha values for each factor is reported in Chapter Five.

In qualitative inquiry and research design, there are issues for determining validity and reliability in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Wang, 2008; Yeh & Inman, 2007). For example, Yeh and Inman (2007) discuss subjectivity and self-reflexivity, credibility and adequacy of data, and interpretation of data to address the issues of determining validity and reliability in qualitative research. In the present study, several strategies were also used to address the validity and reliability in the qualitative part of the research. As a researcher-interviewer of this study, I acknowledged my position, past experiences, biases or assumptions that likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study. As a female Malay-Muslim-Bumiputera counsellor who is part of the Malaysian counsellors' community and involved in the education and training of counsellors in Malaysia, I tried my very best to use an apolitical stance to interpret and approach the study. Several reasons justified the stance that I adopted: First, the topic of interest in the research was on the multicultural competence aspect of counselling practice. Thus, the focus in the inquiry and interpretation process centred on finding themes that contributed to counsellors' MCC when dealing with culturally different clients in a counselling process. Second, the collection and interpretation of personal opinions and experiences dealing with issues on culture and diversity in the Malaysian context were treated as factors that contributed to counsellors' multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills; not focusing on their political ideology. Finally, when interpreting the interview data, I acknowledged participants' dilemmas and discomforts. I understand that such discomforts were aroused due to their: (a) fear of work

implication because 10 out of 12 interviewees were government servants; (b) difficulty in self-evaluating their practice in terms of levels of multicultural competence due to context-specific cultural factor such as 'being humble'; (c) perception of the researcher-interviewer who was a female Malay-Muslim-Bumiputera counsellor who was also a counselling lecturer from one of the recognised public universities in Malaysia; or (d) conflicting values as a person and as a professional.

Another validation strategy used in the inquiry and interpretation of the interview was triangulation. According to Creswell (2007), the triangulation process involves "corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective" (p.208). In this research, I used interview questions that triangulated with the survey data, or were consistent with reviews and critiques from the literature in order to maximise the trustworthiness of the interview data. For example, I drew evidence from survey rating scores on perceived MCC, survey comments on 'multicultural competence' term, interview data on counsellors' opinions and comments on the concept of multicultural competence and multiculturally competent counsellors, and my review of the relevant literature to generate better understanding on the construct of MCC. The use of direct quotes when presenting and interpreting some parts of the interview data is also used to illustrate the connections between the interview data and their interpretation and, hence, increase the validity of the claims.

In addition, to strengthen the reliability of the interview data, several mechanisms were employed, such as jotting down interview notes during meetings; recording the interviews using both an audio-tape recorder and a good-quality digital

voice recorder; and transcribing, storing, coding, and managing the interview data using computer softwares such as Word 2007 and NVivo 8.

Summary and Concluding Comments

The chapter has presented a detailed description, discussion, and justification of the research approach and specific design, the sites involved in the research, the research participants, the instrument, the data collection methods and analysis, and the strategies to address validity, reliability, and trustworthiness of the research. Basically, this research was a mixed-method context-specific counselling study. It aimed to explore the understandings and practices of multicultural counselling among Malaysian counsellors in the Malaysian context.

To conduct the research, the researcher developed a survey questionnaire based firmly on the findings of previous research and drawing on existing instruments, with some modifications. The questionnaire was first checked and reviewed by 5 experts in the Malaysian counselling profession. Then, it was pilot-tested with 26 participants to check for the clarity of language used and readability of survey items. Through minor revision and modification, the final questionnaire was administered in the formats of a mailed and online survey questionnaire to a sample population of approximately 1500 practising counsellors in Malaysia, whose names and work locations were published in the counsellors' directory on the LKM official website (<http://www.lkm.gov.my/>). Five hundred and forty one participants responded but 508 completed surveys were analysed. In order to enrich the survey data, 12 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted. Through these interviews, the researcher further explored participants'

perceptions and experiences of multicultural counselling as a concept and practice in the Malaysian context. Data from the quantitative part of the research were analysed using both the descriptive and inferential statistics, whereas qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis. The results are presented and discussed separately in the following chapters.

CHAPTER FIVE

Survey Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the overall results from surveys to address research question 1 to 9. Firstly, the preliminary results are briefly presented. Then, results from the descriptive statistics and tests of statistical significance which addressed the specific research questions are presented. In order to enhance and further explain some findings from statistical analyses of quantitative data, the results of the qualitative data from the survey were included. Survey results are presented using headings and sub-heading that are consistent with the research aims presented in Chapter One. These are:

1. Profiles of Malaysian Counsellors' Demographic, Training, and Work

Backgrounds:

2. Malaysian Counsellors' Self-Perceived MCCs:

- a. Dimensions of MCC among Malaysian Counsellors;
- b. The extent of Malaysian counsellors' perceived MCCs;
- c. Gender, ethnic, highest education, and multicultural training differences in MCC;
- d. Key factors for predicting MCC.

3. Malaysian Counsellors' Reflections on the Understanding and Practice of

Multicultural Counselling:

- a. Understanding multicultural counselling concepts;

- b. Perceived characteristics of a multiculturally competent counsellor in Malaysia;
- c. Barriers and challenges in the practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia;
- d. Engaging with diversity factors in counselling culturally different clients.

Preliminary Results

Prior to analysis, data were examined for accuracy of data entry and missing values based on Pallant (2007) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2006). Surveys with missing data of more than 10% in Section B of the questionnaire were excluded from analysis. Distributions of the MCCS-MCE for mailed, online, and overall surveys were examined for skewness and kurtosis. Results indicated reasonable normality for the scale. The frequency distribution of mean scores is presented using histograms for both mailed, online and overall survey samples in Figure 2 and 3. Eight potential outliers were identified but they did not statistically influence the mean and therefore these cases were retained in the data file.

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of perceived MCCs for mailed and online survey participants. Results showed that there was no significant difference in scores for mailed ($M = 3.53$, $SD = .33$) and online survey participants, $M = 3.58$, $SD = .30$; $t(506) = -1.27$, $p = .21$ (two-tailed).

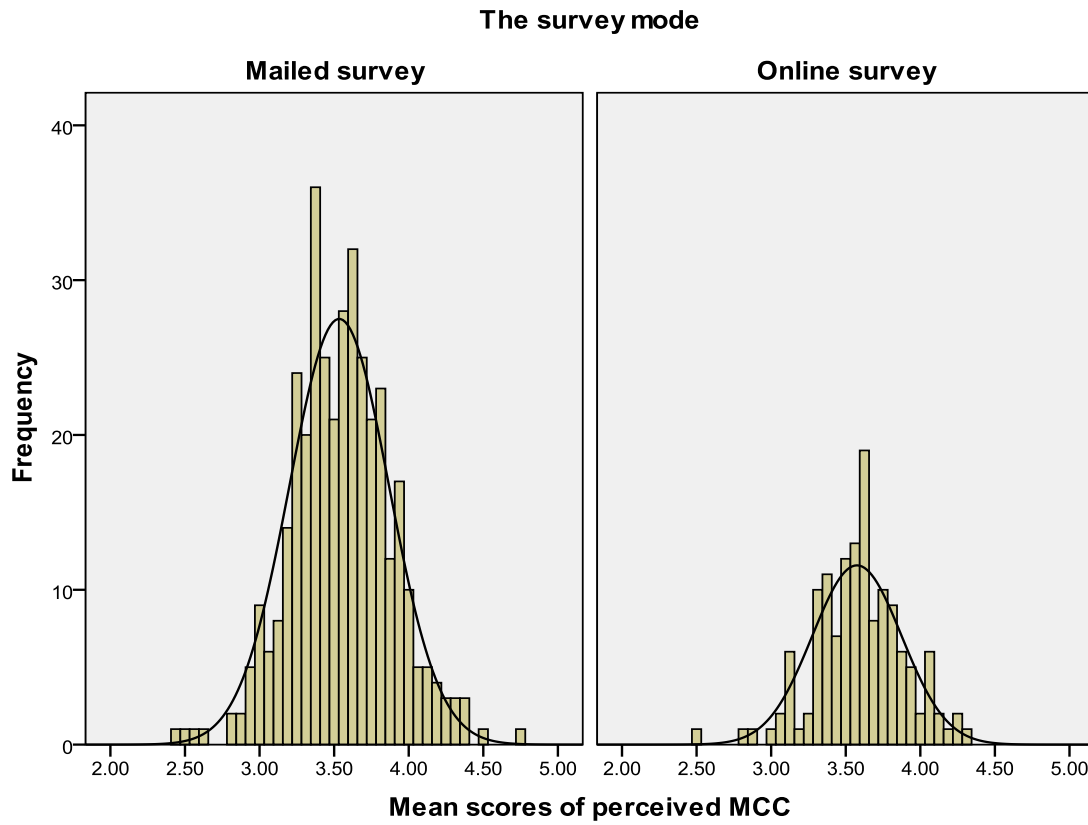


Figure 2. Distribution of MCC mean scores for mailed and online survey samples.

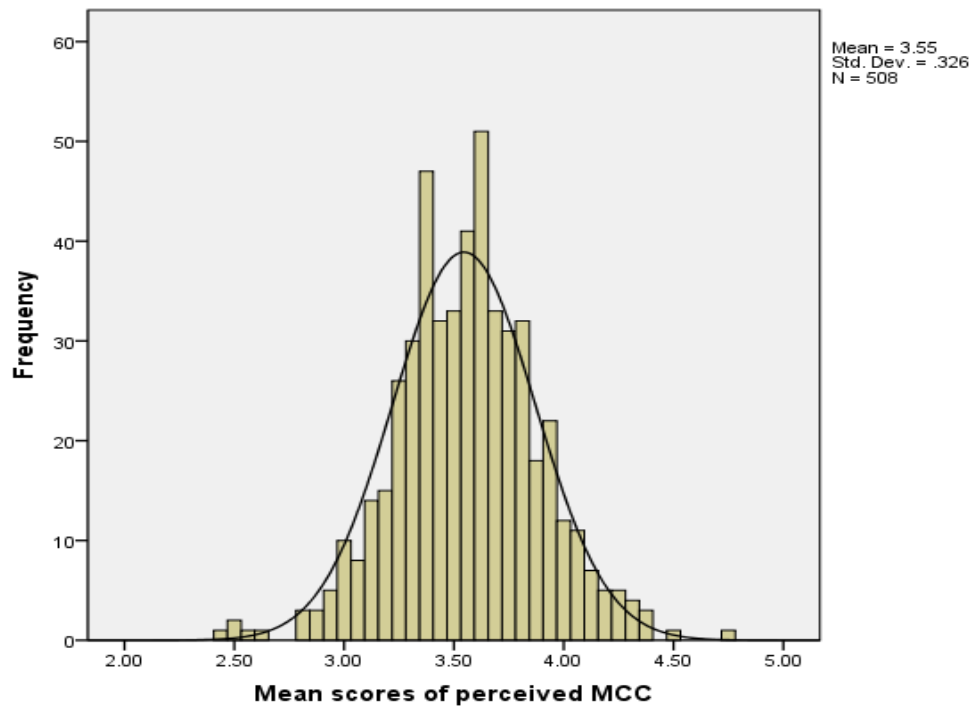


Figure 3. Distribution of MCC mean scores for overall survey sample.

This finding is important because it means that the scores from the mailed and online surveys can be combined for conducting the specific tests of significance to address the specific research questions. However, for the purpose of describing the detailed characteristics of the survey participants, the two samples were analysed individually using the subset function in SPSS. Results are presented in the next section of this chapter.

The preliminary results provided evidence that the perceived MCC data file was free from errors, unwanted outliers, and the mean scores were consistent with the normality assumption. In addition, the preliminary results also provided evidence that the two data sets (from mailed and online surveys) can be combined and treated as the main dependent variable for the actual data analysis to address specific research questions.

Profiles of Malaysian Counsellors' Demographic, Training, and Work Backgrounds

The following sections describe the characteristics of the participants relating to their personal, education and training, and work-related backgrounds.

Demographic background.

Personal background of the survey participants refers to their gender, ethnicity, religion, age range, and monthly family income (or socioeconomic status (SES). Table 7 presents the details of the sample's characteristics.

Table 7

Demographic Characteristics of Survey Samples (n=508)

Characteristic	<u>Mailed</u>		<u>Online</u>		<u>Overall</u>	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Gender						
Male	201	54.5	58	41.7	259	51.0
Female	168	45.5	81	58.3	249	49.0
Ethnicity						
Malays	281	76.2	97	69.8	378	74.4
Chinese	47	12.7	27	19.4	74	14.6
Indians	17	4.6	4	2.9	21	4.1
Others	24	6.5	11	7.9	35	6.9
Religion						
Islam	300	81.3	103	74.1	403	79.3
Christian	23	6.2	13	9.4	36	7.1
Buddhism	29	7.9	19	13.7	48	9.4
Hindu	12	3.2	2	1.4	14	2.8
Other	5	1.4	2	1.4	7	1.4
Age (years)						
20 - 29	28	7.6	38	27.5	66	13.0
30 – 39	115	31.2	45	32.6	160	31.6
40 – 49	130	35.2	36	26.1	166	32.7
50 – 59	86	23.3	18	13.0	104	20.5
60 and more	10	2.7	1	.7	11	2.2
Monthly family income						
RM10K and >	30	8.1	9	6.5	39	7.7
RM8K – RM9999	39	10.6	13	9.4	52	10.3
RM6K – RM7999	78	21.1	25	18.1	103	20.3
RM4K – RM5999	107	29.0	34	24.6	141	27.8
RM2K – RM3999	110	29.8	56	40.6	166	32.7
<RM2K	5	1.4	1	.7	6	1.2

As can be seen in the table, it is clear that while the sample is quite diverse overall, the majority of the mailed survey participants were male-Malay-Muslim counsellors in the age range of 40 to 49 years old. They were mostly in the medium level of SES (i.e., the monthly family income (gross estimates) of participants were divided into three levels - high (RM8000 and more), medium (RM4000 to RM7999), and low (RM3999 and less). However, the majority of the online survey participants were female-Malay-Muslim counsellors in the age range of 30 to 39 years old. They were also mostly in the medium level of SES. The two survey samples shared only one similarity: the majority of both samples came from the medium level of SES.

In addition, other ethnic identities of participants reported in the open comment box in the survey questionnaire were Kadazan and mixed-Kadazan ($n = 11$), Dusun ($n = 3$), Melanau ($n = 3$), Punjabi ($n = 3$), and other minority ethnic groups. In terms of other religious identity, those reported in the survey were Sikhism ($n = 3$), Bahai ($n = 2$), Taoism ($n = 1$) and Free Thinker ($n = 1$). The ratio between male-Malay-Muslim participants to female-Malay-Muslim was 1.31 to 1 whereas the ratio between Malay counsellors to non-Malays was 3 to 1. The percentages of gender and ethnicity were consistent with the percentages of the general population of Malaysian counsellors presented and discussed in the previous chapter (see Table 2). This correspondence means that the statistical significant results can be generalised to the overall study population.

Education and training background.

Survey participants were asked about their highest education, the institutions that they graduated from (local or overseas), their previous education in multicultural counselling (i.e., when they did their formal education in counselling) and recent (i.e., in the past five years) training in the area of multicultural counselling, and also their training needs. This section also reports on the frequency counts of the written responses regarding participants' field of study (or area of specialisation) of their highest qualification. The details of participants' education and training backgrounds are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Education and Training Backgrounds of Survey Participants

Characteristic	<u>Mailed</u>		<u>Online</u>		<u>Overall</u>	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Highest education						
Diploma	28	7.6	6	4.3	34	6.9
Bachelor	178	48.2	64	46.0	242	47.6
Master	141	38.2	64	46.0	205	40.4
PhD	22	6.0	5	3.6	27	5.3
Total	369		139		508	
Institution						
Local	345	93.5	134	96.4	479	94.3
Overseas	24	6.5	5	3.6	29	5.7
Total	369		139		508	
Local university						
UPM	157	45.5	44	32.8	201	42.0
UKM	90	26.1	28	20.9	118	24.6
UM	20	5.8	26	19.4	46	9.6
Other	78	22.6	36	26.9	114	23.8
Total	345		134		479	
Overseas university						
USA	8	32.0	4	80.0	12	40.0
UK	6	24.0	1	20.0	7	23.3
Australia	6	24.0	0	0	6	20.0
Other	4	20.0	0	0	4	16.7
Total	24		5		29	
Completion of multicultural courses						
Yes	292	79.3	109	79.0	401	79.2
No	76	20.7	29	21.0	105	20.8
Total	368		138		506	
Participation in multicultural training						
Yes	165	44.8	68	48.9	233	46.0
No	203	55.2	71	51.1	274	54.0
Total	368		139		507	

Based on the information in Table 8, it was clear that the majority of participants had their highest education level at either Bachelor (47.6%; $n = 242$) or Master (40.4%; $n = 205$) degree qualification from local universities in Malaysia.

Results from the analysis of open-ended question on the participants' field of study showed that out of 259 participants who responded to this question (143 from mailed and 116 from online survey sample), 119 of the participants were specialised in guidance and counselling, 69 were in the counselling and counselling subspecialty (e.g.,

professional counselling, multicultural counselling, counsellor education and supervision), 35 were in the counselling psychology field, 13 were in the psychology and psychology subspecialty (e.g., industrial psychology, educational psychology, psychometric assessment), and 23 were from non-counselling and non-psychology related fields (e.g., business administration, moral education, management). Figure 4 visually displays this result using a column 3-dimensional chart.

The top three universities in Malaysia from which these participants graduated were UPM (42.0%; $n = 201$), UKM (24.6%; $n = 118$), and UM (9.6%; $n = 46$). Other universities reported by participants were UTM (4.6%; $n = 22$), UMS (4.2%; $n = 20$), USM (3.5%; $n = 17$), UPSI (3.5%; $n = 17$); UNIMAS (2.7%; $n = 12$), UUM (2.3%; $n = 11$), UMT (1.35%; $n = 6$), UIA (.45%; $n = 2$), USIM and Open University (each has .23%; $n = 1$). Figure 5 visually displays the frequency distribution of responses regarding the various local universities from which the participants obtained their highest education and training in counselling.

Those who obtained their highest counselling qualification from overseas institutions reported countries such as the USA (40.0%; $n = 12$), followed by UK (23.3%; $n = 7$) and Australia (20.0%; $n = 6$) and other countries (16.7%; $n = 4$) such as Canada, Taiwan, Holland, and Egypt (each has $n = 1$). This finding shows that the USA was still the most preferred country in which Malaysian counsellors chose to pursue their counselling education overseas, as initially observed by Scorzelli (1987a).

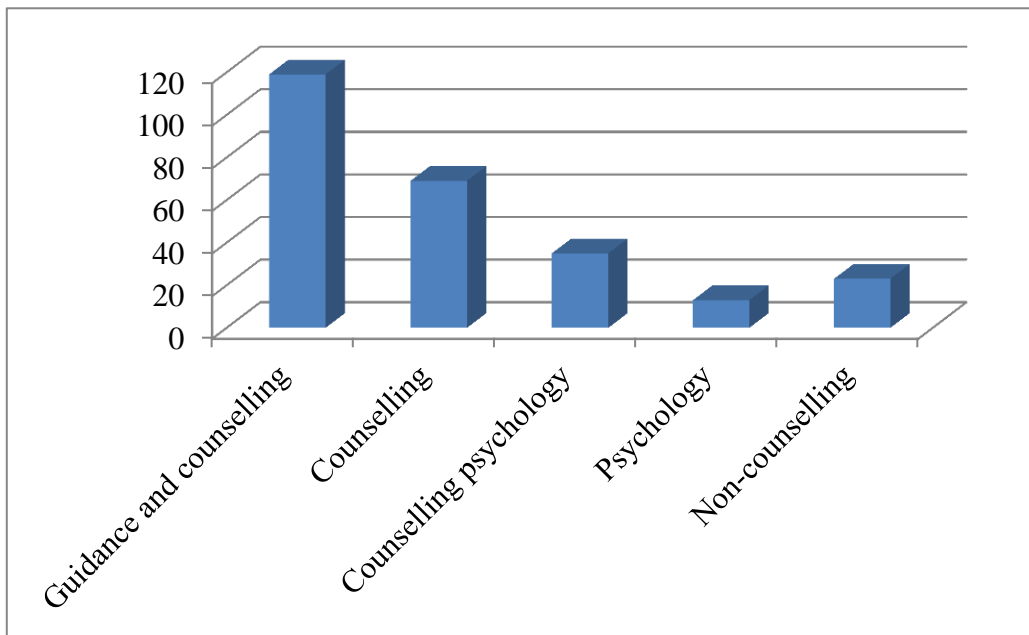


Figure 4. Frequency distribution of participants' field of study of their highest education.

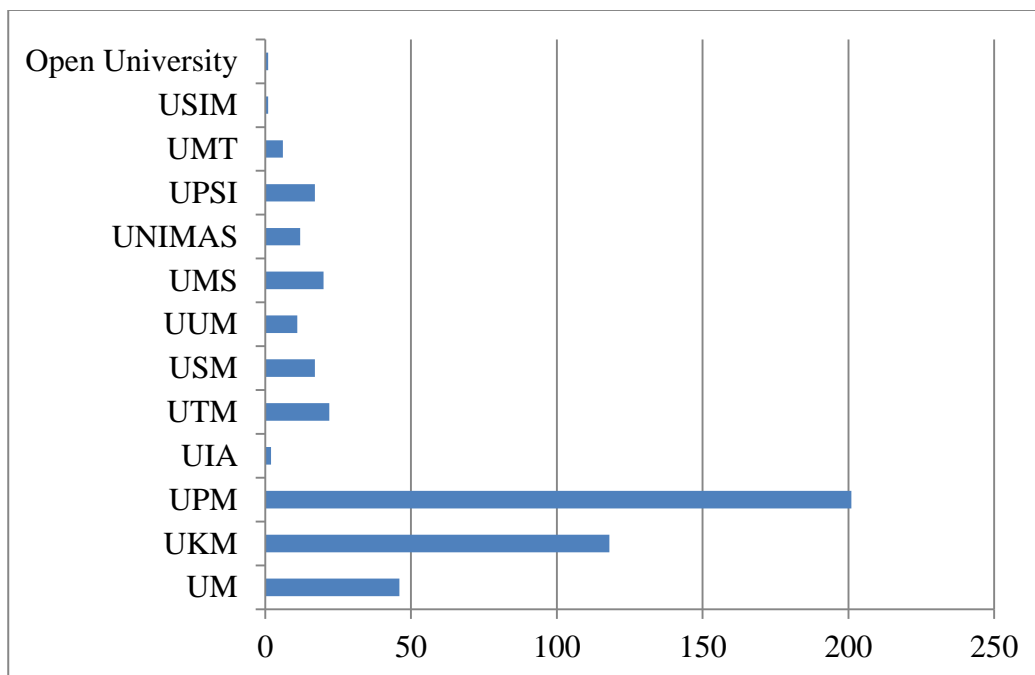


Figure 5. Frequency of local university that participants obtained their highest education and training in counselling.

There are some similarities and differences between the education and training background of the mailed and online survey samples. Some observed similarities are in terms of the top three universities that they graduated from – UPM, UKM, and UM –, the early exposure to multicultural counselling subjects during their formal education in counselling, and the lack of recent training or professional development in multicultural counselling since the past five years. However, these samples have slight differences regarding highest educational achievement: the majority of online survey participants had an equal number of Bachelor and Masters Degree qualifications (i.e., each 46.0%; n=64), whereas the majority of mailed participants had a Bachelor degree qualification (48.2%; n=178). This difference has no influence on the mean scores of perceived MCCs for mailed and online participants as confirmed by the t-test results presented earlier in the Preliminary Results section.

Table 8 also presents some findings on the previous education and recent training in multicultural counselling. It was found that 401 participants (79.2%) reported that they had taken and completed subjects or courses in multicultural counselling during their formal education in a counsellor education program. However, the majority of them (54.0%; n = 274) had not attended any professional development workshops or seminars on cultural diversity or multicultural counselling in the past five years. This clearly indicates that the participants had early exposure to multicultural counselling but they may not have felt a need to upgrade their knowledge and skills after they graduated from their respective counsellor education programs. This will be discussed further under participants' training needs.

Table 9

A Cross Tabulation Table between Participants' Completion of Multicultural Counselling Subjects and Their Participation in Multicultural Counselling Professional Development

		Attended professional development training on multicultural counselling		
		Yes	No	Total
Completion of multicultural subjects	Yes	206	195	401
		51.4%	48.6%	100.0%
	No	26	79	105
		24.8%	75.2%	100.0%
	Total	232	274	506
		45.8%	54.2%	100.0%

In order to investigate whether there is a specific pattern of relationship between participants' previous education and recent training in multicultural counselling, a crosstab analysis using Pearson Chi-square as statistic is used. Results from this analysis are presented in Table 9.

The table shows that only 206 participants (40.7%) out of 508 had previous education and recent training in multicultural counselling, 195 participants (38.5%) had taken and completed multicultural counselling subjects but had not participated in professional development workshops or seminars on multicultural counselling, and only 26 participants who had not attended and completed any multicultural counselling subjects but had participated in professional development seminars on multicultural counselling. There were 15.6 per cent participants ($n = 79$) who still lacked education and training in multicultural counselling. A Chi-square test for independence (with Yates Continuity Correction) indicated a significant association between previous education and recent training in multicultural counselling, $\chi^2 (1, n = 506) = 22.67, p = .00$, $\phi = .217$.

Table 10

Means and Standard Deviations of Participants' Training Needs

	N	Min	Max	M	SD
1. Training on general counselling competencies	468	1	5	3.87	1.22
2. Training on MCCs	484	1	5	4.52	.76
3. Training on culture or cultural diversity	477	1	5	4.45	.77
4. Upskills training on counselling skills and techniques	466	1	5	4.29	.89
5. Any training related to the process of counselling.	471	1	5	4.14	.99
Valid N (listwise)	447				

In addition, the participants' training needs were explored using descriptive statistics. The results are presented in Table 10.

Overall, the survey participants gave high ratings to the five types of training with an average score of 4.26 (SD=.78). However, the top three trainings that participants scored highest were training on MCCs (M=4.52, SD=.76), training on culture or cultural diversity (M=4.45, SD=.77), and upskills training on counselling skills and techniques (M=4.29, SD=.89), indicating that these areas were highly needed for their professional development training. This finding raises an issue of what could be the reasons on why the majority of participants (n=274) did not participate in professional development training in multicultural counselling in the past five years, despite having high ratings on multicultural counselling training needs. This is discussed further in Chapter Seven.

Further analysis on the participants' responses in the open comment box pertaining to counsellors' training needs revealed some important information. Out of

508 participants, 261 provided their comments to justify their ratings on specific training needs. The majority of them reported that such types of training were highly needed, in order to:

1. become more multiculturally competent counsellors (e.g., [English-translated] *to gain current knowledge, information, theories, skills and techniques in order to help me become more competent in multicultural counselling; Any form of training is beneficial to a practitioner as it not only is a refresher but also may provide insight into new knowledge/skills not known to practitioner; and counsellors need to be aware and understand the sensitiveness of cultural influences on clients. This training will help counsellors in giving more effective counselling session[s];*
2. provide better quality, more effective, professional and culturally-sensitive services (e.g., [English-translated] *Enhancing professionalism from time to time can strengthen the services that we provide; ...if training such as a continuous personal and professional development can be made available, it would be good for counsellors to upgrade the quality of their counselling services to become more professional; and “to update skills and competency in multicultural counselling so that the best possible service can be delivered to clients who come from different race and ethnicity”*); and
3. upgrade the status of Malaysian counselling profession (e.g., *“My basic counselling skills are sufficient, but I need training in multicultural counselling to strengthen my profession[alism]”*; *Any training and exposure related to enhancing the competency and skills of counselling are needed on a continuous basis to strengthen and upgrade counselling towards becoming a quality service, especially in Malaysia*”).

On the other hand, there were some participants who suggested some other types of training for professional counsellor development in Malaysia, such as training in handling terminally ill clients, in dealing with substance dependency, in marriage and family counselling, in Islamic perspective counselling, in handling elderly clients, communication skills in multicultural counselling, and other trainings in a specific skill-based or therapy-based counselling.

To summarise, results on the participants' education and training background showed that the majority of the Malaysian counsellors had their highest education at either the bachelor or masters degree from local institutions in Malaysia. Although most of them had completed education in multicultural counselling, more than half of them were still lacking in current knowledge and practice in multicultural counselling as indicated by their responses to the question on their recent participation in professional development workshops and seminars on multicultural counselling. The overall results on participants' training needs showed high ratings in the five specific training areas in multicultural counselling.

Work-related information.

Participants' work-related information refers to their current job title or position, work or employment setting, type of counselling services that they provided to clients, years of practice, and their clientele groups. Table 11 presents the characteristics of the participants' work-related background in terms of their current job title, work or employment setting, and years of practice in counselling among the mailed, online and overall survey samples.

Table 11

Job, Work Setting, and Years of Practice of the Survey Sample

Characteristic	<u>Mailed</u>		<u>Online</u>		<u>Overall</u>	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Job title						
School counsellor	115	40.6	37	27.0	152	36.2
Lecturer/educator	26	9.2	15	10.9	41	9.8
Psychology officer	23	8.1	27	19.7	50	11.9
Counselling officer	11	3.9	5	3.6	16	3.8
Counsellor	34	12.0	29	21.2	63	15.0
Administrative officer	10	3.5	13	9.5	23	5.5
Police/army counsellor	6	2.1	9	6.6	15	3.6
Private practitioner	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other	58	20.5	2	1.5	60	14.3
Total	283	100.0	137	100.0	420	100.0
Work setting						
Schools	154	41.8	47	33.8	201	39.6
Colleges/universities	93	25.3	43	30.9	136	26.8
Drug rehab centres	2	.5	0	0.0	2	.4
Hospitals	6	1.6	8	5.8	14	2.8
Public agencies	83	22.6	34	24.5	117	23.1
Private agencies	2	.5	0	0.0	2	.4
Private practice	6	1.6	0	0.0	6	1.2
Other	22	6.0	7	5.0	29	5.7
Total	368		139		507	
Years of counselling practice						
Less than one	4	1.1	3	2.2	7	1.4
1 - 5	101	27.4	58	41.7	159	31.3
6 - 10	148	40.1	56	40.3	204	40.2
11 - 15	72	19.5	13	9.4	85	16.7
16 - 20	23	6.2	4	2.9	27	5.3
More than 20	21	5.7	5	3.6	26	5.1
Total	369		139		508	

All participants' responses to an open-ended question which asked their current job title were listed and later coded for similar categories. Out of 508 participants, 420 responded to this question. All responses were coded according to the following categories: (a) school counsellor or guidance and counselling teacher; (b) lecturer/counsellor educator; (c) psychology officer; (d) counselling officer; (e) counsellor; (f) administrative officer (e.g. head of counselling unit); (g) police/army counsellor; (h) private practitioner; and (i) other. Some of these categories shared similar properties in job qualification and specification. For example, although (c), (d), and (e) indicated full-practising counsellors but (c) and (d) were job titles normally used for counsellors in the government sector. Similarly, (b) and (f) denoted semi-practising

counsellors, but the core job specification was different (academic and management, respectively).

Overall, in terms of the top three occupations reported as the profession of the survey sample (82.68%; n=420), 152 participants (36.2%) used 'school counsellor' or 'guidance and counselling teacher', 66 (15.7%) used 'counselling officer' or 'psychology officer', and 63 (15.0%) participants used the general term of 'counsellor'. The remaining participants (14.3%, n = 60) used other job titles for their profession such as 'lecturer' or 'counsellor educator' (9.8%, n = 41) or 'counselling administrative officers' (5.5%, n=23) or *kaunselor pentadbir* including police or army counselling administrators (3.6%, n=15). Similar pattern of results was observed among the mailed and online survey samples with one exception: the number for 'administrator' were higher in the online survey sample (n=22), suggesting more counselling administrators in the survey sample preferred the online modality compared to the mailed one.

In terms of their work or employment setting, the top three settings of their current employment were the schools (39.6%, n=201), the colleges and institutes of higher learning (n = 136, 26.8%), and the public agencies, public organisations or public departments (n = 117, 23.1%). The rest of the survey participants reported that they worked in the private agencies and/or private practice (n=8, 1.6%) and treatment-related centres (n=16, 3.2%) such as hospitals and drug rehabilitation centres, and 29 (5.7%) worked in other places (e.g., NGOs, n=4; state counselling centres, n=4; police/army camps, n=6; foreign embassy, n=1; religious centre, n=1; and private training centre, n=1). The majority of the survey participants had practised counselling for one to ten years (n = 364, 71.5%) with 26 participants having more than 20 years in counselling

practice. Similar pattern of results was observed among the mailed and online survey samples.

Results regarding the type of counselling services that counsellors mostly provide to their clients, counsellors' main clients' group and main clients' ethnic background were derived from the multiple dichotomy analysis (Coakes, et al., 2009). This analysis involved individual frequency counts of answer(s) to each multiple-choice-question with multiple responses (MCQ-MR), regardless of the participants' identification. The analysis was chosen because its results provided a snapshot of the type of counselling services available in Malaysia and identifies which type of services scored from most to least, based on frequency count. Figure 6 displays, in a bar chart, the frequency distribution of counselling services mostly provided to clients.

Overall, the top three types of counselling services that scored from highest to least in the frequency count (total = 1349) were: academic-related counselling (n=384; 28.5%), career or vocational counselling (n=381; 28.2%), and family and marriage counselling (n=248; 18.4%). Other types of counselling (n=89; 6.6%) reported by some participants were: individual counselling (n=34), psychosocial counselling (n=21), crisis counselling (n=15), group counselling (n=13), rehabilitative or health-related counselling (n=12) and adolescent counselling (n=12), and some others.

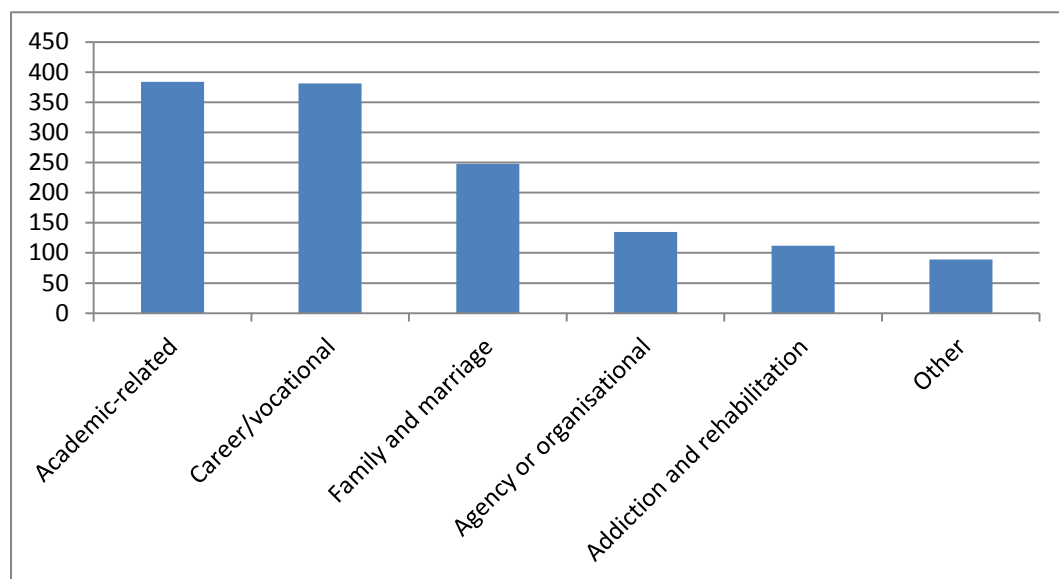


Figure 6. Percentages of counselling services mostly provided to clients.

Results for the participants' clientele groups refer to the results on the reported clients' societal group and also clients' ethnic background. Out of 903 total responses, students ($n=393$; 43.5%) were the main group of clients reported by 77.4 per cent participants, followed by staff or employees ($n=248$; 27.5%), community people ($n=133$; 14.7%), drug abusers ($n=32$; 3.5%), in-patients or hospitalised persons ($n=26$; 2.9%), prisoners ($n=19$; 2.1%), and elderly people ($n=17$; 1.9%). Other clients' group ($n=35$; 3.90%) reported in the survey were student-related individuals/groups (e.g., parents, teachers, school staff; $n=17$), public servants ($n=7$), adolescents ($n=7$), and some minority others such as victims of social crimes and ex-convicts. Figure 7 visually displays the frequency distribution of participants' main client groups.

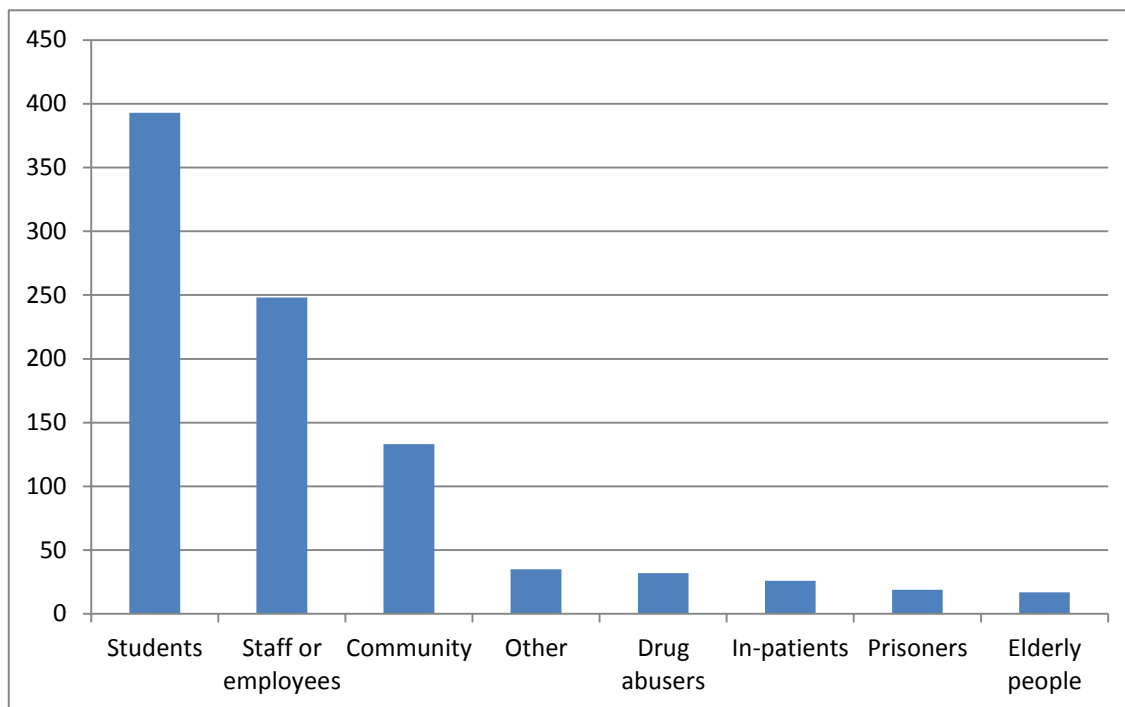


Figure 7. Frequencies of Malaysian counsellors' main client groups.

In terms of the clients' ethnic backgrounds, participants' overall responses to this question produced a total of 711 answers. Out of 711 answers, participants reported that their clients were mainly Malays ($n=459$; 64.6%), followed by Chinese ($n=128$; 18.00%), Indians ($n=81$; 11.4%), and other minority ethnic ($n=43$; 6.0%). Other ethnic groups of clients that were reported by 62 participants were mostly Bumiputera Sabah and Sarawak (e.g., Kadazan, Dususun, Iban, and others; $n=54$), foreigners (e.g., Pakistani, Indonesian, Bangladeshi; $n=17$), Orang Asli ($n=6$), and some other ethnic minority groups in Malaysia such as Bajau ($n=7$), Bugis ($n=2$), Serani ($n=1$), and Sikh ($n=1$). This result is consistent with the percentages of the Malays, Chinese, and Indians in the Malaysian population and also in the Malaysian counsellor population. Table 12 presents these corresponding percentages in details.

Table 12

Percentages of Main Clients' Ethnic Backgrounds Compared to the Malaysian Counsellors and Malaysian Population

Groups	Main clients	Participant counsellors	Malaysian counsellor community	Malaysian population
Ethnicity				
Malays	64.6	74.4	75.1	53.3
Chinese	18.0	14.6	15.5	26.0
Indians	11.4	4.1	3.8	7.9
Others	6.0	6.9	5.6	12.8

To summarise, results on the work-related backgrounds of participants showed that most of them worked as student counsellors or guidance and counselling teachers in the schools. Most of them had practised counselling for 1 to 10 years, and the top three counselling services mostly offered to clients in Malaysia were academic-related and career, vocational counselling, and family and marriage counselling. The top two groups of clients reported by the participants were students and staff (or employees), and, in terms of clients' ethnic background, the majority of the clients' population in Malaysia were Malays.

Malaysian Counsellors' Self-Perceived MCCs

This section presents results pertaining to the nature and extent of self-perceived MCCs among professional counsellors in Malaysia. Firstly, the descriptive statistics for each item from the MCCS-MCE scale (Section B of the MCS-Mal) are investigated to identify the most and least scored items. Secondly, the underlying factor structure of the MCC scale used in this study is explored and defined. Thirdly, the extent of Malaysian counsellors' self-perceived MCCs based on the extracted dimensions of MCC is identified. Fourthly, the self-perceived MCCs of counsellors are compared between

groups based on participants' gender, ethnicity, highest education, and training background in multicultural counselling. Lastly, results on the factors that could predict MCC among professional counsellors community in Malaysia are presented.

Table 13 displays the means and standard deviations of each item in the MCCS-MCE scale. Overall, on a five-point scale using several rating scales (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*; 1 = *very limited* to 5 = *very good*; 1 = *totally not true* to 5 = *totally true*), the means ranged from 2.10 (Item 8: *Potential racial tension/conflicts exist between my clients and myself in terms of ethnic privileges and oppression*) to 4.29 (Item 5: *Counsellors should treat clients equally regardless of their cultural backgrounds*). Results showed that Malaysian counsellors rated very high ($M = 4.00$ and above) on three statements: counsellors should treat clients equally, Bumiputera have privileges and advantages, and Malaysian culture is unique, to indicate their strong agreement towards these statements. Theoretically, these items (among many others) were intended to measure counsellors' multicultural awareness. However, they rated very low ($M = \text{less than } 3.00$) on five statements: Potential racial tension/conflicts exist in counselling, ethnic minority have problems in accessing counselling, and Malaysian counselling has neglected ethnic minorities' needs, to indicate their limited multicultural awareness on these statements; and on counselling gay men and lesbian clients (as examples of specialised or minority groups of clients), to indicate their limited multicultural skills in specialised areas of multicultural counselling practice.

Table 13

Mean and Standard Deviation of Items in the MCCS-MCE Scale

Item Summary	N	Mean	SD
1. Bumiputera have privileges and advantages	506	<u>4.09</u>	.90
2. Non-Bumiputera have unique challenges	498	3.29	1.17
3. Ethnic minority have problems in accessing counselling	506	<u>2.55</u>	1.09
4. Stigmas and taboos exist in counselling	506	3.23	1.16
5. Counsellors should treat clients equally	507	<u>4.29</u>	1.09
6. Malaysian culture is unique	506	<u>4.05</u>	.75
7. Malaysian counselling has neglected ethnic minorities' needs	503	<u>2.93</u>	1.11
8. Potential racial tension/conflicts exist in counselling	508	<u>2.10</u>	.96
9. Understanding Malaysian culture	507	3.95	.68
10. Understanding ethnic differences	502	3.75	.73
11. Understanding differences in religion and spirituality	504	3.76	.78
12. Understanding gender differences	506	3.95	.76
13. Understanding racism issues in Malaysia	503	3.69	.82
14. Understanding cultural influence on thinking and acting	502	3.95	.74
15. Understanding the impact of your culture on culturally different clients	505	3.91	.78
16. Ethnic differences exist in counselling	508	3.25	1.18
17. Individual differences in values, beliefs, and practices exist within groups	507	3.85	.96
18. Conflicting values exist between mainstream and Malaysian counselling	504	3.38	1.00
19. Barriers and challenges exist in cross-cultural counselling relationship	507	3.67	.92
20. Culture and racism influence identity development	507	3.83	.88
21. Culture-specific strategies exist in counselling	505	3.41	1.10
22. Personal biases, language dominance, or rigidity in ethnic identity require referral	507	3.74	.91
23. Counselling ethnically different client	508	3.72	.75
24. Counselling non-Bumiputera client	508	3.84	.69
25. Counselling religiously different client	508	3.68	.73
26. Counselling women	508	3.97	.68
27. Counselling men	506	3.89	.69
28. Counselling the elderly	507	3.50	.85
29. Counselling gay men	502	<u>2.84</u>	1.00
30. Counselling lesbian clients	504	<u>2.87</u>	1.01
31. Counselling disabled persons	506	3.20	.98
32. Counselling very poor clients	508	3.86	.74

Note: Items 1 to 8 were measured using 1 for 'strongly disagree' to 5 for 'strongly agree', items 9 to 15 used scales 1 for 'very limited' to 5 for 'very good', items 16 to 22 used scales 1 for 'totally not true' to 5 for 'totally true', and items 23 to 32 used scales 1 for 'very limited' to 5 for 'very good'.

To further understand the mean scores of these items, participants' responses

(i.e., a total of 329 comments) to the four comment boxes in the MCCS-MCE

instrument were coded and analysed. Results revealed no specific pattern of responses.

Participants' comments were diverse and included themes such as:

1. sharing of their personal practice experiences in multicultural counselling (e.g., *My counselling practicum in a hospital in Sabah made me aware that most West Malaysians do not understand the unique cultures of East Malaysians; I had problems counselling men as they are not as cooperative as women. Most of them don't give good response probably because of the same gender. Otherwise, I had no problems with other patients.*);
2. providing tips and recommendations for further improvement in the Malaysian counselling profession (e.g., *To be a good counsellor, you must have a sound knowledge of the different religion and cultural issues of our citizens; Always refer your client if you have problems related to their religious beliefs or cultural practice*);
3. pointing out 'culturally sensitive factors among clients' in the Malaysian context (e.g., *Again, it is not so much a racial issue, it's more religious differences*); and
4. highlighting the importance of multicultural competencies when counselling Malaysian clients (e.g., *Acknowledging and using the differences to enhance relationships depends on the counsellors' ability to self reflect and develop a counselling environment; to be an effective counsellor, understanding of own and client's culture is very important. Only through friendship with other ethnic Malaysians will make us understand and respect their culture*).

Overall, these responses contribute to the understanding of MCC among professional counsellors in Malaysia.

Dimensions of MCC.

This sub-section presents the results which provide answers to the factor structure of MCC. This is necessary because, theoretically, the scale used in the present research adopted a 3-factor structure model (D. W. Sue, et al., 1992; D. W. Sue, et al., 1982) and many existing studies have also suggested a 3-factor structure – multicultural awareness, multicultural knowledge, and multicultural skills – as constituents or dimensions of MCC (e.g., Khawaja, et al., 2009; Kim, et al., 2003). Therefore, the following results are presented to identify the factors which constitute the MCCs using a professional counsellor community sample in Malaysia, and to determine whether the finding is consistent with the theoretical model and findings from previous research.

Step 1. PCA with Oblimin rotation of eigenvalues over 1 extraction.

The 32 items of the MCCS-MCE were subjected to PCA using SPSS Version 17. Although there are some debates and criticisms on the use of PCA for factor extraction in the literature (Costello & Osborne, 2005; Hair, et al., 2010; Sharma, 1996; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), PCA is still one of the most common methods for factor extraction in MCC studies (e.g., Holcomb-McCoy, 2000; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Kim, et al., 2003; Ponterotto, et al., 2002). Prior to performing PCA, the suitability of data for factor analysis was assessed. The inter-item correlation matrix is presented in Appendix J. Examination of the correlation matrix indicated that 20 items correlated $\geq \pm .30$ with at least 1 other item in the matrix (range: .30 - .73). Thus, factorability is assumed.

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy were used to evaluate the strength of the linear association among the 32 items in the correlation matrix. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($\chi^2=5729.82$, $p=.000$), which indicated that the correlation matrix was not an identity matrix. The KMO statistic (.83), which is an index that compares the magnitude of the observed correlations with the magnitude of the partial correlation coefficients, was exceeding the recommended value of .6 (Kaiser, 1970, 1974). These results support the factorability of the correlation matrix.

PCA revealed the presence of nine components with eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining a total of 62% of the variance. In contrast, an inspection of the screeplot (Cattell, 1966) revealed a clear break after the sixth component, indicated a six-component solution for further investigation. The six-component solution was further supported by the results of Parallel Analysis, which showed only six components with eigenvalues exceeding the corresponding criterion values for a randomly generated data matrix of the same size (32 variables x 508 respondents). In view of this mixed findings, a range of options were utilised to determine the final structure, as suggested by Pallant (2007). Forced factor solutions of five, six and seven components were explored. Initially, both Oblimin and Varimax rotations were used, but a final decision was taken to use Oblimin rotation (Direct Oblimin) because (1) some factors were correlated (Costello & Osborne, 2005), (2) the rotation suits the exploratory nature of the present study (Hair, 2006), and (3) the rotation used was consistent with previous MCC studies (Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Kim, et al., 2003; Sodowsky, et al., 1994).

The five-factor solution appeared to be the best structure, the most meaningful and parsimonious solution. Five problematic items (four were cross-loaded, i.e., item 8, 26, 27, and 32, and item 5 had low factor loadings of less than .40) were excluded and factor analysis results for the refined scale are presented in the following section.

Step 2. PCA with Oblimin rotation of five-factor solution.

The forced five-component solution resulted in a 27-item scale with five factors. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .808, indicating a good level of intercorrelation among the items (Kaiser, 1974). Similarly, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(351)=4764.41$, $p<.001$. Communalities in the five-factor solution ranged from .22 to .83. The five factors accounted for 51.35% of the variance. Details of the total variance explained by the five extracted factors of the MCCS-MCE scale are presented in Table 14.

Table 14

Total Variance Explained by the Five Extracted Factors of the MCCS-MCE

Factor	<i>Initial Eigenvalues</i>			<i>Extracted Sums of Squared Loadings</i>		
	Total	% Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% Variance	Cumulative %
I	5.27	19.51	19.51	5.27	19.51	19.51
II	3.39	12.55	32.06	3.39	12.55	32.06
III	2.17	8.04	40.11	2.17	8.04	40.11
IV	1.62	6.00	46.10	1.62	6.00	46.10
V	1.42	5.25	51.35	1.42	5.25	51.35

A review of the items associated with each factor resulted in the identification of MCC dimensions. Table 15 and Table 16 present the factor loadings from the rotated factor pattern matrix and the factor structure matrix (because an oblique solution was used).

Factor 1, Multicultural Understanding (e.g., Item 10: *At present, how would you rate your understanding regarding differences in ethnicity among Malaysians*), comprised seven items and accounted for 19.51% of the variance. This factor focuses on the professional counsellors' understanding of culture and diversity and the impact that culture has on clients and counsellors in counselling.

Factor 2 was defined as Multicultural Knowledge (e.g., Item 19: *There are initial barriers and challenges related to the cross-cultural counselling relationship*), which also comprised seven items and explained 12.55% of the variance. The items involved professional counsellors' knowledge of multicultural issues in the Malaysian counselling.

Factor 3, Multicultural Skills with specialised client populations (e.g., Item 29: *How well would you rate your ability to accurately assess the counselling needs of lesbian clients?*), comprised five items that accounted for an additional 8.04% of the variance. These items focused on professional counsellors' specialised counselling skills in dealing with specialised client groups. These groups are among the minority-and-the-least-accessible client populations in the Malaysian context.

Table 15

Factor Loadings from the Rotated Five-Factor Pattern Matrix for the 27-Item MCCA-MCE: Principal Component Analysis with Oblimin Rotation

MCCA-MCE Items	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Multicultural Understanding					
Understanding ethnic differences	.81				
Understanding gender differences	.80				
Understanding differences in religion and spirituality	.78				
Understanding racism issues in Malaysia	.78				
Understanding Malaysian culture	.72				
Understanding the impact of culture on culturally different clients	.57				
Understanding cultural influence on thinking and behaving	.49				
2. Multicultural Knowledge					
Barriers and challenges exist in cross-cultural counselling relationship		.75			
Individual differences in values, beliefs, and practices exist within groups		.73			
Culture and racism influence identity development		.70			
Conflicting values exist between mainstream and Malaysian counselling		.69			
Ethnic differences exist in counselling		.67			
Personal biases, language dominance, or rigidity in ethnic identity require referral		.44			
Culture-specific strategies exist in counselling		.43			
3. Multicultural Skills (Specialised Client Populations)					
Counselling gay men			.90		
Counselling lesbian clients			.90		
Counselling disabled persons			.77		
Counselling the elderly			.60		
4. Multicultural Awareness (Beliefs and Attitudes)					
Ethnic minority have problems in accessing counselling				.70	
Malaysian counselling has neglected ethnic minorities' needs				.61	
Non-Bumiputera have unique challenges				.52	
Malaysian culture is unique				.49	
Bumiputera have privileges and advantages				.45	
Stigma and taboos exist in counselling				.43	
5. Multicultural Skills (Culturally Different Clients)					
Counselling non-Bumiputera client					.85
Counselling ethnically different client					.82
Counselling religiously different client					.75

Table 16

Factor Loadings from the Rotated Five-Factor Structure Matrix for the 27-Item MCCS-MCE: Principal Component Analysis with Oblimin Rotation

MCCS-MCE Items	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Multicultural Understanding					
Understanding ethnic differences	.80				
Understanding racism issues in Malaysia	.78				
Understanding differences in religion and spirituality	.78				
Understanding gender differences	.77				
Understanding Malaysian culture	.72				
Understanding the impact of culture on culturally different clients	.63				
Understanding cultural influence on thinking and behaving	.54				
2. Multicultural Knowledge					
Barriers and challenges exist in cross-cultural counselling relationship		.74			
Individual differences in values, beliefs, and practices exist within groups		.73			
Culture and racism influence identity development		.70			
Conflicting values exist between mainstream and Malaysian counselling		.69			
Ethnic differences exist in counselling		.67			
Personal biases, language dominance, or rigidity in ethnic identity require referral		.48			
Culture-specific strategies exist in counselling		.44			
3. Multicultural Skills (Specialised Client Populations)					
Counselling gay men			.91		
Counselling lesbian clients			.91		
Counselling disabled persons			.80		
Counselling the elderly			.66		
4. Multicultural Awareness (Beliefs and Attitudes)					
Ethnic minority have problems in accessing counselling				.68	
Malaysian counselling has neglected ethnic minorities' needs				.60	
Non-Bumiputera have unique challenges				.52	
Malaysian culture is unique				.50	
Bumiputera have privileges and advantages				.46	
Stigma and taboos exist in counselling				.45	
5. Multicultural Skills (Culturally Different Clients)					
Counselling non-Bumiputera client					.89
Counselling ethnically different client					.86
Counselling religiously different client					.80

Factor 4, Multicultural Awareness (Beliefs and Attitudes), included six items (e.g., Item 3: *Persons in ethnic minority groups have problems in accessing counselling services from counsellors who are predominantly female Malay-Muslim*) and explained an additional 6.00% of the overall variance. This factor focuses on the professional counsellors' characteristic of being aware of multicultural issues related to ethnic minorities in Malaysia, of the uniqueness of Malaysian culture that could pose some challenges to the Malaysian counselling profession.

Factor 5, Cross-Cultural Skills with culturally different clients (e.g., Item 24: *How would you rate your ability to effectively treat a client whose cultural background is from the non-Bumiputera group?*), consisted three items that accounted for the remaining 5.25% of the variance. These items involved professional counsellors' skills in dealing with clients from different cultural groups.

The 27-item scale generated a minimum score of 27 and a maximum score of 135. Mean scores were computed for the individual factors or sub-scales using Transform (compute variable) function of the SPSS software. Table 17 presents the minimum-maximum score, descriptive statistics, between-factor correlations, and alpha coefficients for the five generated sub-scales of the MCCA-MCE.

Table 17

Factor Correlations and Factor Alpha Coefficients for the MCCS-MCE Scale (N=508)

5-Factor Solution	Min	Max	*M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Multicultural understanding (n=7)	1.86	5.00	3.85	.55	(.85)				
2. Multicultural knowledge (n=7)	1.00	5.00	3.86	.63	.08	(.76)			
3. Multicultural skills (n=4)	1.00	5.00	3.11	.80	.21	-.04	(.86)		
4. Multicultural Awareness (n=6)	1.33	5.00	3.36	.56	.02	.24	-.04	(.52)	
5. Cross-cultural skills (n=3)	1.00	5.00	3.75	.63	.35	-.04	.23	-.05	(.85)
Total scale (n=27)	2.27	4.81	3.55	.34					(.75)

*. Range 1.00 to 5.00.

Note: Reliability estimates appear in the parentheses on the diagonal.

The correlations between the subscales ranged from $\pm.00$ (for the two subscales Multicultural Understanding and Multicultural Awareness) to $\pm.35$ (for the two subscales Multicultural Understanding and Cross-Cultural Skills). The results indicate a satisfactory internal consistency for the scale, both overall and within subscales (N=508). The reliability estimates presented in parentheses on the diagonal of Table 17 ranged from .52 to .86 with a total scale coefficient alpha equal to .74, which are quite acceptable for exploratory studies (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009). The somewhat lower reliability coefficient values was observed for the Multicultural Awareness subscale ($\alpha=.52$), while the other factors had high reliability coefficients. This pattern of results is consistent with results from previous studies (D'Andrea, et al., 1991; Kim, et al., 2003; Whitney, 2006). In line with D'Andrea et al.'s (1991) interpretation, "the construct of multicultural "awareness" is more diverse" than is multicultural "knowledge" or "skills." (p.145). Thus, the items used to measure counsellors' multicultural awareness may produce less internal consistency as a group than those used to measure other subscales. The distribution of scores for the overall items was reasonably 'normal', but the scores for the five subscales were negatively skewed. This is consistent with the

underlying positive nature of the MCC construct, which may generate responses in a socially desirable manner (Constantine & Ladany, 2000).

Overall, the current findings did not support the three MCC domains of Sue et al. (1992; 1982). This suggests that there are more than three dimensions of MCC, which is consistent with the findings from some previous research such as those from Holcomb-McCoy & Myers (1999), Sadowsky et al. (1994) and Constantine and Ladany (2001).

The extent of Malaysian counsellors' self-perceived MCC.

Descriptive statistics using means and standard deviations were used to determine the extent of counsellors' self-reported MCC based on the extracted dimensions of MCC. Table 17 in the previous section presents the means and standard deviations of each extracted factors or dimensions. The mean ratings of competence for each factor were mostly between 3 (moderately competent) to 4 (competent). Overall, the participants perceived themselves as multiculturally competent ($M=3.55$, $SD=.34$). They perceived themselves to be most competent on the Multicultural Knowledge ($M=3.86$, $SD=.63$) and Multicultural Understanding ($M=3.85$, $SD=.55$) dimensions. In contrast, they perceived themselves to be the least competent on the Multicultural Skills ($M=3.11$, $SD=.80$) and Multicultural Awareness ($M=3.36$, $SD=.56$) dimensions.

Gender, ethnicity, highest education, and multicultural training and perceived MCC.

This sub-section presents results on the comparisons of self-reported MCCs, as measured by the 27-item MCCS-MCE questionnaire, with gender, ethnicity, highest education level, and MC education and training among professional counsellors in Malaysia.

An independent-samples t-test was performed to compare the MCC scores for males and females. There was no significant difference in scores for males ($M=3.56$, $SD=.34$) and females, $M=3.54$, $SD=.34$; $t(506)=.73$, $p=.47$ (two tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference=.02, 95% CI: -.04 to .08) was very small (eta squared=.001). This means that only .1 per cent of the variance in MCC is explained by participants' gender.

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of ethnicity on self-perceived MCC. Participants were divided into four groups according to their ethnicity (Malay, Chinese, Indian, and Other) and the mean plot among these four groups was depicted in Figure 8.

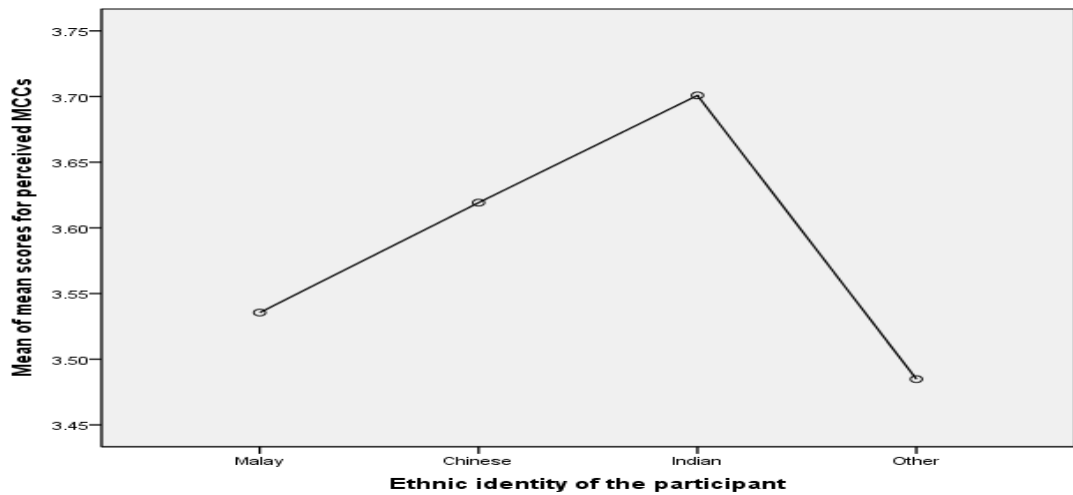


Figure 8. Comparisons of mean scores for the different ethnic groups.

Results showed a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ level in MCC scores for the four ethnic groups: $F(3, 504) = 3.10$, $p = .026$. Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference in mean scores between the groups was very small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .02. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test failed to suggest which group was statistically different from which other group. However, the mean plot indicates that among the three major ethnic groups in Malaysia, counsellors from ethnic minority groups (Chinese and Indian) in various professional fields generally perceived themselves to be more multiculturally competent than their peers' from the dominant group (Malay).

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of highest education level on self-perceived MCC. Participants were divided into four groups according to their highest education level (Diploma, Bachelor, Master, and PhD). Results showed a statistically significant difference at the $p < .01$ level in MCC scores for the four groups: $F(3, 504) = 4.09$, $p = .007$. Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference in mean scores between the groups was very small.

The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .02. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for Diploma group ($M=3.42$, $SD=.34$) was significantly different from Master group ($M=3.59$, $SD=.34$) and PhD group ($M=3.67$, $SD=.40$). Bachelor group ($M=3.53$, $SD=.32$) did not differ significantly with other groups.

To investigate any significant differences between groups due to multicultural education and training factors, two independent-samples t-tests were performed. The first test was conducted to compare the MCC scores for participants' completion of multicultural education (MC courses completed versus MC courses uncompleted). There was no significant difference in MCC scores for those who had completed multicultural counselling courses ($M=3.56$, $SD=.33$) and those who had not completed multicultural counselling courses, $M=3.51$, $SD=.38$; $t(506) = -1.50$, $p=.13$ (two tailed). In contrast, results from the second t-test, which compared the MCC scores with participants' participation in recent training in multiculturalism, showed a significant difference in scores for those who had attended multicultural professional development training in the past five years ($M=3.59$, $SD=.35$) and those who had not ($M=3.52$, $SD=.33$), $t(506) = -2.46$, $p=.014$ (two tailed). Both findings indicate that although the majority of participants completed their multicultural counselling education, it does not affect their perceived MCCs. Their self-perceived MCCs can only be affected by their recent participation in multicultural professional development training in the past five years.

To summarise, results in this section showed that self-reported MCCs of Malaysian counsellors did not differ significantly by (a) gender and (b) multicultural

education but, it was found to be statistically significant by (c) ethnicity, (d) highest educational level and (e) recent multicultural professional training.

Key factors for predicting perceived MCC.

Previous sections have given a detailed description of the survey sample's characteristics and the nature and extent of self-perceived MCC using the Malaysian counsellor community sample. This sub-section presents results that were obtained in order to address the fourth research question: What are the factors that influence/predict Malaysian counsellors' self-perceived MCCs?

A series of standard (simultaneous) multiple regressions were performed to assess the impact of a number of participants' characteristics on the components of MCC (five dependent variables: mean scores of multicultural understanding, multicultural knowledge, multicultural skills, multicultural awareness, and cross-cultural skills). These characteristics were gender, ethnicity, highest education level, age group, monthly family income, multicultural education and training, work setting, and years of practising counselling. Each model contained 27 predictor variables (i.e., demographics: male, Malay, Chinese, Indian, bachelor, Masters, PhD, aged 20 to 29 years, aged 30 to 39 years, aged, 40 to 49 years, aged 50 to 59 years, monthly family income of RM2000 to 3999, monthly family income of RM4000 to 5999, monthly family income of RM6000 to 7999, monthly family income of RM8000 to 9999, and monthly family income of RM10000 and above; multicultural education and training: completed multicultural counselling courses and attended multicultural development training; work-related information: schools, college/universities, public agencies/departments, practised 1 to 5 years, practised 6 to 10 years, practised 11 to 15

years, practised 16 to 20 years, and practised more than 20 years; and a Constant). Most of these predictors were derived from categorical independent variables (e.g., gender, ethnicity, highest education, and employment setting) and ordinal independent variables (e.g., age group, family monthly income, and years of practising counselling). Thus, they were called dummy variables because the data transformation was based on dummy coding: “a way of representing groups of people using only zeros and ones” (Field, 2009, p. 254). Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity.

Table 18 to Table 22 present the unstandardized regression coefficients (B), standards error for unstandardised coefficients (SE B), regression coefficients (β), t-values and statistical significance (p) for each variable in the five regression models. These results were then summarised and presented in Table 23.

Results of the first regression model revealed that participants’ characteristics significantly predicted the self-perceived multicultural understanding of professional counsellors in Malaysia, $F(26, 480) = 1.63, p < .05$. The multiple R, R^2 , and adjusted R^2 values were .285, .081, and .031, respectively. The model can explain about 8% of the variance in perceived multicultural understanding. Significant predictions were observed in the results for four predictor variables (see Table 18). In contrast, participants’ characteristics could not significantly predict perceived multicultural knowledge, as indicated by results of the second model, but there were significant predictions for bachelor, masters, and PhD variables (see Table 19).

Table 18

Regression Analysis Summary for Counsellor Variables Predicting Survey Participants' Multicultural Understanding

Predictor Variables	B	SE B	β	<i>t</i>	p
<u>Demographics:</u>					
Male	-.05	.05	-.05	-.99	.322
Malay	-.11	.10	-.09	-1.13	.261
Chinese	-.15	.11	-.10	-1.38	.169
Indian	.00	.52	.00	.00	.999
Bachelor	.12	.12	.11	1.00	.311
Masters	.18	.11	.17	1.64	.101
PhD	.27	.16	.11	1.70	.091
Aged 20-29 years	.40	.19	.25	2.10	.036*
Aged 30-39 years	.28	.18	.24	1.56	.120
Aged 40-49 years	.29	.18	.25	1.63	.103
Aged 50-59 years	.29	.17	.21	1.65	.101
Income RM2000-3999	.31	.22	.27	1.42	.157
Income RM4000-5999	.42	.23	.34	1.83	.068
Income RM6000-7999	.40	.23	.30	1.73	.085
Income RM8000-9999	.47	.24	.26	1.98	.049*
Income RM10000 & above	.56	.24	.28	2.34	.020*
<u>Multicultural Education and Training:</u>					
Completed multicultural education	.06	.06	.04	.96	.339
Attended multicultural training	.12	.05	.11	2.26	.024*
<u>Work-Related Information:</u>					
School	-.15	.09	-.14	-1.64	.102
Colleges/Universities	-.01	.09	-.06	-.76	.447
Public	-.10	.09	-.08	-1.09	.276
Agencies/Departments					
Practised 1-5 years	-.19	.22	-.16	-.87	.386
Practised 6-10 years	-.09	.22	-.08	-.40	.687
Practised 11-15 years	-.08	.22	-.06	-.36	.719
Practised 16 to 20 years	-.08	.24	-.03	-.31	.758
Practised more than 20 years	-.10	.25	-.04	-.39	.699

Note: $R^2 = .081$ ($N=507$, $p < .05$), * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 19

Regression Analysis Summary for Counsellor Variables Predicting Survey Participants' Multicultural Knowledge

Predictor Variables	B	SE B	β	<i>t</i>	p
<u>Demographics:</u>					
Male	.07	.06	.06	1.17	.242
Malay	.12	.12	.08	.99	.324
Chinese	.13	.13	.07	.95	.345
Indian	.07	.18	.02	.39	.697
Bachelor	.36	.14	.29	2.66	.008**
Masters	.41	.13	.32	3.14	.002**
PhD	.53	.19	.19	2.84	.005**
Aged 20-29 years	-.26	.23	-.14	-1.16	.247
Aged 30-39 years	-.20	.21	-.15	-.96	.341
Aged 40-49 years	-.24	.21	-.18	-1.15	.252
Aged 50-59 years	-.18	.21	-.12	-.89	.374
Income RM2000-3999	-.03	.26	-.02	-.12	.907
Income RM4000-5999	-.08	.27	-.06	-.29	.771
Income RM6000-7999	-.19	.27	-.12	-.71	.478
Income RM8000-9999	-.09	.28	.04	.32	.752
Income RM10000 & above	-.10	.28	-.04	-.36	.717
<u>Multicultural Education and Training:</u>					
Completed multicultural education	.04	.07	.03	.59	.556
Attended multicultural training	.01	.06	.01	.17	.867
<u>Work-Related Information:</u>					
School	.02	.11	.01	.17	.868
Colleges/Universities	.05	.11	.04	.47	.642
Public	.07	.11	.05	.66	.510
Agencies/Departments					
Practised 1-5 years	.15	.26	.11	.58	.563
Practised 6-10 years	.10	.26	.08	.41	.686
Practised 11-15 years	.13	.27	.07	.48	.634
Practised 16 to 20 years	.09	.29	.03	.31	.760
Practised more than 20 years	-.22	.29	-.08	-.75	.453

Note: $R^2 = .062$ ($N=507$, $p = .205$), * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Results of the third model revealed that participants' characteristics significantly predicted the self-perceived multicultural skills of Malaysian counsellors, $F(26, 480) = 2.95$, $p=.000$. The multiple R, R^2 , and adjusted R^2 values were .371, .138, and .091, respectively. The model can explain about 14% of the variance in perceived multicultural skills and among the best predictor variables came from participants'

demographics such as gender, ethnicity, highest education level, and age groups (see Table 20 for details).

Table 20

Regression Analysis Summary for Counsellor Variables Predicting Survey Participants' Multicultural Skills

Predictor Variables	B	SE B	β	<i>t</i>	p
<u>Demographics:</u>					
Male	.20	.08	.12	2.60	.009**
Malay	.35	.14	.19	2.46	.014*
Chinese	.44	.16	.19	2.72	.007**
Indian	.36	.22	.09	1.64	.103
Bachelor	.40	.17	.25	2.44	.015*
Masters	.32	.16	.19	1.98	.049*
PhD	.54	.23	.15	2.37	.018*
Aged 20-29 years	.94	.27	.39	3.41	.001**
Aged 30-39 years	.80	.26	.47	3.13	.002**
Aged 40-49 years	.75	.26	.44	2.94	.003**
Aged 50-59 years	.87	.25	.44	3.51	.000***
Income RM2000-3999	.17	.32	.10	.53	.596
Income RM4000-5999	.08	.33	.04	.24	.809
Income RM6000-7999	.20	.33	.10	.59	.554
Income RM8000-9999	.17	.34	.06	.49	.626
Income RM10000 & above	.11	.34	.04	.33	.744
<u>Multicultural Education and Training:</u>					
Completed multicultural education	.06	.09	.03	.63	.530
Attended multicultural training	.25	.07	.15	3.33	.001**
<u>Work-Related Information:</u>					
School	-.28	.13	-.17	-2.15	.032*
Colleges/Universities	.02	.13	.01	.11	.912
Public	-.01	.13	-.01	-.08	.936
Agencies/Departments					
Practised 1-5 years	-.37	.31	-.21	-1.19	.233
Practised 6-10 years	-.27	.31	-.17	-.88	.381
Practised 11-15 years	-.27	.32	-.13	-.85	.393
Practised 16 to 20 years	-.26	.35	-.07	-.76	.448
Practised more than 20 years	.06	.36	.02	.17	.867

Note: $R^2 = .138$ ($N=507$, $p < .001$), * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 21

Regression Analysis Summary for Counsellor Variables Predicting Survey Participants' Multicultural Awareness

Predictor Variables	B	SE B	β	<i>t</i>	p
<u>Demographics:</u>					
Male	.07	.05	.06	1.34	.182
Malay	-.14	.10	-.11	-1.44	.152
Chinese	.20	.12	.13	1.74	.083
Indian	.37	.16	.13	2.42	.016*
Bachelor	-.12	.12	-.10	-.99	.321
Masters	-.14	.11	-.12	-1.21	.227
PhD	-.09	.16	-.04	-.58	.564
Aged 20-29 years	-.14	.20	-.08	-.70	.482
Aged 30-39 years	-.18	.18	-.15	-1.00	.318
Aged 40-49 years	-.15	.18	-.12	-.82	.413
Aged 50-59 years	-.10	.18	-.07	-.57	.568
Income RM2000-3999	.24	.23	.20	1.04	.299
Income RM4000-5999	.24	.23	.19	1.06	.291
Income RM6000-7999	.13	.23	.09	.56	.575
Income RM8000-9999	.23	.24	.12	.95	.341
Income RM10000 & above	.23	.24	.11	.96	.339
<u>Multicultural Education and Training:</u>					
Completed multicultural education	-.02	.06	-.01	-.24	.814
Attended multicultural training	-.04	.05	-.03	-.67	.500
<u>Work-Related Information:</u>					
School	.00	.09	.00	.01	.994
Colleges/Universities	-.06	.09	-.05	-.63	.528
Public	-.03	.09	-.02	-.27	.784
Agencies/Departments					
Practised 1-5 years	-.36	.22	-.29	-1.63	.104
Practised 6-10 years	-.46	.22	-.40	-2.07	.039*
Practised 11-15 years	-.49	.23	-.33	-2.15	.032*
Practised 16 to 20 years	-.64	.25	-.26	-2.60	.010**
Practised more than 20 years	-.73	.25	-.29	-2.90	.004**

Note: $R^2 = .123$ ($N=507$, $p < .001$), * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Similar results were obtained from the fourth model (see Table 21), which showed that counsellors' characteristics could predict the perceived multicultural awareness of counsellors too, $F(26, 480) = 2.59$, $p=.000$. The values for multiple R, R^2 , and adjusted R^2 were .351, .123, and .076, respectively. The predictors explained 12% of the variance in perceived multicultural awareness. Ethnicity (being Indian) and years

of practice (practised 6 years and more) are two best predictors for multicultural awareness. In the final model (see Table 22), results revealed that counsellor characteristics can also predict about 11% of perceived cross-cultural skills, $F(26, 480) = 2.17, p = .001$, but there was no significant prediction observed in the results for each predictor variable.

Table 22

Regression Analysis Summary for Counsellor Variables Predicting Survey Participants' Cross-Cultural Skills

Predictor Variables	B	SE B	β	<i>t</i>	p
<u>Demographics:</u>					
Male	-.01	.06	-.01	-.12	.904
Malay	-.17	.11	-.11	-1.45	.149
Chinese	.08	.13	.05	.62	.537
Indian	.14	.18	.04	.80	.422
Bachelor	-.26	.13	-.20	-1.92	.055
Masters	-.15	.13	-.12	-1.19	.236
PhD	-.10	.18	-.04	-.54	.589
Aged 20-29 years	.40	.22	.21	1.80	.073
Aged 30-39 years	.18	.21	.14	.89	.375
Aged 40-49 years	.20	.21	.15	.98	.327
Aged 50-59 years	.24	.20	.15	1.18	.239
Income RM2000-3999	.38	.26	.28	1.48	.140
Income RM4000-5999	.37	.26	.26	1.41	.160
Income RM6000-7999	.38	.27	.24	1.41	.158
Income RM8000-9999	.53	.27	.25	1.93	.054
Income RM10000 & above	.48	.28	.20	1.74	.083
<u>Multicultural Education and Training:</u>					
Completed multicultural education	.01	.07	.00	.09	.925
Attended multicultural training	.07	.06	.06	1.16	.245
<u>Work-Related Information:</u>					
School	-.03	.11	-.03	-.32	.747
Colleges/Universities	.14	.11	.10	1.28	.202
Public	-.02	.11	-.02	-.21	.833
Agencies/Departments					
Practised 1-5 years	-.06	.25	-.04	-.22	.825
Practised 6-10 years	.15	.25	.12	.60	.548
Practised 11-15 years	.19	.26	.11	.74	.458
Practised 16 to 20 years	.33	.28	.12	1.16	.245
Practised more than 20 years	.23	.29	.08	.78	.432

Note: $R^2 = .105$ ($N=507, p = .001$), $*p < .05$. $**p < .01$. $***p < .001$.

Table 23

Summary of Findings from a Series of Multiple Regression Analyses on Each MCC

Dimension Based on the 5-Factor Model

Predictors	Understanding*	Knowledge	Multicultural skills***	Awareness ***	Cross-cultural skills*
<u>Demographics:</u>					
Male	ns	ns	+sig.**	ns	ns
Malay	ns	ns	+sig.*	ns	ns
Chinese	ns	ns	+sig.**	ns	ns
Indian	ns	ns	ns	+sig.*	ns
Bachelor	ns	+sig.**	+sig.*	ns	ns
Masters	ns	+sig.**	+sig.*	ns	ns
PhD	ns	+sig.**	+sig.*	ns	ns
Aged 20-29 years	+sig.*	ns	+sig.**	ns	ns
Aged 30-39 years	ns	ns	+sig.**	ns	ns
Aged 40-49 years	ns	ns	+sig.**	ns	ns
Aged 50-59 years	ns	ns	+sig.***	ns	ns
Income RM2000-3999	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Income RM4000-5999	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Income RM6000-7999	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Income RM8000-9999	+sig.*	ns	ns	ns	ns
Income RM10000 above	+sig.*	ns	ns	ns	ns
<u>Multicultural Education and Training:</u>					
Multicultural education	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Multicultural training	+sig.*	ns	ns	ns	ns
<u>Work-Related Information:</u>					
School	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Colleges or Universities	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Public Sector	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Practised 1-5 years	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Practised 6-10 years	ns	ns	ns	-sig.*	ns
Practised 11-15 years	ns	ns	ns	-sig.*	ns
Practised 16 to 20 years	ns	ns	ns	-sig.**	ns
Practised more than 20 years	ns	ns	ns	-sig.**	ns

Note: The abbreviated term of 'ns' stands for 'Not Significant'. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

To identify the best predictor for each component of MCC (i.e., perceived multicultural understanding, multicultural knowledge, multicultural skills, multicultural awareness, and cross-cultural skills), Table 23 gives clearer information.

To summarise, overall results showed that:

1. having age group of 20 to 29 years (e.g., beginning practising counsellors), having high income (i.e., RM8000 and more) and recent training in multicultural counselling were the three best predictors for counsellors' perceived multicultural understanding regarding culture and diversity issues in Malaysia;
2. having highest education at bachelor, Masters, or PhD level (educated counsellors) were three key predictors of professional counsellors' perceived multicultural knowledge in Malaysia;
3. being male, coming from Malay or Chinese ethnic groups, having highest education at bachelor, Masters, or PhD level, having age groups between 20 to 59 years old, and having recent training in multicultural counselling were 11 positive predictors of Malaysian counsellors' perceived multicultural skills. Among these predictors, counsellors' age group of 50 to 59 years was the best predictor for multicultural skills. Those who work in schools were negatively correlated with perceived multicultural skills, suggesting that there is a need for multicultural skills training for school counsellors;
4. being Indian was the only positive predictor for perceived multicultural awareness among professional counsellors in Malaysia, but counsellors' years of practice of at least six years was negatively correlated with multicultural awareness. This suggests that the longer counsellors practised counselling (e.g., senior counsellors), the less

aware they become regarding multicultural issues in counselling, or perhaps those ‘out in the field’ longer had less training in multicultural counselling; and

5. no specific variables were able to significantly predict perceived cross-cultural skills of professional counsellors in Malaysia.

These results were consistent with the results from previous sections. Surprisingly, participants’ completion of multicultural counselling courses was not able to explain and predict perceived MCCs, as initially hypothesised in Chapter One.

Malaysian Counsellors’ Reflections on their Understanding and Practice of Multicultural Counselling

This section presents results from the analyses of survey data generated from Section C of the questionnaire. It covers four main topics – (1) understanding multicultural counselling concepts, (2) perceived characteristics of a multiculturally competent counsellor in Malaysia, (3) barriers and challenges in the practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia, and (4) engaging with diversity factors in counselling culturally different clients – which enhanced and substantiated the previous results on Malaysian counsellors’ self-reported MCCs in the Malaysian context.

Understanding multicultural counselling concepts.

This sub-section presents results based on participants’ written definitions of terms (i.e., text data) in two open-ended survey questions (one was on ‘multicultural counselling’ and the other was on ‘multicultural competence’. Results from coding analysis for both terms are presented in Figure 9 and Figure 10.

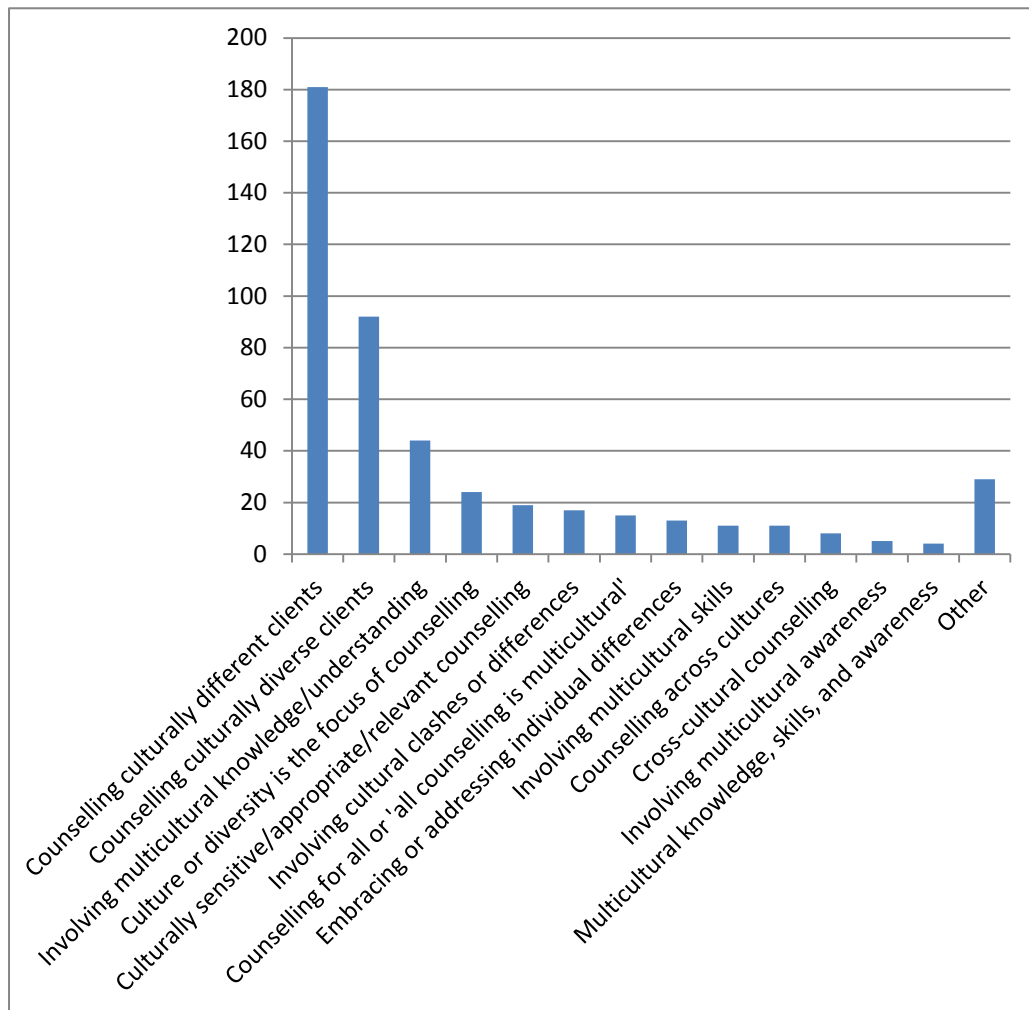


Figure 9. Frequencies of participants' responses on defining 'multicultural counselling' concept.

Results in Figure 9 depicted numerous definitions of the term multicultural counselling as reported by 449 participants in this study. The majority of them (n=181) defined multicultural counselling as 'counselling culturally different clients'. Other definitions reported in this study were 'counselling culturally diverse clients' (n=92), 'involving multicultural knowledge and understanding' (n=44), 'culture or diversity is the focus of counselling' (n=24), 'culturally sensitive/appropriate/relevant counselling' (n=19), 'involving cultural clashes or differences in counselling' (n=17), 'counselling for all or *all counselling is multicultural*' (n=15), and some others.

This finding indicates that defining the concept of multicultural counselling in the specific cultural context also poses some challenges because it can be understood from multiple perspectives. However, in general, it appears that the majority of counsellors in Malaysia defined multicultural counselling to refer to the process of counselling clients from different cultural backgrounds.

When asked to define the term ‘multicultural competence’, 444 participants responded to the question. Figure 10 presents results from coding analysis based on text data.

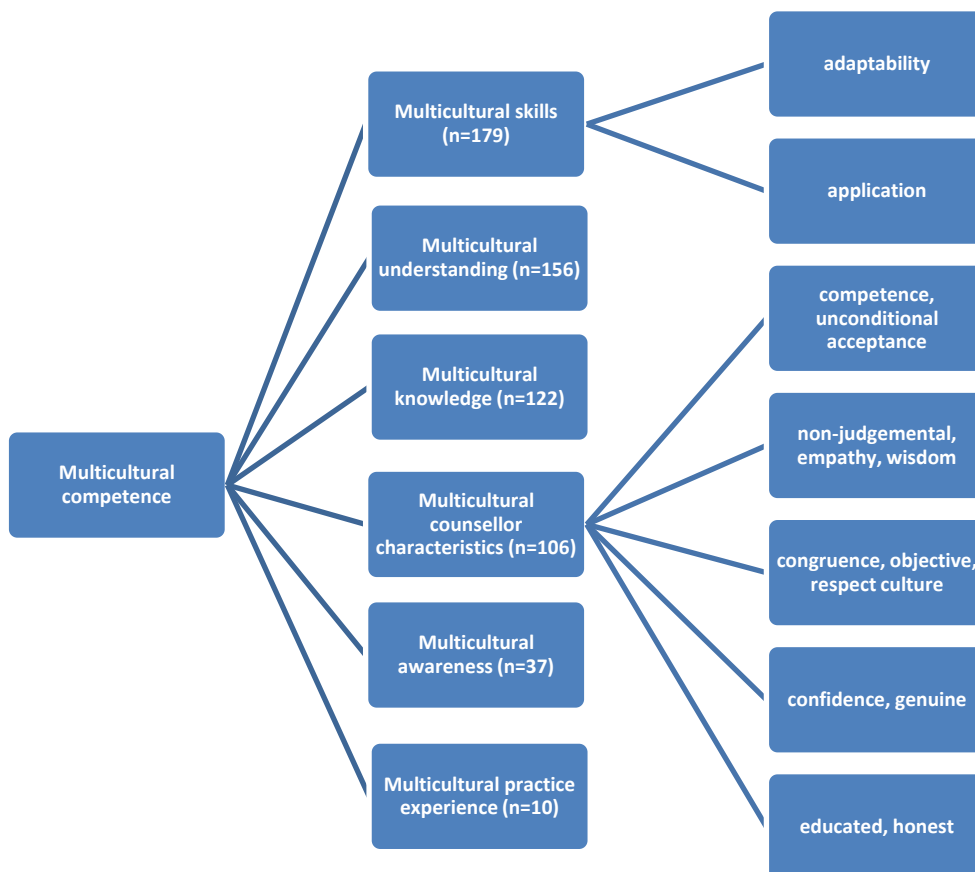


Figure 10. A diagrammatic representation of the major categories and sub-categories emerging in defining multicultural competence.

Results revealed six major categories emerging in the definitions of multicultural competence as reported by participants. According to its hierarchy of frequencies, these categories were: (1) multicultural skills (e.g., *practitioners need to think about the way in which skills should be adapted to accommodate the particular needs of certain clients groups*), (2) multicultural understanding (e.g., *ability to understand the client as a whole person in terms of gender, age, socio economic status, political views, ethnics, cultural values, way of life, religion, and personal values*), (3) multicultural knowledge (e.g., *counsellor who has the knowledge of different ethnic groups, their cultures and belief system and also the effects of gender on ones perception of life*), (4) multicultural counsellor characteristics (e.g., *Being able to empathise and able to understand with the cultural background of the client; being comfortable with the client's culture and background; able to be congruent; aware of counsellor's own culture and able to understand client's culture too; non-judgmental and genuine; The ability to be objective and non-judgmental to a client who is of different cultural background*), (5) multicultural awareness (e.g., *aware of counsellor's own culture and able to understand client's culture too*), and (6) multicultural experience (e.g., [English-translated] *Competence comes from experiences and lots of interactions with diverse races*).

Under the superordinate category of 'multicultural counsellor characteristics', 11 specific qualities emerged: competent (n=55), unconditional acceptance (n=20), non-judgemental (n=8), empathy (n=6), wisdom (n=5), congruence, objective, respect culture (n=3, respectively), confidence, genuine (n=2, respectively), educated and honest (n=1, respectively).

In addition, the majority of participants defined the term ‘multicultural competence’ using a combination of at least two of the above-mentioned categories in a single definition. The popular combinations of categories found in a single definition were a combination of:

1. ‘multicultural knowledge’ and ‘multicultural understanding’ (e.g., *The counsellor’s knowledge and understanding in multicultural counselling and ability to adopt it in clinical practice*);
2. ‘multicultural knowledge’ and ‘multicultural skills’ (e.g., *The knowledge and ability to counsel clients from different cultural background*); and
3. ‘multicultural understanding’ and ‘multicultural skills’ (e.g., *The ability to understand others from their framework of world and the ability to help them using their framework*).

Among numerous written definitions provided by the participants, one was clearly written as it also summarised the above categories:

Multicultural competency refers to a specialized competency in counselling needed to work effectively and ethically with clients from different cultural backgrounds.

This definition is important because it differentiates multicultural competence from general competency in counselling. The presence of several key categories or dimensions in the definition of multicultural competence provides evidence that this construct is quite complex and hence to fully understand it as a concept requires deeper exploration and investigation.

Perceived characteristics of a multiculturally competent counsellor.

This sub-section presents results based on participants' responses to one open-ended question in Section C (i.e., what do you see as the characteristics of a multiculturally competent counsellor?). A total of 452 survey participants responded to this question and data were coded using NVivo 8. Initially, there were 41 assigned codes generated from the first-cycle coding. Figure 11 presents details of the initial codes from NVivo 8 according to the number of references (Note: References in NVivo mean quotes or excerpts). However, in the final coding, 7 themes were identified according to the number of quote references in the text data: (a) 'Multiculturally knowledgeable' (e.g., *a wide base of knowledge about different cultures*), (b) 'multicultural understanding' (e.g., *understand the value of culture and religion in counselling*), (c) 'Rogerian concepts of a good counsellor' (e.g., *all the generic characteristics of a counsellor according to Rogerian approach*), (d) 'multiculturally skilled' (e.g., *Developing appropriate intervention strategies and techniques*), (e) 'multiculturally aware' (e.g., *actively in the process of becoming aware of her own assumptions about human behaviour, values, biases, preconceived notion, personal limitations*), (f) 'multiculturally experienced' (e.g., *A counsellor who has a vast experience counselling people of other culture and has a very good knowledge of the culture of others*), and (g) 'basic qualities of a good counsellor' (e.g., *sincerity to help*). These are further discussed in the following paragraph.

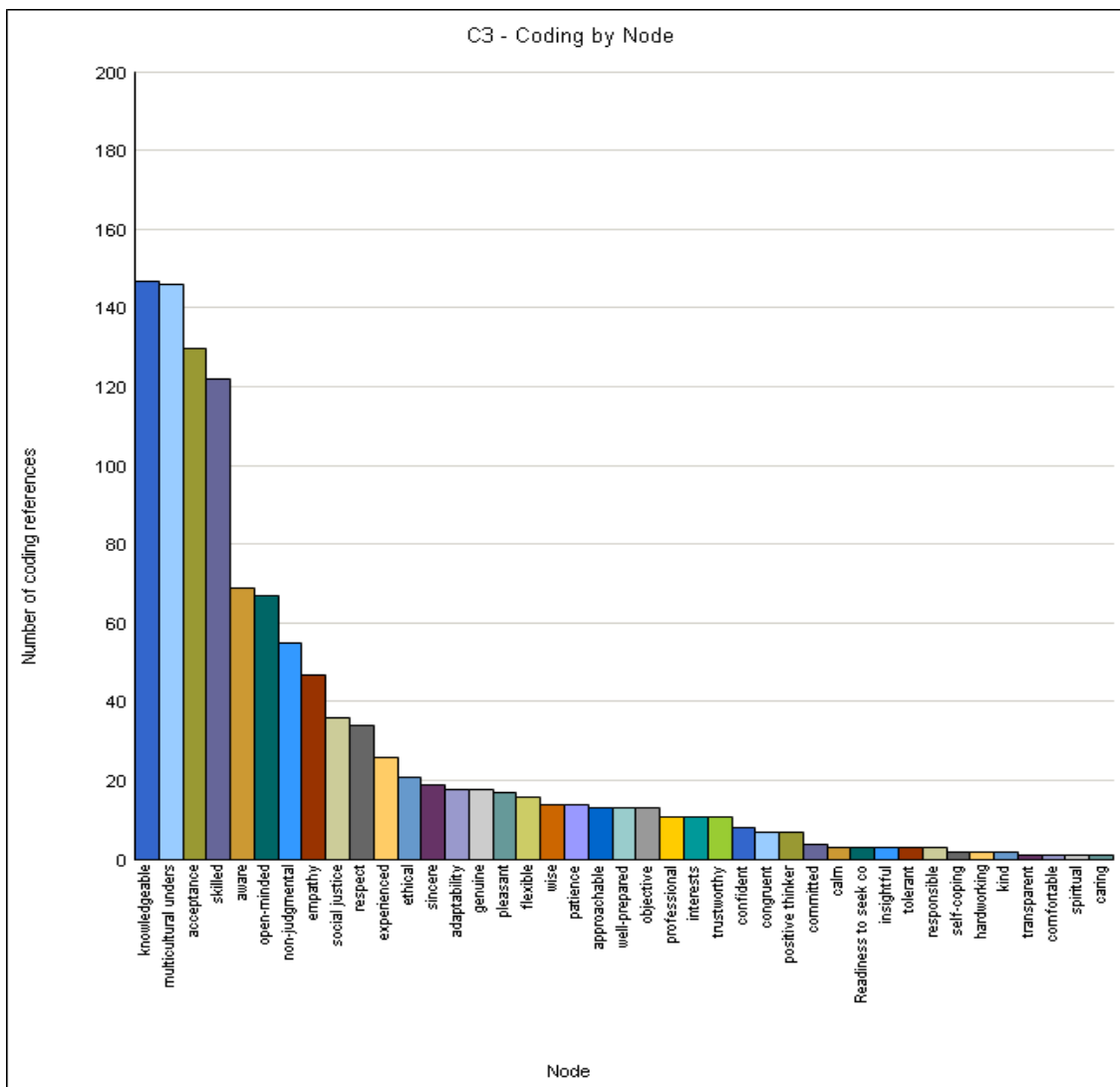


Figure 11. Initial codes generated from participants' responses on the perceived characteristics of a multiculturally competent counsellor.

With regards to the theme 'multiculturally knowledgeable', participants reported that a multiculturally competent counsellor should know about Malaysian clients, cultures and diversity issues, counselling theories, clients' language, and multicultural counselling. They also reported that a multiculturally competent counsellor must not only know about the above aspects, but must have good understanding too. Then, the specific multicultural skills reported by participants were communicating, listening, attending, multicultural counselling skills, problem solving, and other basic counselling

skills. Some of the emerging characteristics were found to be consistent with the qualities of a good multicultural counsellor presented in the earlier sub-section. These qualities were unconditional positive regard, non-judgemental, empathic, genuine, and congruent.

In terms of being multiculturally experienced, participants reported that a multiculturally competent counsellor is someone who has a broad exposure and experience (1) in dealing with culturally different clients and (2) socialising in multicultural community. Under the last theme of ‘basic qualities of a good counsellor’, several characteristics were reported such as open-minded, sincere, pleasant and approachable, objective, and trustworthy. New emerging qualities revealed by the coding analysis comprised social justice-oriented, respect for culture and diversity, ethical and professional, flexible, and readiness to seek consultations.

In sum, the characteristics of a multiculturally competent counsellor as perceived by the Malaysian counsellors involved six core dimensions: multiculturally knowledgeable, skilled, aware, experienced, having understanding and qualities of a good counsellor, which are consistent with the extracted components from factor analysis. These dimensions can be further summarised in the following definition, which was reported by one survey participant:

A multiculturally competent counsellor is a professional counsellor who is able to appreciate and respect diversity, able to work effectively with diverse clients regardless of their cultural background, and willing to continuously learn about his/her own culture and the cultural backgrounds of his/her clients.

Challenges in the practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia.

This sub-section presents results from the thematic analysis of 439 participants' responses to the question: '*What are the challenges and difficulties that you have encountered when counselling clients who are culturally different from you?*'

Results revealed three clusters of responses from 21 initial codes generated in the first-cycle coding (with percentage coverage in parenthesis):

1. None (6.83%, indicating no specific challenges encountered: *So far, I have never encountered any problems*),
2. Not sure (0.29%, including 'no comment' responses: *unable to provide comments to this section. Perhaps and maybe I need to study multicultural counselling and understand more first*), and
3. Yes (92.88%, indicating some challenges were reported).

Among those who reported that they had encountered some challenges and difficulties when counselling culturally different clients, three emerging themes were identified: (a) perceived MCC (e.g., *a multicultural approach to counselling is relatively new, the implications for practice are still being developed*), (b) counsellor-client relationship (e.g., *As a counsellor, you might feel difficulties to relate with your client. The sense [of] connection with the client is weak. The client might feel you [were] not able to understand her or him*), and (c) [new theme] suggested strategies. Figure 12 presents the diagrammatic representation of the relationships among the clusters, themes, and sub-themes generated from the thematic analysis.

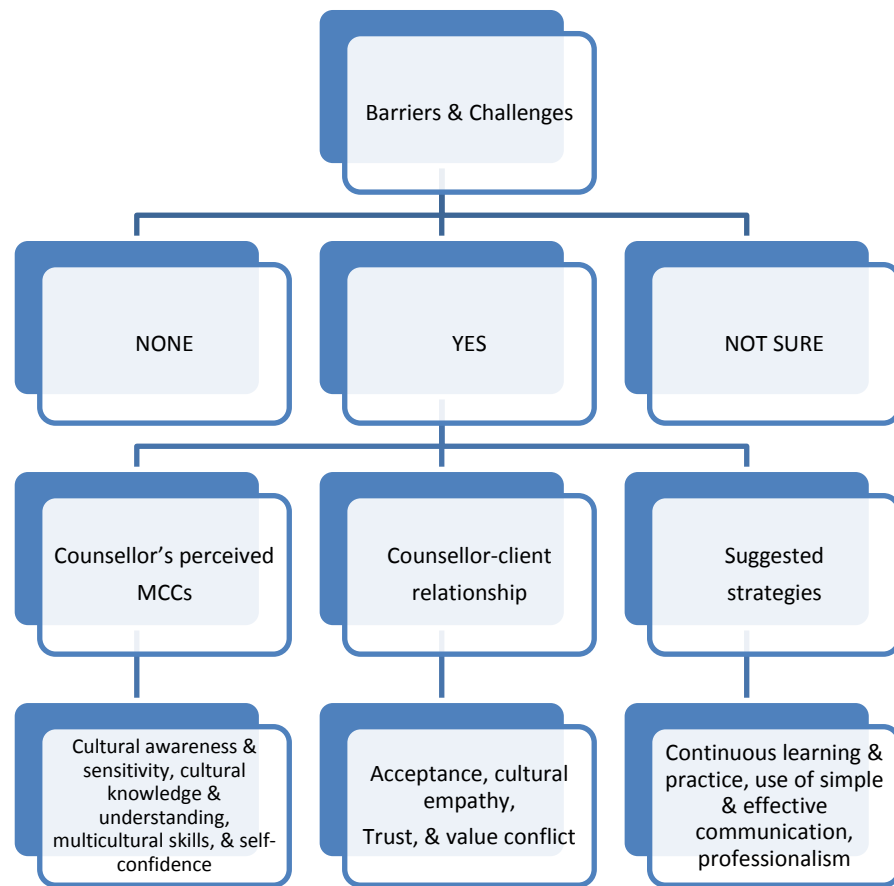


Figure 12. A diagrammatical representation of the themes, sub-themes, and categories revealed by thematic analysis on barriers and challenges in multicultural counselling.

Under the superordinate theme of ‘counsellors’ perceived MCCs’, five sub-themes were identified:

1. understanding of culture (e.g., *the challenges is to understand the belief and practices of my clients*),
2. multicultural skills (e.g., *1. the tendency of making mistakes when diagnosing their problems; 2. the tendency to impose my own values when counselling culturally different clients; 3. the possibility of making faulty assumptions about some aspects of their life experiences based on my personal biases*),

3. cultural knowledge (e.g., [English-translated] *limited knowledge regarding clients' culture*),
4. cultural awareness and sensitivity (e.g., [English-translated] *not sensitive to cultural issues*), and
5. self-confidence (e.g., [English-translated] *lack of self-confidence in the beginning of the session*).

This finding means that Malaysian counsellors do face some challenges and difficulties when counselling culturally different clients and these challenges are manifested in their multicultural understanding (especially when involving clients from minority groups), skills (especially in language and expression), knowledge (especially associated with stigmas, religious and racism issues), awareness (of minority groups), and self-confidence (which could be due to a lack of practice experience in MC).

Participants also reported having challenges in building the counsellor-client relationship (i.e., sub-themes 2) especially in terms of: (a) expressing unconditional acceptance and gaining complete acceptance from clients (e.g., *The client's acceptance of me as their counsellor*), (b) gaining trust (e.g., *The trust of clients towards a counsellor that is from different ethnic group*), (c) handling value conflicts (e.g., *Differences in defining concepts and values*), and (d) expressing cultural empathy (e.g., [English-translated] *the challenge is lack of empathy due to differences in cultural backgrounds*). This finding indicates that the counsellor-client relationship stage in a multicultural counselling process may be somewhat different from that of the general counselling process. The counsellor-client relationship in multicultural counselling process will be further discussed in the next chapter using results from interviews.

Although Malaysian counsellors reported many challenges and difficulties they encountered when counselling culturally different clients, they also shared some useful strategies to deal with those challenges. For example, besides developing multicultural competencies (e.g., [English-translated] *neither challenges nor difficulties if a counsellor has skills and understanding regarding multi-cultures or groups*), it was recommended that counsellors should:

1. continue to learn and practice multicultural counselling (e.g., [English-translated] *need continuous learning and practice*),
2. use simple but effective communication skills (e.g., *The main challenge has been language barriers. However, somehow, non verbal communication helps a lot in such cases; the difficulty perhaps is a technical one - communicating with Chinese speaking clients. We have to converse in very simple BM (i.e., Malay)*), such as using a translator if necessary (e.g., [English-translated] *Difficulty in terms of language. I have to make sure that my language can be understood by my clients. Sometimes, I have to ask my colleague who is ethnically matched with the client to act as a translator*), and
3. always strive for professionalism in practice (e.g., [English-translated] *normally, I can handle any difficulties. If not, I always ask clients to explain to me until I fully understand the issue*).

Overall, this finding seems to indicate that although Malaysian counsellors encountered many challenges in multicultural counselling, they appear to be prepared to engage with any issues on culture and diversity when counselling culturally different clients.

Malaysian counsellors engaging with diversity factors in counselling culturally different clients.

This sub-section presents results of participants' responses to a case vignette presented in Section C of the questionnaire. When participants were asked if they had encountered a similar multicultural case (as prompted by a description of an abusive-and-angry elderly male client who came from poor socioeconomic background), the majority reported 'No' (80.2%), while 16.6% participants reported 'Yes', and 3.2% reported 'Not sure'. However, in terms of participants' preparedness and confidence to deal with a similar multicultural case, the majority reported 'Yes' (68.9%), while only 10.2% reported 'No' and 20.9% reported 'Not sure'. When asked to justify their answers, 430 participants responded. Their responses were categorized into three datasets: 'Yes', indicating some justification for those who ticked 'yes' for their preparedness and confidence were reported; 'No', indicating some justification for those who ticked 'no'; and 'Not Sure', indicating some justification for those who ticked 'not sure'.

Under the 'Yes' dataset, qualitative data analysis revealed seven themes which explained and justified participants' answers. The themes that emerged were:

1. multicultural experience (e.g., *I was brought up in a place with different races; [English-translated] with my skills and experience, and also general knowledge regarding the sociopolitics of Malaysia can help to give some insight to the client*),
2. multicultural knowledge (e.g., *I think I have the sufficient knowledge to handle this situation even though I haven't had this kind of case before*),

3. multicultural skills (e.g., *As a counsellor, I have been trained to handle any problem; because by using the microskills and knowledge about Mr. M's cultural background, this situation can be handled appropriately*),
4. multicultural understanding (e.g., *I understand his feelings, I think; I could understand how he feels and why he reacted this way. I will acknowledge his problem first and tell him that is natural to react that way. Then I will bring him to see the whole scenario of Malaysian citizens which consist of different ethnic groups. I will make him understand that his pension is nothing to do with racism*),
5. multicultural awareness (e.g., *I am confident that I am able to put aside my cultural differences to empathise with the client, and setting the wellbeing of my client as utmost priority.*),
6. good counsellors' characteristics (e.g., *I feel I am able to empathize with his issues and help him professionally*), and
7. experiential learning (e.g., *I also want to experience such situation. As a counsellor I always open my whole life to the world without exception; [English-translated] as a counsellor, we must always try something new in order to gain experience and enhance our ability*).

It appears that participants explained and justified their preparedness and confidence in dealing with similar cases based on their perceived practice capabilities, which are a result of their multicultural knowledge, skills, past experience, awareness, and basic qualities as a counsellor. Indirectly, this means that counsellors must be equipped with MCCs before counselling clients from different cultural backgrounds. In

addition, there were also some participants who reported that they wanted to gain knowledge and experience to broaden their practice capabilities.

Under the 'No' set, participants' responses showed similar pattern of themes, but focuses on what they lacked in each domain. For example:

1. multicultural experience (e.g., *I don't have the experience to deal with the elderly*);
2. multicultural knowledge (e.g., [English-translated] *I have to gain knowledge in multicultural counselling. The age factor of the client which is far too different from mine is another barrier*);
3. multicultural skills (e.g., *honestly, I have never handled situation like this, so I need to learn more skills and techniques about multi cultural counselling*),
4. multicultural understanding (e.g., [English-translated] *I felt that I have yet to understand issues on racism and I am a bit worried about giving false information*); and
5. multicultural awareness (e.g., [English-translated] *Mr M's belief system and prejudices are too strong and deeply rooted since childhood. It's very difficult to find the real cause of the presenting problem. My knowledge in dealing with issues and needs of the elderly is very limited*).

It appears that those who reported they were not confident and prepared to deal with a similar case to the one depicted in the case vignette were mostly school counsellors because their justifications highlighted some information regarding their limited clientele (i.e., school students and Malays), concerns for significant age differences, and less diversity in counselling practice.

Among those who reported under the set ‘Not sure’, their justifications were very similar to the justifications in the ‘No’ set, but there were two additional emerging themes: ‘time constraint’ (e.g., *I have not encountered a similar problem. This is deep rooted. It might take a long time to change his set attitude, at 65 it is not easy to change his thinking*) and ‘training need’ (e.g., [English-translated] *Not sure, because I need adequate training to upgrade my current counselling skills before I’m prepared to deal with the individual such as the above. On the other hand, if I were having no other options and have to deal with such a client, I would try my very best*). In addition, there were also some general comments pertaining to counsellors’ concerns for safety issues; power differences due to age and life experience factors, which could affect the counsellor-client relationship; and client’s attitude towards counsellor and counselling terms.

Further investigations on how these participants would respond to a similar multicultural case revealed the following results: 58.1% would provide appropriate counselling, 25.6% would make appropriate referrals, 24.2% would seek appropriate consultations, and the remaining 3.7% would choose other actions. Some other actions reported by 51 participants in the comment box revealed one theme with three sub-themes: To develop MCCs by gaining more knowledge, skills and techniques, and awareness regarding multicultural counselling via (1) continuous reading and learning, (2) training and participation in professional development seminars or workshops, and (3) brainstorming activity on social justice issues.

One female Chinese-Christian counsellor suggested a comprehensive approach for counselling Mr. M, which she defined it as a ‘counselling plus empowerment’ approach. According to her,

...Mr. M's anger toward the government more likely is his presenting problem in the session. The onset problem/underlying problem possibly related with his suffering in [during] his childhood/adulthood or possibly his feeling not capable to provide to the family sufficiently. Based on my own feelings, Mr. M is lacks of worthiness being who he is in the community he is living. My role as a counsellor is to help him gains back the sense of worthiness being who he is. My aim of the session is to lead Mr. M to stop punish himself with all the unresolved anger he experienced in his childhood/adulthood however to help him to see his capability to survived in the community. The empowerment approach will be helpful to Mr. M to gain back self-respect and worthiness. My final work will lead to respect and appreciate his family and get him to stop repeat[ing] the cycle of oppression he had experienced [during] his childhood/adulthood onto his own family. (Participant Id: 500)

This approach seems to be consistent with a multicultural counselling process because it conceptualizes the client’s problem using the client’s cultural framework – exploring culturally-significant factors from the client’s past and present experiences that contribute to the problem – and promotes empowerment as a culturally appropriate intervention to help Mr M (an elderly male client) cope with his problem, family, and community at large. Thus, it seems that the counsellor’s role is to help the client grow and function by overcoming the client’s unfinished business with self and environment. Clearly, this can be successfully achieved if the counsellor had MCCs. The use of empowerment in counselling was also reported by one of the interview participants in this study when reflecting on his practice with victims of abuse and domestic violence, and this is further discussed in the next chapter under a similar heading.

Overall, this section has presented results that showed most participants' lack of encounters with multicultural cases involving elderly clients with complex and culturally sensitive issues. Despite having less exposure to multicultural cases, they reported their preparedness and confidence in dealing with a similar case and their readiness to provide appropriate counselling.

Summary and Concluding Comments

To summarise, this chapter has presented the results from the analyses of survey data, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Results from the Demographic Section showed that the majority of survey participants were male Malay-Muslim counsellors of the age group of 30 to 49 years old with the highest education at the bachelor degree level, who had completed multicultural counselling courses before but lack recent professional training in the field, and thus reported high needs for training in the multicultural counselling areas. Most of them were school counsellors and their clientele were mostly students and Malays. Results from the MCC Section showed that the participants' self-perceived MCC has five dimensions (i.e., Multicultural Understanding, Multicultural Knowledge, Multicultural Skills, Multicultural Awareness, and Cross-Cultural Skills) and they were most competent in multicultural knowledge and least competent in multicultural skills. The comparison of the MCC scores were not influenced by gender and completed courses in multicultural counselling, but were affected by ethnicity, highest education level and recent participation in professional multicultural training. The prediction of MCC, as measured by the five dimensions of MCC, was mostly influenced by participants' demographics (e.g., ethnicity, highest education level, and age group) and participants' multicultural training experience). In addition, results from the final section showed that the majority

of survey participants had better, but diverse, understanding regarding multicultural counselling concepts. However, in practice, they reported a lack of practice experience in multicultural counselling; yet they were confident and prepared to respond to any multicultural case, if necessary.

These results indicate that counsellors' personal and professional backgrounds, self-perceived MCCs, and practice reflections are very important factors to successfully understand and practice multicultural counselling in the specific cultural context of Malaysia. Professional counsellors' understanding and practice of multicultural counselling will be further explored in the next chapter when results from the analyses of the interview data are presented.

CHAPTER SIX

Thematic Analysis of Interview Data

Introduction

The previous chapter presented evidence regarding the nature and extent of perceived MCCs among Malaysian counsellors and a snapshot of their reflections on the understanding and practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia. However, the survey data were unable to provide further explanation of some survey findings. For example, there was no information on a workable counselling process to describe how Malaysian counsellors engage with culture and diversity, even though most survey participants reported their readiness and confidence to provide culturally appropriate counselling to diverse clients in Malaysia. These are some of the limitations of a large-scale survey method which require the use of an additional qualitative method, such as follow-up interviews, to make the research findings more meaningful and comprehensive.

This chapter presents results from the 12 interviews to enhance the survey findings. The structure of this chapter is organised around four overarching topics used during the interviews: (1) understanding of multicultural counselling concepts (including MCC), (2) challenges in the understanding and practice of multicultural counselling, (3) counsellors engaging with culturally different clients, and (4) counsellors responding to power differential issues. These topics were consistent with the specific aims in the third set of research questions (see Chapter One for details).

As discussed in Chapter Four, analysing text data from the 12 interviews involved three phases: preliminary, second-cycle, and final analysis. The preliminary analysis (i.e., first-cycle coding using free nodes function in the NVivo) of the interview data revealed 155 initial codes (Refer to Appendix K for details). These codes were then revised and refined by merging two or more similar codes or deleting some redundant codes. In the final coding, these codes were grouped under the interview topics (i.e., tree nodes function of the NVivo) as categories and sub-categories, which lead to identifying the major themes for each interview topic. Deeper qualitative analysis was performed on the interview Topic Three and Topic Four because the results were needed to address the research questions that surveys could not provide. However, since these results were based on 12 counsellors' voices, they cannot be generalised to the whole population of registered practising counsellors.

To protect the identity of the 12 interview participants in this research, pseudonyms are used throughout this chapter. All quotes presented in this chapter were taken directly from the interview transcripts. However, for the four interviews which were conducted in Malay, the original Malay quotes were translated to English. The chapter begins with an overview of interview participants' personal and professional backgrounds to set the context for their thoughts, perceptions, and experiences.

Overview of Personal and Professional Background of

Interview Participants

The basic characteristics of the interview participants have been presented in the methodology chapter and in Appendix L. This section, on the other hand, describes the

participants' background in more depth according to the four categories that emerged from the thematic analysis using NVivo 8. These were counsellors' personal cultural background, education and training, work-related background, and early challenges in counselling career.

Participants reported that their personal cultural background was characterised by several factors such as their cultural identity (e.g., either as a Malay, Chinese, Indian, or multicultural), hometown (e.g., from a Malay *kampung* or Chinese *kampung*, or other multicultural contexts), upbringing (e.g., transcultural context), growing up environment (e.g., either in a multicultural community or culturally encapsulated), and socialisation process (i.e., through acculturation process into mainstream society or mixed cultures). Two participants (Ali and Kasmah) clearly identified themselves as having a multicultural identity. Ali is a male Chinese-Muslim convert who experienced hardship during his upbringing and schooling years because his family was poor. His hometown was a Malay-dominated village and this helped him blend well with the Malay and Chinese communities. In fact, he can speak three languages well - Chinese, Malay, and English. After school, he managed to get a teaching career in one of the schools in a Malay community and his upbringing and education with diverse cultures helped him to become established as a teacher quickly. He was very much a Malay man especially when he converted to Islam and married a Malay woman.

Kasmah, on the other hand, is a product of a mixed-ethnic marriage because her mother is a Chinese-Muslim and her father is a Malay-Muslim. She was born and bred in Sarawak, one of the most diverse populace states in East Malaysia. She has experienced life in a truly multicultural way because her extended family members also

practised inter-cultural marriages and they celebrated almost all the major festivals in Malaysia due to this cultural diversity. Although both claimed having a multicultural identity, they differed in terms of their perceived level of MCCs: Ali's scores were in the high MCC level (above one SD from the mean), while Kasmah's scores were moderate (Refer to Appendix L for details: among the 12 interview participants, eight had high perceived MCC scores (Malays=3; Chinese=3; and Indian=2), while two had moderate scores and one had lower scores). This suggests that Ali perceived himself to be more multiculturally competent than Kasmah.

Eight participants also reported their hometown as another significant factor which influenced their personal and professional lives. Most of them were born and bred in rural areas, mostly *kampung* (villages). Other places reported as hometowns were army camps, the big city of Kuala Lumpur, and small towns. The upbringing process also emerged as an important sub-theme. Five participants reported having transcultural contexts during their upbringing period as a result of their parent's work transfer or retirement, and schooling. The environment where most participants grew up was either in a multicultural community (as experienced by most non-Malay participants) or culturally encapsulated environment (e.g., Hidayah, who came from a police-oriented family background).

Not only was participants' growing-up background important, their socialisation process also emerged as an important contributor to their personal and professional life experience, as reported by eight participants in this study. Most reported that their socialisation was based on mixed cultures (Example: *we are so get use to each of the three major races in Malaysia....So, even Sarawakians and all those like Ibans people. I*

so get used to mix with people with these different people) but a few reported having acculturated into the mainstream society of Malays (Example: *So, of course my early upbringing was very Chinese inclined in which the Chinese culture was very much in me. And then, it was after I started teaching in a Malay community that I got acculturalised into the Malay culture).*

Participants' description of their education and training were categorised into four: Malaysian-trained counsellor, Western-trained counsellor, '*Tak kenal maka tak cinta*' (A popular Malay saying that means getting to know counselling for the first time and liking it so much), and internship experience. The majority of participants were Malaysian-trained counsellors while two (Rogayah and Kasmah) were trained in the USA. Ten participants recollected personal stories related to the first moment that they 'fell in love' with counselling as a profession. Based on these stories, it was found that seven participants were initially trained in different fields during their undergraduate studies. For example:

OK. My first degree was in cognitive science. But, I wasn't really good with computers, I don't. I feel that it was not right for me to let the machine imitate the humans' emotions. From that moment, I started to learn about human more. Then, I got an offer from here, from this faculty, and that was the starting point whereby I started myself in this profession. I was a tutor and then I did my Master in Professional Counselling in the States. And then, I found my calling. I think that my calling like, this is what I really want to do! (Kasmah, Interview 11, p.3)

Five participants also shared their experiences during internship (counselling placement or off-campus supervised practice at various work settings) because according to them, the first-hand counselling experience in a real setting exposed them to culture and diversity issues. The internship experience in various settings and with

diverse clients helped them to understand and practise multicultural counselling better. However, only Cheng had the opportunity to practise in two different settings during internship period and this was at her own initiative. This reflects the current limitation in most counsellor education programs in Malaysia, which lacked practical training in counselling during internship. Rogayah's comment on a lack of practical training in the teaching of multicultural counselling course substantiated this finding:

...at undergraduate level, we don't have a practical aspect of this subject. So, we can't conduct any practice. So, the skill-based element became less. The skills were told but weren't practised. Even at a Masters level, we still have no practical training.

The participants' experience during internship was the formal starting point in their involvement with multicultural counselling practice. Then, their work background became the main factor for their continued interest and experience to further explore multicultural counselling as a practice. Under this category, there were three sub-categories: clientele characteristics (i.e., when they highlighted their racially-mixed clientele, majority clients, or multifaith clientele), counsellor roles and job specifications in the organisation they work with, and transcultural working environment.

Eight participants reported having racially-mixed and multifaith clientele. This helped them to understand their clients better such as 'the different race, religion, and their dos and don'ts and the pros and cons' (Dharma, Interview 4, p.3). Among the three major ethnic groups of clients, most participants reported that the majority of their clients were from the Malay-Muslim population. This finding appears to be consistent with the finding from surveys. However, as can be expected, Indian counsellors reported having both the Malay-Muslims and Indian-Hindu as their main clients and

very few Chinese. This indicates that accessibility to counselling services is not a major issue based on the perspective of most participant counsellors.

Five participants reported having transcultural working environments due to changing their workplaces, and this contributes to their multicultural experience in dealing with diverse Malaysian clients. In addition, two participants reported that they were the pioneering counsellors, who were directly responsible for the setting up and management of counselling units in their workplace – hospital and uniformed unit (armed forces). This attribute is an added advantage to them in their practice of multicultural counselling because they understood the work culture well.

Under the final category of ‘early challenges in counselling career’, nine participants reported having challenges in their early counselling career, such as language barrier, stigma about counsellor and counselling, and pressures and demands from top management, among others. Among these challenges, language barrier emerged as the most frequently reported problem in multicultural counselling practice. Between the Malay and non-Malay participant counsellors, it was found that most non-Malays experienced difficulties in language when counselling culturally different clients during their early counselling careers. For example, Fred (Indian-Christian) said:

When I started working, the government service you know majority Malays. I could not really understand the language. My Malay was really bad.

Current barriers and challenges faced by participant counsellors’ in this study will be discussed further in a separate section of this chapter.

In sum, participants discussed their cultural identity, hometown, upbringing, socialisation process, and early career challenges as significant factors that influenced their personal and professional background. It appears that most of them, whether or not they identified themselves as having a multicultural identity, had some multicultural backgrounds as a result of the intersection of their cultural identity, hometown location, social environment such as during upbringing and schooling years, education and training experience, and work-related characteristics and background. Understanding these participants' personal and professional background helped to analyse and interpret their perceptions and experiences that underlined their understanding and practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia.

Understanding of Multicultural Counselling Concepts

This section presents results related to participants' responses to the first interview topic: understanding of multicultural counselling concepts. This topic includes the understanding of MCC concept and its perceived characteristics or attributes.

Understanding multicultural counselling as a concept.

The meaning of multicultural counselling as communicated by the counsellors in this research can be analysed and understood from three perspectives emerged from the data:

1. the way they defined multicultural counselling;
2. their views on the practice of multicultural counselling; and
3. their perceived importance of multicultural counselling.

Regarding the first, participants' responses resulted in six categories of definitions: counselling culturally different clients (which includes within-group and between-group differences), counselling culturally diverse clients, culture-match counselling, counselling is multicultural, culture is the focus of counselling, and counselling across cultures. Among these, 'counselling culturally different clients' emerged as the most common definition of multicultural counselling reported by eight participants. This finding is consistent with the survey finding reported in the previous chapter. For example, Rogayah, a female Malay-Muslim counsellor educator, who is also a PhD holder, said:

I accept the definition that multicultural counselling is a process of helping between two individuals from different cultural backgrounds. So, all of us, each of us, is culturally different. So, therefore, I go with what Pedersen said: "All counselling is to some extent multicultural". So, it doesn't mean that when I see a Malay counsellor with a Chinese client, then it becomes multicultural.

Ali, another counsellor educator, who also had a PhD in counselling, responded in a more comprehensive manner when he differentiated between the terms 'cross-cultural' and 'multicultural' counselling according to his understanding:

When I said cross-cultural, that means when the clients and the counsellors' culture are macro differences or at macro level. Macro cultures that means these are the cultures that have gone through civilisations. So, that has been inherited. So, let's say the Malay culture and the Indian culture, to me, that's cross-cultural. But within the macro culture, if the differences are at the micro level, then to me it is multicultural. To me, that is how I perceived and understand what cross-cultural and multicultural is all about.

In its bluntness, Ali's understanding of multicultural counselling clearly includes the between-group differences (such as ethnicity) and within-group differences between individuals such as gender, age, education, and so forth. This is consistent with the conceptualisation of multiculturalism from a universal perspective (Draguns, 2008;

Pedersen, et al., 2008). In addition, other within-group differences such as differences in worldviews, values, upbringing, life experiences, and age-groups also emerged as sub-categories to reflect interview participants' understanding of the multicultural counselling concepts. For example, Bee, a female Chinese-Buddhist counsellor, described her understanding of multicultural counselling to include differences in worldviews. She said, "The meaning to me? I didn't really highlight as a multicultural. I think a different worldview, as I wrote in the questionnaire. How you perceived...your own perception towards whatever aspects in your life. That's multicultural for me" (Interview 3).

This definition, even though given by a so-called non-multicultural counsellor, seems to be consistent with the current thinking in multicultural counselling because Bee is emphasising diversity implicitly (D. W. Sue & Torino, 2005). This provides evidence to support the inclusive perspective of multiculturalism (Draguns, 2008; Pedersen, et al., 2008) as earlier discussed in Chapter Two.

Participants' views on the practice of multicultural counselling also varied and generated mixed findings. Some viewed the practice as somewhat in line with general and culture-matched counselling, but emphasised more on awareness about culture. For example, Rogayah, who is a USA-trained professional and taught multicultural counselling courses by mostly referring to the USA texts, said,

Actually, I was responding to your question when you said, "Is the current practice that we do is really multicultural?" Who is to define that? What is considered really multicultural? For me, the main objective is for counsellors to be instilled with the awareness that culture is an important element to be considered in counselling...[For example,] how do you attend to Chinese client so that you won't violate their customs or cultures.

In an earlier account, she emphasised the need to 'localise' the practice of multicultural counselling to suit the needs and cultures of the Malaysian population. This highlights her multicultural awareness and knowledge as a Malaysian professional counsellor, despite having formal education and training in the Western context.

Some others described the practice as most suitable to non-Malay counsellors rather than the Malays due to perceived language restriction among Malays. For example, Ali, who had a very Malay life and taught multicultural counselling courses for more than five years, commented:

I think for the non-Malay counsellors, they are at the better position to practise cross-cultural and multicultural counselling. For the Malay counsellors, I do not see it as, I think the Malay and non-Malay counsellors, the non-Malay counsellors are better equipped because they have gone through the education system whereby they have mastered the Malay language on top of their own mother tongue. So, there itself they could handle at least two ethnic groups there – their own race and also those who can speak Malay. But for the Malay, if they cannot speak English, that means they could only attend to clients who can speak only Malay. So, that's where the limitation is.

Ali's comment, even though was based on his personal and professional involvement in counselling, seemed somewhat debatable because findings from surveys confirmed that: there were no significant differences in perceived MCCs between Malay and non-Malay counsellors and language competency was not the only dimension that constitutes MCC. Hence, it could be argued that maybe some participant counsellors are too confident in their perceptions of MCC.

Other non-Malay counsellors seemed to support Ali's comment. For example, Elaine, a female Indian-Christian counsellor, asserted that language is not a problem for her to counsel culturally different clients because she can speak Malay (the national

language) well. However, she predicted that gender bias might influence the practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia (*Maybe gender bias is there. For example, we prefer lady but to me, I think, they should not*). This is interesting because, even though the survey finding showed that counsellor's gender was not a good predictor for MCCs based on counsellors' perspectives, it may generate a different outcome if this research used clients' perspectives instead.

Another general view regarding the practice of multicultural counselling involved the notion of 'to understand it, is so easy; to practise it, is not easy'. For example, Cheng, a female Chinese-Buddhist counsellor, said,

when you practice multicultural counselling, it always come back to you not to the client no matter how deep understanding you have about the culture, ...but don't forget the counter-transference that always be a challenge.

Cheng's view seems to highlight the many difficulties, potential barriers and challenges faced by Malaysian counsellors in their practice of multicultural counselling. This is further discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Regarding the importance of multicultural counselling, most participant counsellors perceived the practice to be very important when considering the diversity of the current Malaysian population, as discussed by Dharma, a male Indian-Hindu counsellor:

I think it is very important now. You must understand now that we are not having Indian, Malay, and Chinese alone here. In our country, we have a lot of foreigners who are giving problems to the country. Most of the problems of the country are because of the foreigners – the Indonesians, the Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, Indians – you will find a lot of abusive, a lot of ill moral activities, a lot of abandoned babies and all that, all from foreigners. A lot of foreigners are

involved. And these people also need counselling. So, I feel all these people we must also learn about their culture and so that we can handle them.

Dharma's comment is rather controversial because at one hand, he seems to have prejudiced beliefs about foreigners by attributing most social problems in Malaysia to them, but at the other hand, he emphasises the need to know and understand both the local people's and the foreigners' cultures.

Lazim, the one and only 'virtual' interviewee in this research, wrote that multicultural counselling is important because of several diversity factors such as race/ethnicity, economic control, political, and educational power. This highlights the complexity in the socio-political dynamics and power imbalances among Malaysians which is closely linked with their ethnic identification. The issues on power differences in counselling will be further discussed in the final section of this chapter.

Overall, it seems that professional counsellors' understanding of multicultural counselling as a concept is somewhat adequate as revealed by the way they defined multicultural counselling, viewed the practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia, and perceived the importance of such practice with Malaysian clients. The following discusses results of counsellors' understanding of the MCC concept, a very important construct in the multicultural counselling research.

Understanding the MCC concept.

Participants' responses to the topic of MCC revealed one overarching theme (dimensions of MCC) with six categories: (1) multicultural skills, (2) multicultural personal or practice experiences, (3) understanding of culture and diversity, (4)

knowledge of culture and diversity, (5) language competency, and (6) multicultural awareness (with two sub-categories, i.e., multicultural attitudes and multicultural beliefs). These categories were consistent with survey findings from PCA and coding analysis on definitions of multicultural competence term in Chapter Five. The only difference was the emergence of language competency as an added dimension of MCC, and not being embedded under the multicultural skills.

Ten participants discussed MCC in terms of various skills needed when counselling culturally different clients. Ali discussed the basic skills of counselling as the pre-requisite skills to be equipped among counsellors before practising multicultural counselling. He explained that these skills need to be culturally adapted to a client's presenting problem with the use of client's culture as background and reference. For example, he said that in multicultural counselling, "*we don't preach, but we may want to skilfully ask them to think and analyse and examine their situations according to their religious values*" (Interview 1). This means that, besides mastering basic skills of counselling (such as listening, reflecting, paraphrasing, seeking clarification, questioning, and encouraging), a multiculturally competent counsellor should have a focus on the client's culture to develop culturally relevant skills.

Under the category of multicultural personal and practice experience, responses from nine participants revealed the advantages of having personal and practice experience with culturally diverse clients. For example, Jasmi, a male Malay-Muslim school counsellor, who worked with more than 70% non-Malay clients, acknowledged the role of his practice experience with culturally diverse clients in enhancing his counselling practice in the school setting. He then advised all counsellors, especially the

fresh graduates, to gain more multicultural experience through personal socialisation and contacts with outsiders (i.e., those outside the school community) to improve multicultural counselling practice in schools:

[English-translated] OK, what I've seen so far is that what we learnt at the universities are supporting materials only. Indeed, they will help us. However, besides that, we must seek our own experiences through socialisation, through external contacts. Sometimes, a non-counselling background person may perform better than us because their experiences are abundant. And, this explains why older counsellors are more acceptable than those who just graduated from [universities] and are aged in their 20s. And then, maybe when these [young] counsellors wanted to counsel an older client, they may be less successful.

Ika, a fresh graduate female Malay-Muslim counsellor aged in her 20s, agreed with Jasmi's comment because she herself perceived the more experienced counsellors to be more understanding and competent. However, the survey results indicated that this is not the case because there was no significant relationship between counsellors' years of practice and their multicultural understanding (refer to Table 23).

In this light, participants reported their understanding of culture and diversity as another dimension to understand the concept of MCC. Some participants discussed the types of cultures and diversity factors which matter most among Malaysian clients such as *'their culture, their religion, their belief, their likes and their dislikes, the do's and the don'ts, [and] their way of life'* (Dharma, Interview 4). In order to understand these factors easier and better, counsellors' personal background and knowledge emerged as the pre-requisites. For example, Kasmah said,

I come from er..my mum is Chinese and my dad is Malay. ... So, in terms of understanding the main religions, the main cultures in Malaysia, I think, I'm quite fine with that. I think that's why, for me, I'm quite open-minded about other cultures. And, it is easy for me to mix around with other cultures and then

with other people as well from different religions, from different cultures, and from different norms.

This is one of the advantages of being a multicultural counsellor, such as Kasmah, because the cultural identity and life experiences during upbringing enhance the counsellor's understanding of culture and diversity (Cartwright & D'Andrea, 2005; Comas-Diaz, 2005). Hence, it is easier for her to appreciate, respect, and accept diversity in the counselling practice.

Participant counsellors also discussed the need and advantage of having knowledge of culture and diversity. For example, Dharma discussed the importance of having good knowledge of culture and diversity to better understand diverse Malaysian clients by drawing examples of the major ethnic groups in Peninsular Malaysia. According to him,

In Peninsular Malaysia, you must have good knowledge about our Malaysian cultures – Culture of the different ethnic groups of Malay, Indian, and Chinese, their cultures, their beliefs, their myths, their religions. It's very important because these are all very sensitive issues.

In this regard, Cheng recalled a counselling case with a Malay client who talked about the Malay myth of 'Orang Minyak' (NOTE: The *Orang Minyak* literally means an 'oily man' in Malay, but according to one of the Malay ghost myths, it refers to a supernatural serial rapist who uses black grease as a night-time camouflage and thus making him hard to see and hard to catch). She said her background knowledge helped her to counsel her client better and prevented her from falsely assuming (or misdiagnosing) her client as 'having some illusions', that is, delusional.

Besides ethnicity, religion, belief, and myth; other cultural variables mentioned by counsellors in this study were cultural practices such as cultural festivals, customs, and cultural language. They emphasised explicitly the importance of having cultural knowledge to better counsel culturally diverse client in Malaysia.

As Malaysia is also a multilingual nation, it is not surprising that language competency emerged as another dimension of MCC. Eight participants who responded under this category discussed the advantage of having multi-language competency to successfully (1) practise counselling with culturally different clients and (2) socialise with people from other cultures. For example, Ali said:

Because I could speak Chinese, I could speak Malay, and I could speak English as well. So, language is not an issue at all for me to have clients from various backgrounds. So, that is something...an advantage that I have, I suppose.

Cheng and Fred shared Ali's view because both could speak and write in three languages well (English, Malay and their own mother tongue).

Similarly, Kasmah, who has a wide exposure to diverse cultures due to her multicultural background and context during schooling and employment years, argued that 'language is the main thing' and 'the most important thing' that she has to consider when mixing (or counselling) with people (or clients) from different cultural background (Interview 11, p.3 and p.7, respectively). She used the term 'cultural language' to refer to the shared properties of a language that belongs to a particular ethnic group, which sometimes may have different meanings and dialects across cultural contexts. In this light, she questioned the effectiveness of culture-matched counselling in terms of understanding the 'real' meaning from what clients said to her:

It is true that in the text, it says that we have to speak the same language as our client. So, when I read that in theory, I said, “OK, fair enough, I’m Malay. Maybe my client will be Malays. So, it is easy to understand.” But, even though that I am Malay, and then she’s Malay, or he’s Malay, it doesn’t mean that I really understand what actually she means, right?

In view of the difficulty in speaking ‘the same language’ with culturally diverse clients, one interesting finding emerged from interviews was the use of body language in enhancing their multicultural counselling practices, as suggested by two participant counsellors (Elaine and Ika). According to them, counsellors should know and understand body languages because knowing how to read clients’ body language can give useful information to better understand the clients and their problems.

Under the final category of multicultural awareness, there were two emergent sub-categories (i.e., multicultural beliefs and multicultural attitudes). Fred, a male Indian-Christian counsellor, who has worked with diverse people for more than 20 years in various government agencies, claimed multicultural awareness as the main ingredient in multicultural counselling. He prefers the term multicultural awareness to multicultural counselling, and explained,

I’m more comfortable with the term multicultural awareness in counselling. And I believe, every encounter is a cross-cultural encounter. You see, even if I meet an Indian male; I am a male if I meet another male, Indian male, same age, same background and everything, it is still cross-cultural or multicultural encounter because for me culture is not just Indian, Chinese. Of course, those are the outward expression, the tangible, what you can look at; but the values we hold. You know, you can have two young Malay girls wearing ‘tudung’ [head scarf], same religion, same background, same ‘kampong’ [village] whatever it is the same, but they can be totally different culturally. They come from different experiences.

He further discussed his understanding of multicultural awareness in greater detail such as explaining the meaning of cross-cultural awareness (*For me, cross-*

cultural awareness always telling yourself, “Look the person and don’t ever assume that the person is like you”. That’s cross-cultural awareness), linking it to empathy (So, to be able to empathise well, you must have that what we call cultural awareness – the differences in human beings, differences in lifestyles, differences from where we come), sharing his beliefs and faiths as a culturally aware counsellor (I believe in God. I believe that all religions are right in their own way...I got a lot of faith in human beings...if you give the right condition, the right environment, the right situation, they will be able to deal with their problem) and highlighting issues on spirituality and supernatural phenomena as another important elements in Malaysians’ culture (So, as a counsellor, you must be aware of this. This is culture: the belief in spirit, the belief in supernatural forces. It’s part of culture). With regard to dealing with supernatural issues in counselling, he explicitly emphasised the advantage of having cultural awareness:

This thing about belief in supernatural and supernatural has an influence in our lives. So, as a counsellor, you must be aware, you must be able to empathise with those who believe in this and you must be able to negotiate how to manoeuvre when you can still respect their views and at the same time get them to consider going for hospital treatment.

In view of his comments and recommendations, it is transparent that Fred is a good example of a multiculturally aware counsellor. Besides having one of the highest scores in self-reported MCC, his upbringing and hometown (born and bred in Kuala Lumpur), previous work experiences (mostly in the government sector where the majority staff are Malays), and current work with the welfare department are the facilitative factors that enhance his multicultural competence. Six other counsellors also discussed multicultural awareness, beliefs, and attitudes as another important element to be considered when counselling culturally different clients, but their responses were not as detailed as those provided by Fred.

Perceived characteristics of a multiculturally competent counsellor.

As counsellor characteristics emerged as part of the dimensions of MCC from surveys and also part of Sue et al.'s (1992) MCC model, the following discusses the characteristics of a multiculturally competent counsellor as perceived by the 12 interview participants to deepen the understanding of MCC concept.

Participants were asked whether they consider themselves as a multiculturally competent counsellor and to give the reasons for their answers. Their perceptions of a multiculturally competent counsellor in Malaysia were also explored. Out of 29 preliminary findings, thematic analysis revealed six themes: (1) basic qualities of a good counsellor (including Rogerian concepts), (2) basic counselling principles and skills, (3) multicultural skills (i.e., specialised skills in dealing with culturally different or diverse clients), (4) cultural knowledge and understanding, (5) multicultural awareness (be 'culturally sensitive' or culturally aware), and (6) multicultural experiences.

Three participants (Dharma, Fred, and Hidayah) emphasised having the basic qualities of a good counsellor as one of the pre-requisites of becoming a multiculturally competent counsellor. Among the basic qualities of a good counsellor reported by participants in this study were the Rogerian concepts (i.e., unconditional positive regard, non-judgmental, empathic, and genuine), warm person, willingness to help others, being honest and sincere. Other emerging qualities discussed by interview participants were: (a) 'professionalism', which has three sub-categories: 'counsellor qualification', 'ethical practice', and 'remains objective'; (b) 'outward appearance acceptable to all', (c) 'patriotism', and (d) 'patience and perseverance'. Ali gave a very interesting comment

to emphasise the importance of having outward appearance acceptable to all ethnics when practising multicultural counselling in Malaysia. He said,

I do see some of my colleagues who put on a 'songkok'. I don't think he would be able to attract non-Muslim clients. Non-Muslim clients would stay away from – I think most of them will stay away from if you put on a Muslim identity. You carry yourself like a Muslim counsellor, or Islamic counselling. So, to me, you are limiting your clientele. The scope [of your clientele]. So, I think in our population, the Malaysian society, where we are multiracial and multicultural, I would strongly advocate our counsellors to portray themselves to be acceptable to all not to be like projecting yourself you are not approachable by clients from other cultural backgrounds.

This indicate that to successfully practise multicultural counselling, counsellors must always be prepared to self-check whether their selection of clothing, for example, would have an impact to their client's way of thinking and behaving during the sessions. This is important because clients' first impression may influence their acceptance towards the counsellor and the counselling process.

Another pre-requisite is having basic counselling principles and skills as suggested by Cheng and Ali. This means that a multiculturally competent counsellor must possess all the qualities of a good counsellor and also master the basic knowledge and skills of counselling such as the general counselling process.

Besides having the basics of counselling, a multiculturally competent counsellor is perceived as someone who has multicultural skills. Most participants understood multicultural skills as a specialised set of counselling skills needed to work effectively and ethically with clients who come from different cultural backgrounds. For example, Kasmah, who studied child counselling, said:

I believe in multicultural counselling, you do have different skills. Like, for instance, I'm more to children counselling. I know there are steps, there are ways how to attract my child client to be in the session. How to make my child client to talk to me? So, I believe in multicultural counselling, you do have this kind of interventions or ways to make them talk.

However, Rogayah, a counsellor educator who had her first, masters, and PhD degrees from the USA and taught multicultural counselling subjects for more than five years, had a somewhat different account of multicultural skills. According to her, multicultural skills were assessed in terms of 'mastery in counselling strategies and general counselling theories' so that a counsellor knows which strategies to pick and match with which clients. She added that in her multicultural counselling classes, whenever she taught multicultural skills, she did not focus on any multicultural theory. She said (translated to English),

I don't touch on that because for me, personally, I strongly believe that you don't have to. If you had a theory which you strongly adhered, you simply use those strategies which you have culturally modified and adapted.

This emphasised her belief that "there is no such thing as [a] theory [of] multicultural counselling" because according to her, when counsellors use a theory with clients from multicultural group, then the counselling itself becomes multicultural counselling. This finding adds to the current debate in multicultural counselling literature: do we need a multicultural counselling theory to be able to successfully practise multicultural counselling?

Another important characteristic of a multiculturally competent counsellor as revealed by interview data analysis was having deeper cultural knowledge and understanding. Results showed that having cultural knowledge was not only referring to

wanting to learn about diverse cultures but included enjoying learning about them.

Having deep cultural knowledge and understanding means that a counsellor does not only need to know the differences between cultures (e.g., having ‘good understanding of religions’ or ethnicity) or the differences that exist within each culture (e.g., gender and age), but he or she should be able to explain why such differences exist (Example: *We know that they are celebrating these festivals but sometimes, we don’t know why they are celebrating. We have so many. We only know the basic things*). Dharma provided a description of a multiculturally competent counsellor which not only emphasises understanding of cultures and religions in Malaysia, but includes practice implication if such understanding lacked:

To be a successful counsellor, then it is important that you must have good background of all cultures and all religions so that you don’t do certain things that might hurt their feelings. And then, once they have hurt their feelings, or the relationship is not there, then the counselling is a failure.

This indicates that a multiculturally competent counsellor must not only develop the MCC dimensions but must be prepared to engage in counsellor-client relationship in a multicultural counselling process. This will be further discussed later in this chapter.

In contrast, Cheng’s definition of a multiculturally competent counsellor put more emphasis on counsellors’ self-awareness than counsellors’ awareness of their clients. She said, “No matter how you understand your clients, but if you don’t understand yourself [how] you bring your culture, then you tend to influence your clients”. This leads to the theme of having multicultural awareness or being culturally sensitive or culturally aware as another important characteristic of a multiculturally competent counsellor. Participants indicated that a multiculturally competent counsellor must have a sense of awareness regarding their clients’ cultural background and

presenting problem, and their own personal and professional background, values, beliefs, and perceived strengths and weaknesses. Ali defined 'cultural sensitivity' to refer to, "...the sense that we shouldn't impose our values onto them [i.e., clients] which is against their cultural values". This indicates that counsellors have to be sensitive about clients' cultures so that any 'conflicting cultural values within our Malaysian cultures' can be detected and dealt with. Fred said something very interesting as an example of counsellors demonstrating cultural awareness regarding their clients' beliefs in religion. He said that

...to be a competent counsellor who are culturally aware, you must be brave enough to know even though I walked into a church, I sit and have a dialog with a priest; but if I go to a temple, there is no way that it is going to corrupt my religion. We must have that confidence.

So, counsellors must have faith in their own beliefs, be culturally sensitive, and able to appreciate their clients' cultural background.

The final theme revealed by the interview analysis was having multicultural experiences and this included two categories: 'socialisation with culturally diverse people' and 'being comfortable with diversity'. Hidayah explained her meaning of the socialisation process. According to her, the socialisation process includes factors such as upbringing, parental styles, and schooling. It is a continuous process which can affect individual's way of life. Seven other counsellors such as Ika, Elaine, and Jasmi discussed the benefits of socialisation with culturally diverse people and these included having friends from all races, becoming familiar with multi-languages, understanding diverse clients better, broadening professional network and resources for referral purposes, and enhancing counsellors' confidence in dealing with multicultural issues. Their multicultural experiences demonstrate that by mixing and socialising with

culturally diverse people can help them become comfortable with culture and diversity, and hence enhance their MCCs.

Overall, this section has presented and discussed participants' understandings of multicultural counselling and MCC as concepts. The most frequently reported definition for multicultural counselling was "counselling culturally different clients", while the concept of multicultural competence was understood based on multiple factors such as counsellors' characteristics, multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills, experience with culture and diversity, among many other dimensions. The following section discusses the challenges and potential barriers faced by participants in their practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia.

Barriers and Challenges in the Practice of Multicultural Counselling in Malaysia

Thematic analysis revealed a list of barriers and challenges reported by 12 participant counsellors in their practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia. These challenges were clustered into five main themes: challenges related to counsellor characteristics, to client characteristics, to characteristics of the presenting issues or problems, to third-party characteristics (i.e., clients' support systems such as community, colleagues and bosses and family members) and to specific counselling contexts (i.e., counselling rooms and work settings). Table 24 presents these themes and their emerging categories. This section discusses these themes in detail by drawing on some selected examples from the participants' responses.

Table 24

Emerging Themes and Categories on the Barriers and Challenges in the Practice of Multicultural Counselling

Themes	Categories
1. Counsellor characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Language barrier ▪ Lack of practice experience and exposure to diverse cultures (macro and micro) in Malaysia ▪ Perceived multiculturally incompetence ▪ Counsellors' value conflicts
2. Client characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clients' resistance - Lack of acceptance, trust, confidence ▪ Clients' misconception/pre-judgmental beliefs about counselling or counsellor ▪ Clients' dependency
3. Presenting issues/problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Culturally sensitive issues ▪ Culturally complex issues
4. Third-party characteristics (e.g., organisation, client's support system, society)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stigmas and misconceptions ▪ Negative societal labelling ▪ Organisational expectations/pressures ▪ Resistance and lack of support systems
5. Counselling context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unconducive counselling room: inappropriate physical setting and infrastructure ▪ Conflicting work values and work cultures

Challenges related to counsellor characteristics.

Counsellor characteristics emerged as the first theme of barriers and challenges in the practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia with four categories: language barrier, lack of experience and exposure to diverse cultures, perceived multicultural incompetence, and counsellors' value conflicts. Among these, language barrier was the most frequent response reported by most participant counsellors, especially when counselling clients from different cultural backgrounds. As the majority of Malaysian counsellors are Malay-Muslim, the non-Malay counsellors in this study felt that their workload increases because of Malay counsellors' language restriction. For example, Fred, who could speak three languages well, said,

...in government service, welfare department, the vast majority are Malay-Muslims. That's a few challenge. That is why 'sana' [over there] I got so many clients because those Indians want to see me due to language problem and that kind of thing. Those English speaking want to see me. Because counselling is people service, so you need to at minimum language la. People who can speak the language that their clients are comfortable with. This is a big challenge that we are having in this country.

In view of this problem, he then further urged the Malaysian counselling profession (including all counsellor educators) to tackle the language problem among professional counsellors because he perceived this problem is serious because it could lead to inaccessibility of counselling services, especially among the ethnic-minority client population in Malaysia.

This finding, indirectly, explains why language competency emerged as one of the dimensions of MCC in this study. If counsellors were linguistically competent, they could work well with linguistically diverse populations.

Participants also indicated a lack of practice experience (especially among counselling lecturers because their job specifications do not include a requirement for clinical practice) and exposure to diverse cultures (macro and micro) in Malaysia. Their current roles and duties at their work organisation was one of the factors which contributed to this. For example, those who worked in the schools or universities might have a limited practice experience with and exposure to culturally diverse clientele or issues. In addition, there were concerns regarding the education and training of multicultural counselling courses in Malaysia, which lacked practical training for trainee counsellors. This finding implies that there is much room for improvement in the education and training of counsellors in the field of multicultural counselling in

Malaysia. This also explains why some participant counsellors reported some earlier difficulties and discomfort in the practice of multicultural counselling, as discussed in Chapter Five and earlier parts in this chapter.

Participant counsellors also perceived themselves as not as multiculturally competent as they would like to be. According to them, their background knowledge and understanding of multicultural issues, self-awareness on culture and diversity, and multicultural skills in dealing with culturally different clients or culturally sensitive and complex issues in Malaysia are lacking. For example, Elaine was frustrated with her limited knowledge and skills in Islam in order to better serve her Malay-Muslim clients. She said,

OK, my client is a Malay, she's a Muslim; So, I can't, I don't have any like, maybe at that time, something like a word of comfort from the [Quran]. If it is from the same religion, it is easy for me to comfort by taking some quotations from anywhere and tell her. But, for her being there, I don't know much about [Islam]. So, of course, I can't go more onto helping her in the religious, to bring back in the religion, you see.

This finding suggests that professional counsellors must develop competency in spiritual and religious aspects of counselling in order to successfully and ethically practise multicultural counselling in the Malaysian context. This has direct implications for the education and training of counsellors in Malaysia.

The final category under this theme involved counsellors' value conflicts. Participant counsellors reported experiencing conflicting personal and professional values and conflicting cultural values between them and their clients. Due to these, some faced problems such as unfinished business, countertransference, frustrations, and learned helplessness in their counselling practice. For example, Ali, who sometimes felt

some 'initial discomforts' in the cross-cultural counsellor-client relationship, used self-reminder technique to focus on his counselling:

I would normally tell myself that you just have to remain objective, respect your clients. OK, it's their choice. The choice is still theirs. We are helping them to make the best choice to suit their situations but we are not going to make decisions for them.

On the other hand, Cheng, who sometimes experienced countertransference, helplessness, and burnout in her multicultural counselling practice, emphasised explicitly the importance of counsellor self-awareness and the use of self-checking to deal with those personal issues.

Overall, counsellors in this study have shared various challenges and barriers which are related to their personal and professional characteristics such as language barriers, lack of practice experience with and exposure to diverse cultures, counsellors' perceived multiculturally incompetence, and value conflicts. This finding highlights the importance of counsellors developing competency in multicultural counselling so that they can be better prepared and confident to practise counselling with diverse Malaysian clients.

Challenges related to client characteristics.

Under this theme, three categories emerged: clients' resistance (lack of acceptance, trust, and confidence towards a culturally different counsellor), clients' misconception or having pre-judgmental beliefs about counselling or counsellor, and clients' dependency. Some participant counsellors, especially those who worked with younger generation clients and male clients, felt that their clients sometimes showed a

lack of acceptance, trust, and confidence towards them, and this may be due to stigmas. For example, Dharma, who used to counsel clients from hospitals but now focuses more on counselling students at a private college, explained by comparing counselling in the Western countries and in Malaysia:

Because their negative stigmas are still there. It's not like Western countries where people go and see a psychiatrist when they have some problems but 'sini takde' [here it's not like that]. Kalau you pergi and see a psychiatrist [If you go and see a psychiatrist,], you already endorsed, people endorsed you 'psychiatric [patient] ni orang gila' [psychiatric patient as crazy person]. I mean the Asian concept is still there.

Dharma's comment, while it overstates the case of lack of stigma in the West, is consistent with the multicultural counselling literature reviewed in Chapter Two and Three because multicultural counselling, or even general counselling, is generally perceived as an emerging profession in most Asian countries (e.g., Othman, 2001a; Tol, Jordans, Regmi, & Sharma, 2005; Yu, Fu, Zhao, & Davey, 2010).

In addition, clients' misconception or having pre-judgmental beliefs about counselling or counsellor may also pose some challenges to Malaysian counsellors. For example, Kasmah was concerned that her physical appearance as a female Malay-Muslim, as expressed in terms of her clothing, may affect her culturally different clients' first impression of her:

...I have my own way of life, I have my own belief. Belief of something, when client believes something, I think it is really hard to change. If he sees us like we are wearing 'tudung' [head scarf] and said, "This Muslim girl, she doesn't know anything about me". That kind of perception, the belief, the self-concept, I think, about counsellors. I think, it is a big challenge for us to change the perception, to change, "Hey, we are capable to help you out here, you know".

This is interesting because it opens up future research direction to explore clients' perceptions of a multiculturally competent counsellor in Malaysia. Would they associate counsellors' competency with the counsellors' outward appearance?

The final category under this theme involved dealing with clients' dependency due to culture. For example, Dharma, who shared his counselling experience with Malay-Muslim housewives (whose husbands were abusive) suffering from marital problems and depression, reported some difficulties and discomforts to help these clients because:

Sometimes they become very dependent on you, and then you are also worried about transference and all that, you know...I have clients who sometimes who have problems with their husbands and all that, and at the middle of the night, you know, they call you, "can I see you, I am waiting out here". So, you have to be very careful with this kind of thing.

So, counsellors must always be 'very careful' and practise 'professionalism' in dealing with this issue and also other potential challenges related to clients' characteristics or attributes.

Challenges related to the presenting problem(s) in counselling.

Participants' responses under this theme revealed two main categories: dealing with culturally sensitive and culturally complex issues in Malaysia. Some counselling problems presented during counselling relate to different norms and values than those upheld by most Malaysians. Issues such as gay or lesbian lifestyles, pre-marital or extra-marital sex are generally perceived as culturally sensitive because these violate the cultural norms and values of general Malaysians. Hence, counselling clients with such

issues poses some challenges to Malaysian professional counsellors. For example, Ali, who had experience counselling a male Malay-Muslim client with multiple issues (gay relationship, marital problems, self-esteem and family issues), indicated that his case was complex because:

...it involves of course religious values, it involves also sexuality issue, and it also involves family issues there whereby he's got problems with his siblings as well. He's the youngest. The only child, the only person in the family who did not go to the university. So, self-esteem issues also came in. So, it's quite complicated in that sense.

So, when the presenting problem(s) involved an intersection of culturally sensitive issues related to ethnicity, religion, sexuality, and family relationship, the case may be perceived as most challenging by Malaysian counsellors, especially when it violates the cultural norms and values of Malaysians.

Challenges related to third-party characteristics.

Under this theme, third-party refers to individuals other than the client himself or herself such as the parents, teachers or top bosses. Participants' experiences were categorised into four: stigmas and misconceptions about counselling and counsellor concepts, negative societal labelling towards some client groups, unrealistic expectations and pressures from top management, and resistance and lack of support from clients' support systems. Most participants agreed that the stigmas and misconceptions about counselling and counsellors in Malaysia were generally based on a mistaken viewpoint that 'counselling is to fix or change people' and the 'counsellor is a problem solver' (e.g., Fred, Interview 6), respectively. In view of this, some participant counsellors purposely conducted talks and training, as part of their

counsellor roles, to educate parents, teachers, or even community people regarding the real meaning of these concepts so that the practice of counselling would be less challenging.

In addition, some participant counsellors reported that even among the Malaysian paraprofessional counsellor community, negative societal labelling towards some client groups such as victims of forced prostitution, abused wives, and abused children did exist. For example, Fred, who used to give counselling training to the NGO staff community (i.e., mostly paraprofessional counsellors) working with victims of human trafficking who had been forced into prostitution, was concerned regarding the staff's negative labelling towards these victims due to culture. He said,

... we focus on the staff - the staff working with these girls in the shelter. The staff, if they were not careful, they will look at these girls as bad girls. They don't look at them as victims because in our culture, sex is dirty. If you are a prostitute, you are a bad person. So, even when you are forced into prostitution, people feel sorry for you because you are forced into it but behind of it, bla..bla..bla...sleeping around. So, these kinds of things need to be sorted out.

This means that to successfully practise multicultural counselling, counsellors must constantly check themselves whether they have any negative labelling, stereotypes or prejudices towards certain groups of people in the Malaysian society. If they do, they have to be able to deal with such labelling and stereotypes effectively in order to be multiculturally competent counsellors.

Some participant counsellors reported their challenges when dealing with the bosses or top management in their work organisations. For example, both Hidayah and Fred were concerned regarding their bosses' attitudes towards counselling:

...they [the top management people] wanted it to be quick. When staff went for counselling, they expected the case settled. However, in reality, we couldn't do that. It all depend on our clients, maybe they took some time [to change]. That's the challenge. They want fast results. (Translated to English from Hidayah, Interview 8)

This finding shows that Malaysian counsellors faced many challenges from different angles and parties when it comes to the practice of multicultural counselling in their respective work organisations. Not only had they to deal with the challenges of their clients' resistance and misconception, but they also had to deal with their top management expectations.

Resistance and lack of support from clients' support systems, especially if the clients came from school student population, were also reported by some participants. For example, Bee shared her problems and difficulties when counselling Malaysian school students. According to her, counselling in schools became a real challenge to her when it involved dealing with two school-related parties: (a) the clients' parents from specific cultural groups, who were sometimes lacking in cooperation and acceptance towards the clients' positive changes due to their parenting styles) and (b) the teachers, who seemed judgmental towards the culturally different counsellor and some clients. So, dealing with the attitudes of clients' support systems is another critical challenge that professional counsellors in Malaysia have to deal with, especially for those who work with younger clients such as the school students or teenagers in general.

Challenges related to the counselling settings or contexts.

Under this theme, two categories emerged: uncondusive counselling rooms and conflicting work norms and values. Regarding the first, some participants voiced their

concerns regarding the location, seating arrangement and appropriate environment of the counselling rooms in their workplace. According to them, these factors could pose some challenges or potential challenges in their practice with culturally diverse clients or prospective clients. This seems very true in view of the existence of societal pre-judgmental beliefs, stigmas, and stereotypes about counselling and counsellor, as earlier discussed. For example, Fred, who used to counsel poor clients from ethnic-minority groups and victims of domestic violence, said:

For years, I've been seeing that we should never do counselling across table. We should be like in this room – L setting. But sometimes I find clients are more comfortable when they sit across a table because they also need to protect themselves from the counsellor. The table makes them feel secure. That is something that I found out.

The underlying meaning of this quote shows that Fred learnt the most from practice experience rather than from former counselling education in order to be multiculturally competent in dealing with specific groups of clients. This finding is consistent with the findings from surveys, particularly from the t-test analysis in Chapter Five (Note: It was found that participants' perceived MCCs were not influenced by their completion of multicultural counselling courses).

The second category under this theme involved dealing with conflicting work values due to differing work cultures in various work sectors. Since all participant counsellors came from diverse work settings, some of them reported the challenges that they had to deal with in order to fit in the existing work cultures. In some work cultures such as counselling in schools, counselling in hospitals, and counselling in the uniformed civil defence and force unit, some existing work values were not compatible with the counselling values, principles and ethical guidelines. For example, Ika, whose

background was not related to police and had limited work experience in the uniform civil defence and force unit, said (translated to English):

...when a civilian entered a uniformed unit, there is a gap. What I meant by ‘gap’ is in terms of the implementation of power. For example, the civilians’ voices were less heard even though we have complied with the rules and regulations that all decisions have to be made by the senior uniformed officers....So, when it came to giving orders, we found it very challenging. Indeed, a civilian officer had difficulties to adjust to anything pertaining to administrative matter.

This reflects two things for consideration: the potential challenges that could happen to other civilian counsellors (or general counsellors) whose first posting was in the ‘unfamiliar work environment’ and the importance of having adequate practice experience during internship. This finding has direct implications for the education and training of counsellors in Malaysia.

To summarise, this section have discussed some challenges (or potential challenges) and barriers faced by Malaysian counsellors in their practice of counselling with diverse clients in diverse work settings. The challenges were related to attributes of counsellors, clients, or third-parties, counselling problems, or counselling contexts. Among the top three challenges reported by participant counsellors were language barriers, lack of practice with and exposure to diverse cultures, and counsellors’ perceived multicultural incompetence. The findings suggest two areas for further improvement: (a) better education and training for counsellor trainees and practising counsellors so that they can develop MCCs to better serve diverse clients in diverse work settings, and (b) better promotion, facilities, and infrastructure for counselling so that the quality of services can be guaranteed to meet the individual and cultural needs of diverse Malaysian clients.

Malaysian Counsellors Engaging with Culture and Diversity Factors When Counselling Culturally Different Clients

Most results from the surveys addressed the nature and extent of MCC as a product of attitudinal assessment: measuring professional counsellors' perceived MCC based on their self-report. In order to deepen the understanding of MCC, this research also investigated how Malaysian counsellors engage with culture and diversity issues through their reflections on multicultural counselling practices

Under this overarching topic, participants were asked to recall the most challenging case that they have encountered (topic one) and described how they engage with issues on culture and diversity using prompts such as during counsellor-client relationship, case conceptualisation, and intervention stages (topic two). The emergent themes for each topic are presented and discussed in the following sections by drawing on examples from participants' responses.

Topic One: Culturally Challenging Anecdotes.

Eleven participants responded to the question and their responses are summarised in Table 25. A closer examination of participants' responses revealed three emergent themes: (1) culturally challenging clients (culturally different clients), (2) culturally challenging issues/problems (culturally sensitive and complicated issues/problems in Malaysia), and (3) challenging self (dealing with personal cultural issues in counselling).

Table 25

Summary of Participants' Challenging Anecdotes in Multicultural Counselling Practice

No	Challenging Cases	Sources
1	Counselling school students with socio-cultural problems such as pornography, *free/casual sex (pre-marital sex), *incest, hardcore drug addiction, and problematic effects of parents' divorce on children.	Jasmi, Interview 10
2	Counselling school students with culturally complex issues such as verbal abuse, mental torture, attempted murder (Malay-Muslim), attempted suicide, and mentally ill.	Bee, Interview 2
3	Counselling pre-school client with culturally sensitive and complex issues (e.g., traumatised due to exposure to parents' lesbian lifestyle).	Kasmah, Interview 11
4	Counselling a Malay-Muslim man with culturally complex and sensitive issues (e.g., conflicting values between religion and sexuality) such as marital problems, *problems in gay lifestyle and relationship, loneliness, depression, self-esteem, and problems in family relationship.	Ali, Interview 1
5	Counselling a reluctant client (a culturally different man with chronic alcoholic problem).	Dharma, Interview 4
6	Counselling a depressed elderly lady dealing with death/loss of a loved one.	Ali, Interview 1
7	Counselling a lonely but furious elderly man dealing with dissatisfactions in life	Cheng, Interview 3
8	Counselling a culturally different university student who was suicidal in dealing with her family matters (forced into an arranged marriage) and death of a loved one and, at the same time, the counsellor had to deal with a personal challenge of countertransference.	Cheng, Interview 3
9	Counselling a housewife with issues related to supernatural phenomena which led into depression and attempted suicide.	Cheng, Interview 3
10	Counselling housewives with issues on marital problems (such as *polygamy) and depression	Dharma, Interview 4
11	*Counselling culturally different abused victims (mothers and children with physical abuse or mental torture) of domestic violence and at the same time the counsellors faced some personal issues of: i. Frustrations and Helplessness ii. Unfinished business	i: Cheng, Interview 3; Elaine, Interview 5; ii: Fred, Interview 6
12	Counselling culturally different abused victims of human trafficking who had been forced into prostitution	Fred, Interview 6
13	Counselling teenagers with socio-cultural problems such as (i) *pre-marital sex, *pre-marital motherhood, deviant behaviours without parental support; and (ii) uncontrollable behaviour, *free/casual sex, and *pre-marital motherhood	i: Elaine, Interview 5; and ii: Ika, Interview 9
14	Counselling culturally different inter-racial married couples (i.e., a couple who each come from different ethnic and religious groups) in dealing with marital issues pertaining to their cultural differences.	Elaine, Interview 5; Hidayah, Interview 8
15	Counselling single mums (Micro cultures)	Ali, Interview 1

Note: Those with asterisks (*) denote very sensitive issues in counselling because they violate the cultural norms and values of Malaysians.

Under the theme of ‘culturally challenging clients’, participants’ responses involved dealing with a culturally different client. According to these participants, the cultural differences between them and their clients can exist on the basis of ethnicity, religion, gender, age, life experiences, education, and/or sexuality, which are consistent with their earlier definitions of multicultural counselling: counselling culturally different clients. This understanding shows their multicultural awareness regarding their own culture and the culture of their clients, which not only focuses on the classic differences due to race or ethnicity but includes differences in diversity factors such as differences in life experiences between two individuals from similar religious backgrounds. For example, Ali, a male Chinese-Muslim convert who led a very Malay-Muslim life, described his counselling experiences with a male Malay-Muslim client who had a very different lifestyle from his or ‘normal’ Malay-Muslim men would have:

There was this guy who was married for almost 11 years and with a child, a boy, and he worked in a multinational company. ... at the time of the counselling session, he was about 36 years old, well good looking guy. He divorced his wife because he felt he loved with his manager who is a guy and an expatriate. So, he moved in to live together with that manager who provided him with all the luxury. So, he lived in a very luxurious life. He did not abandon the child and the former wife. He still provided for them. OK, and this is a Muslim guy.

The differences in ethnicity and life experiences between Ali and his client posed some ‘initial discomforts’ and challenges to him when he tried to help the client dealing with his personal problems, despite both being males and having similar religious backgrounds. This indicates that the awareness of self and culture and the understanding of cultural differences play a major role when working with a culturally different client in the Malaysian context.

Similarly, a client who had different ethnicity, religion, and life experiences from the counsellor would be perceived as the most challenging client because of these prominent cultural differences. This was experienced by Bee, a female Chinese-Buddhist school counsellor, who described her counselling experience with a female Malay-Muslim student client, who had attempted to murder her own mother. According to her, dealing with the client was ‘very challenging’ because she had to deal with cultural differences in ethnicity and religion between herself and her client while at the same time trying to help her client. Her difficulties and lack of confidence in dealing with the client might be explained by her limited knowledge of Malay culture and Islam because she self-scored her current knowledge about Malays and Islam about 40% and 10%, respectively. So, it seems that Bee need to upgrade her knowledge and understanding regarding different ethnicities and religions in Malaysia in order to successfully practise multicultural counselling.

Both examples highlight two important lessons for practising counsellors: (1) to inform counsellors regarding the need to develop multicultural awareness, cultural knowledge and understanding (among many dimensions of MCC) before they can successfully engage with culturally different clients in Malaysia; and (2) to caution them that the cultural differences within each ethnic-religious groups in Malaysia were also as difficult to be dealt with as those existing between the groups.

Participants also described their culturally challenging anecdotes in terms of the specific types of issues or problems that they had to deal with and their responses revealed ‘culturally challenging issues/problems’ as the emergent theme with two categories: culturally sensitive and culturally complicated issues in Malaysia. Among

the culturally sensitive issues reported by participants in this study were gay lifestyles, pre-marital sex or motherhood, free/casual sex among teenagers, domestic violence and polygamy. These issues were perceived by most participants as ‘very sensitive issues’ because they violate the cultural norms and values upheld by most Malaysians (Dharma, Interview 4). Thus, dealing with clients with these issues poses some challenges to these Malaysian counsellors in their practice of multicultural counselling, as discussed in the previous section.

Under the category of culturally complicated issues in Malaysia, participants’ responses involved dealing with a sensitive issue that encompasses an intertwining of social class, gender, race/ethnicity, age, sexuality, among other cultural aspects. For example, Ali considered his case with a Malay-Muslim corporate man with problems in gay lifestyle/relationship, in marriage, with loneliness, depression, and self-esteem, and in family relationship as the most challenging because he had to deal with conflicting values that were intertwined in the client’s religion, sexuality, and family. He said,

... it involves of course religious values, it involves also sexuality issue, and it also involves family issues there whereby he’s got problems with his siblings as well. He’s the youngest, the only child, the only person in the family who did not go to the university. So, self-esteem issues also came in. So, it’s quite complicated in that sense.

So, Malaysian counsellors must have the ability to be aware of, know, understand, and be able to deal with culturally sensitive and complicated issues in Malaysia. These are the dimensions of MCC revealed by the surveys and the initial part of interviews. Context-specific issues related to gender, ethnicity, religion, family, and sexuality must be handled with a high level of MCCs because these relate to the cultural norms and values of Malaysians. When these issues were intertwined in a client’s

presenting problem and violated the cultural norms and values of Malaysians, then the counselling process becomes more challenging for professional counsellors to deal with. This process is further discussed in the next topic.

Under the final theme of ‘challenging self’, participants courageously voiced their difficulties and challenges when dealing with their personal issues and problems as a result of internal conflicts as a person as well as a professional. Some counsellors cautiously admitted that among the personal challenges and difficulties that they encountered when counselling culturally different clients or dealing with culturally sensitive and complicated issues, were dealing with their own unfinished business. For example, Fred talked about his difficulties and discomfort when counselling victims of domestic violence:

I know that I have to be extra careful when I’m dealing with domestic violence. I got to watch myself because my dad was a wonderful man but now after all these years, I never knew this, but after all these years, I suddenly realise that my father was actually an abusive person. He abused his [pause] towards my mother sometimes, physically and verbally and [in] so many ways financially. I can sense this transference because I was young and I live in some kind of fear sometimes. So, when I’m dealing with domestic violence, I can see myself sometimes getting a bit mushy and a bit...[carried away?]. I don’t know some kind of impact on me. So, when I’m dealing with domestic violence cases, I’ve got to... [be extra careful]. I loved my late dad. He’s a wonderful man. I’m also some kind being part of an abusive family. So, those kinds of cases, I find it sometimes a bit challenging.

This quote captures the intensity of personal conflict experienced by Fred, whose childhood was full of fears because he had witnessed all kinds of abuse done to his mother, and yet during that time he did not understand why. This has an impact on his professional practice because dealing with domestic violence cases sometimes

triggered his unfinished business towards his abusive father that he nevertheless loved dearly.

Overall, it can be concluded that culturally challenging cases in Malaysia, as experienced by the counsellors in this study, involved several themes: counselling culturally different clients, dealing with culturally sensitive and complicated issues/problems presented during the counselling sessions, and dealing with counsellors' personal conflicts and issues as a person and a professional at the same time. Understanding these themes enhances the understanding and practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia. Thus, these may be considered as necessary conditions for understanding how Malaysian counsellors engage with culture and diversity factors in counselling, which is discussed below.

Topic Two: Stages of engaging with culture and diversity.

During the interviews, participants described how they engage with culturally different clients or with issues of culture or diversity following the main stages in the general counselling process: building counsellor-client relationship, understanding the real problems and facilitating counselling interventions (Gladding, 2000). From 12 interview transcripts, thematic analysis using NVivo 8 revealed a model, which encompasses: (1) the stages of conducting multiculturally competent counselling, and (2) the mechanisms that were the drivers and facilitators of each stage, contributing to successful engagement with culture and diversity. This theoretical model is presented in Figure 13.

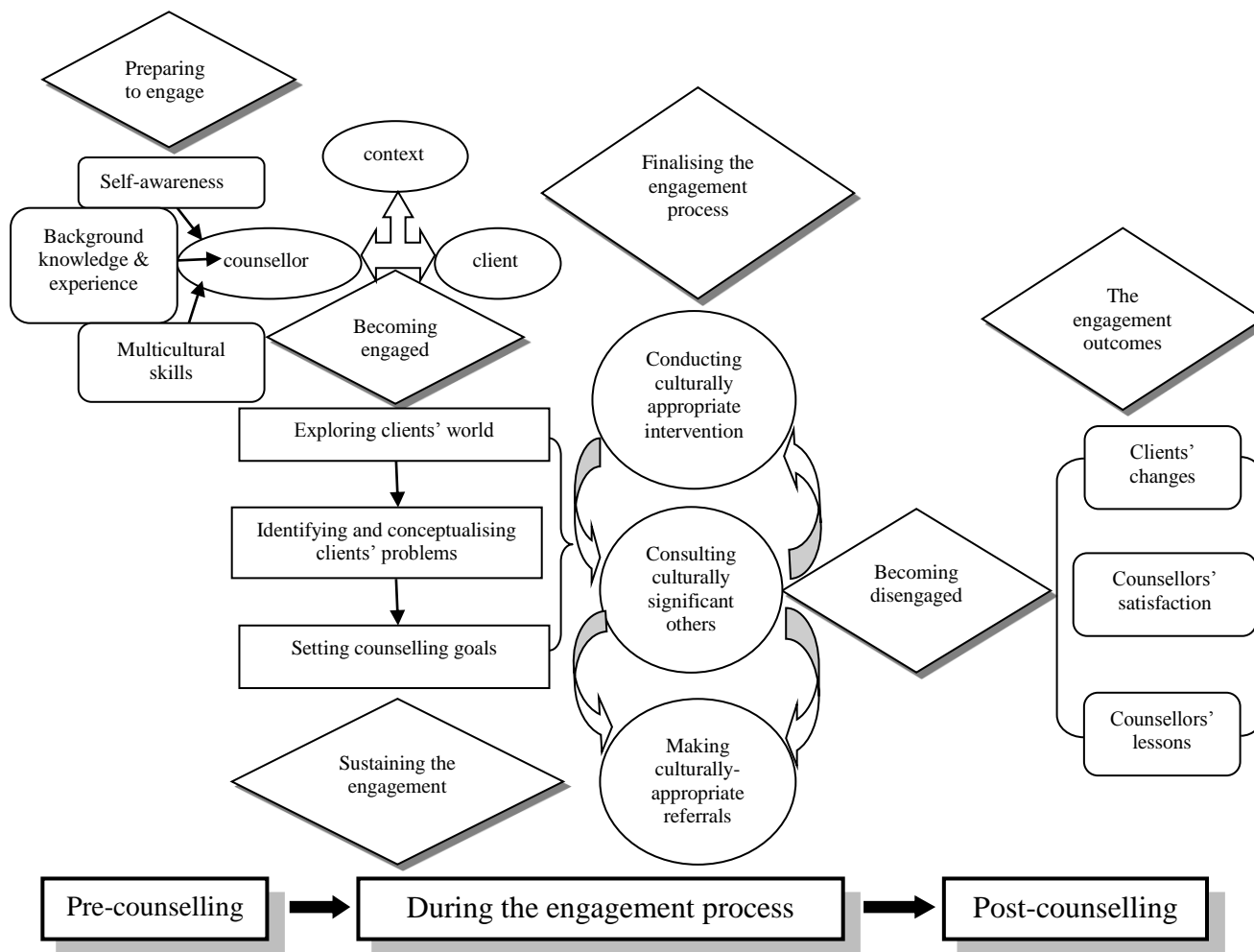


Figure 13. Theoretical model for engagement process with culturally different clients described by counsellors.

A more in-depth analysis of participants' responses revealed three thematic clusters corresponding to the three stages of general counselling: pre-counselling, during counselling, and post-counselling. The themes and categories emerging under each cluster are discussed in detail below. It is important to note that although the stages look very similar to the general counselling process, they were specifically applicable to the process of multicultural counselling because of several reasons:

1. Culture (cultural differences or cultural issues) was the central focus in the counselling process;
2. Dealing with culture or diversity required a number of underlying mechanisms associated with each stage. These mechanisms were the qualities of a multiculturally competent counsellor (dimensions of MCCs); and
3. The objective of helping focused on providing a culturally sensitive and culturally appropriate intervention for culturally different clients.

Pre-counselling stage: Preparing to engage.

All counsellors need to prepare, but common to all interview participants was a need to be well-prepared and confident before they can engage with their culturally different clients or with issues on culture or diversity. Four themes emerged from participants' accounts: having background experience with culture and diversity (as a person or/and as a professional); having background knowledge of culture and context (such as information of clientele market, the history of counselling in specific work organisations, or culture-specific issues or spiritual phenomena); continuously enhancing self-awareness (such as by using self-check, self-talk/self-reminder, or self-

therapy strategies), and making necessary homework prior to counselling (such as consulting with religious experts, conducting intake interview sessions to check clients' cultural backgrounds and homelife environment, setting up the counselling room to make it approachable to diverse clients, or recruiting relevant translators if there seemed to be a need for it). For example, Dharma, a male Indian-Hindu counsellor, who had experienced counselling a Malay-Muslim housewife with depression and marital problems (her husband was abusive and intended to commit polygamy), said:

I have to prepare myself actually for this situation actually. Before coming, what do I do I usually talk to my friends who are Muslims, you know. Talk to my friends who are Muslims to find out whether I can use certain strategies. Is it OK? Is it something that is going to offend her or family? So, usually I discussed with my colleagues who are counsellors but also Muslims. So, I get the better picture from them. I always keep them as my contingency plan because if I come to a stage where I can't handle because of some constraints, religious, I always refer to them.

This is interesting because even though in earlier accounts Dharma claimed that he was born and bred from multicultural community context and had studied Islam at university, he still had to prepare himself for the differences he expected to encounter before actually counselling the client. So, the need to be well-prepared and confidence is more prominent when the case involved dealing with culturally sensitive and complicated issues in Malaysia.

During counselling stage: engaging in the multicultural counselling process.

At this stage, participants' responses revealed three broad phases, which are consistent with the general counselling process (Gladding, 2000):

1. Building multicultural therapeutic relationship – becoming engaged as the cross-cultural counselling relationship was established;
2. Conceptualising multicultural cases –sustaining the engagement process with culturally different clients once the multicultural case was successfully conceptualised; and
3. Applying culturally appropriate approach/intervention strategies – finalising the engagement process once the most culturally suitable approach was chosen and implemented, and then becoming disengaged in a culturally-sensitive manner.

What happens within each of these phases is examined below.

Becoming engaged: building a therapeutic cross-cultural relationship.

Eleven participants' responses fit within this phase. Based on thematic analysis, becoming engaged refers to a state after the process of 'bonding' or 'making connection', making 'rapport' or conducting 'pre-session small talks' between a counsellor and his/her culturally different client by using culturally-appropriate attending skills to earn the client's trust, respect, confidence and acceptance during the initial stage of multicultural counselling. Most participants felt that this was the most crucial stage in multicultural counselling that they must be multiculturally competent. They had to deal with the cultural differences that exist between themselves and their clients' before they can further proceed to helping their clients. Due to this, some participants took more time for this phase (*You see, the process, the most important thing is the bonding... That's why I take long time to build that trust, long time to build that bonding*), became somewhat accommodative and flexible when dealing with culturally different clients with personal constraints (*And I was accommodative because*

she was being a [Malay-Muslim] housewife and sometimes she only can come when certain period.), and had to use humour when engaging with reluctant teenage clients with socio-cultural problems (e.g., pre-marital casual sex or/and pre-marital motherhood), who came from different ethnic-religious groups in Malaysia:

At the beginning, it is very challenging because I have some discomforts because I have to make the client be comfortable with me. So, I add it with humour. Most of my clients, my sessions, I like it when I have a bit of humour. So, when the girl comes in, “Why are you here?” She said: “Saya lari rumah” [I ran away from home]. So, I’ll ask her “Why did you run away? You did not walk?” [laugh]. So, they get up and that kind of thing. Then later, after the first session, the second session, they like to come to me. They will pick me to come. They like to come to me. (Elaine, Interview 5)

This means that counsellors must be confident, well-prepared with background knowledge and experience (experiential skills), quick thinking and creative, apart from being multiculturally competent (multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills), to successfully engage with culturally challenging clients/issues in multicultural counselling. Once becoming engaged, these counsellors can readily proceed to the next phase:

And that relationship, when it was built, and I know that’s time then we go into the real thing then the diagnosis of the problem and with that the intervention comes, then the change comes. (Cheng, Interview 3)

Sustaining the engagement process: conceptualising the multicultural case.

At this phase, counselling becomes more facilitative. The engagement process was sustained by a series of culturally-sensitive steps such as exploring clients’ world/problems and thus identifying and conceptualising the real problem using their cultural framework as reference. Then, once this problem was mutually understood, this

understanding was translated into the process of negotiating culturally-appropriate counselling goals or objectives.

Nine participants described how they managed to explore and identify their clients' real problems using appropriate multicultural skills, for example:

1. cultural empathy (*You can understand, you can feel somewhat how they feel based on your own personal life, you can understand, you can walk in their shoes but not necessary you agree with them*),
2. thoughtful listening (*I'm listening but there're questions in my head*),
3. collecting culturally relevant information from clients (e.g., clients' current life situation, clients' worldviews regarding their problems, clients' core issues or main concerns, clients' cultural backgrounds, and a bit of clients' case history),
4. making sure the 'story and background' right (using the clients' cultural framework as lens), and
5. providing conducive or loving environment for comfort and mutual understanding, for example:

So, most of the time, they have their answers. Sometimes, they were not sure this or that. But, they have a rough idea. So, it's just to provide the whole atmosphere, the loving atmosphere, where the clients can comfortably explore and reach the decision where in the first place, they had a rough idea that they would do that. (Fred, Interview 6: counselling abused victims of domestic violence)

This means using multicultural counselling skills helped counsellors to collect relevant information regarding the clients' problem and cultural backgrounds which then contributed to counsellors' understanding.

Understanding the role of culture in clients' presenting problems is also very important in multicultural counselling process as this helped these counsellors conceptualise the case better. For example, the following analysis illustrates how Cheng incorporated the relevant information on culture and diversity factors when trying to understand her culturally different client's problem:

1. Building a therapeutic cross-cultural relationship:

...first I look at my client as who she is and what has influence her in her life. Then, I look at her culture, I ask her about background and I notice all these before I go into the real problem.

2. Exploring culturally different clients' problems:

I have to somehow stand by my clients. Not just standby but really wear their shoes. Really have to understand. So, when I look at my clients, I don't look at their language, their gender; don't look at that at all. I'm only looking at their problems at that time. So, when I look at their problems, I heard to their problems, we lie on the tables...

3. Conceptualising the multicultural case:

...then I used this – their language, their upbringing, their gender – to understand the clients' views because all these gender, language, their upbringing will have some factors or influence in how my clients look and face their issues...So, I would like to see all these factors – multicultural factors – how these factors have affected my clients to resolve their own issues. Then, from there, I have better understanding of my client and of their presenting problems.

A close examination on how Cheng engaged with her culturally different clients revealed different perceptions of the role of culture and diversity in the multicultural counselling process. During the relationship building, she perceived the role of culture and diversity as central in order to properly attend to her clients' needs based on their cultural framework and to gain their trust and acceptance. Then, during the problem

exploration stage, she perceived the role of culture and diversity as secondary because her main focus was on the clients' presenting problem. However, when she wanted to conceptualise the multicultural case (the clients and their presenting problems), then the role of culture and diversity became central again: she incorporated all diversity factors (e.g., gender, language, upbringing) related to the clients' cultural background to help her understand her clients' problems better before making her culturally-appropriate 'diagnosis'.

This analysis appears to indicate two things: (1) the complexity of exploring and identifying clients' problems in a multicultural counselling process because the role of culture can be understood differently by different counsellors; and (2) the importance of having multicultural skills, background knowledge of and experience with multicultural issues, and deep understanding of culture and diversity factors in clients' problems to successfully conceptualise client's real problems.

Once the real problem has been identified, most participants' responses highlight the importance of setting culturally-appropriate counselling goals/objectives (i.e., the counselling goals should be consistent with the laws, norms and values of Malaysians). For example, Fred, who used to counsel victims of domestic violence, said, "...negotiating the counselling objectives, that's the most important part in a counselling process. You have to determine why the client is here. Their problem is one thing but what do they want". This is interesting because the awareness, perception, definition and documentation of domestic violence differ widely from country to country. In Malaysia, the legal definition of domestic violence according to Malaysia's Domestic Violence Act 521 (1994) was very similar to most definitions used in other

countries. However, the society's perception was generally biased as they tend to blame women for such cases. In addition, due to the strong belief in the sanctity, privacy and intimacy of the family and marital problems, domestic violence in Malaysia is often a hidden issue (Ng & Stevens, 2001). This is consistent with Malaysia being a patriarchal country and with the cultural issue of 'loss of face' for the head of the affected family in the public's eyes, despite involving violation of laws (Pope, et al., 2002).

According to Fred, in some domestic violence cases that he handled, some clients only want to release their emotions and that itself was an acceptable counselling objective. This reflects Fred's deep understanding of and acceptance towards the role of culture and context concerning domestic violence cases, maybe because he himself experienced being a child victim of domestic violence. However, two female non-Malay counsellors in the study seemed somewhat unable to accept the powerful influence of culture when dealing with domestic violence cases, maybe because of their gender as a factor:

Women's problems with the husbands and they still stick to the husbands. Years they are battered. Although they are not battered physically – some of them battered physically, some of them go through mental torture – and yet they stick to the husbands because of their culture. (Elaine, Interview 5)

Similarly, Cheng, who felt 'so helpless', especially when counselling abused mums or abused children, had to use praying strategy as her last resort to help her clients:

"Oh! My God. She is going back to her husband even though the husband is abusive". She is going back. I know deep down in my heart that she's going back. But, OK don't think about it. So, I start praying maybe one fine day when she get good life, she will meet someone or she will find the strength to leave her husband. So, I pray lah. I pray.

So, having first-hand experience with culturally sensitive and complicated cases such as domestic violence and understanding of such issues can help these counsellors to handle the case better even though it is closely related to culture and specific cultural context. Counsellors must be aware that gender bias may become a factor in the general perception of the case, especially in the socio-political context of Malaysia whereby most victims of domestic violence were still negatively perceived by the Malaysian society.

In view of this, Fred highlighted the importance of ‘empowerment’ as an acceptable counselling goal to help most abused victims of domestic violence or human trafficking. According to him, ‘once they have [been] empowered, they can solve their own problems’. He later added,

...from my experience, I believe, I sense that nearly everybody who comes here with a problem, most of the times, they have a rough idea what they want to do. They have rough idea where or which direction they should go or what decision they want. They just want some affirmations. They want someone to say “look, that’s the right thing” “That’s a good thing to do”, “You are on the right track”. They want someone to appreciate what they were doing.

So, empowerment and giving the right information (such as ‘information about protective orders’) would normally ‘help them make quality decisions – decisions based on knowledge’ (Fred, Interview 6).

The use of empowerment in counselling had been suggested by one survey participant when describing her culturally-appropriate approach in response to a case vignette (how to counsel an elderly male client, who came from low socio-economic background and experienced racism and oppression during his schooling and

employment years) (see Chapter Five under a similar main heading). This indicates that a multiculturally competent counsellor must have specialised multicultural skills (including empowerment) especially when working with oppressed, disadvantaged, or marginalised clients from specialised minority groups such as abused victims of domestic violence, poor people, or elderly population.

In sum, sustaining the engagement process involved several systematic processes such as exploring clients' world/problems, conceptualising the multicultural case using their cultural framework, and negotiating culturally-appropriate counselling goals/objectives; which are similar to the general counselling process. When culture and diversity factors became central in the clients' background and problems, then these processes become specific to the multicultural counselling process. Only with counsellors' background knowledge and experience, their multicultural skills, and also their deep understanding of culture and context can these counsellors conceptualise their clients' problems better and hence be able to plan and initiate culturally-appropriate approach/intervention strategies for their culturally diverse clients.

Finalising the engagement process and becoming disengaged: Planning, applying, and terminating culturally-appropriate approach/intervention strategies.

This theme denotes the final phase in engaging with culture or diversity issues in counselling. It refers to the process of selecting, identifying, and applying the culturally-appropriate approach or strategies to help the clients solve their problems, and then terminating the engagement process in a culturally sensitive manner. There were three emerging categories revealed by the data analysis: providing culturally-appropriate

counselling, making culturally-appropriate consultations before or during counselling and providing culturally-appropriate referrals.

Some participants claimed that they used both the culturally universal and culture-specific approaches and strategies in their multicultural counselling process. Some examples of participants' intervention approaches were play therapy, Islamic approach, eclectic, behavioural, religious or spiritual, group counselling, non-directive, aromatherapy, and meditation. Although some of these were based on existing theories of counselling, their application seemed to have been culturally adapted to the Malaysian context and focus on multicultural perspective. For example, Ali claimed that he had to use an eclectic approach (with a multicultural focus) when counselling a male Malay-Muslim client with culturally sensitive and complicated issues that entwined with the client's religion, culture, sexuality, marriage and family relationship. However, when he counselled a female Malay-Muslim elderly client who suffered from depression and loss of a loved one, he used a context-specific Islamic approach that he felt culturally-appropriate for counselling. He explained,

So, in that session, it was very Islamic in approach. I brought her to ponder on the basic teachings in Islam which were 'redha' [acceptance], 'maaf' [forgiveness], 'syukur' [thankfulness] - RMS. 'Redha ke tidak?' 'Redha' is like you accept the things that already prescribed, not really prescribed, what is the word? That everything has already scripted for us and you do not challenge what's happened. If you keep on questioning, that thing will keep on hounding you. But, if you accepted it, you may be at peace. You are like you know... That is 'redha'. And then, 'maaf' – forgive. If you are not a forgiving person, will you be ... If you don't forgive yourself, if you don't forgive others, that is going to have a lot of baggage in you. OK, that is going to harm you. That is going to intoxicate you. OK. One more thing, the third is 'syukur'. Sometimes, we always look at the negatives; we always see what we don't have; we forget what we have already got. Whatever that we have already got, we must be thankful and grateful. So, it was those three approach which is very Islamic inclined that I think she was on the recovery road.

These examples confirmed Ali's earlier assertion that in multicultural counselling approaches, "there is this universal approach and also culture-specific approach". Although he claimed that he strongly believed in the universal approach to multicultural counselling, he sometimes used the culture-specific approach to help his culturally different clients when necessary. This finding provides support to the broad (inclusive) perspective of multiculturalism to include both the etic and emic perspectives when counselling culturally diverse clients.

Some participants' accounts also involved the use of culturally-appropriate intervention strategies to effectively help their culturally different clients. For example, as religion is a central element in the Malaysian culture, Dharma used religious verses, meditation and prayers when counselling his culturally different clients. According to him, such strategies helped him to become completely engaged with his clients. He said,

You find that for an example when I talk to our Muslim-Malay clients, you give them their 'hadis'[verses] and all that, they'll become very happy, they become very confident. They said you know their religions. That means, you have interests in their religions. That means, they feel that you know what to do and what not to do. They will know that. He will know "what is the 'batasan' [boundary] - his limits?" because we understand their culture. We understand their religion.

He further added,

I also use religion; I use religion as one of the best things. I always tell them, that is one of the best places for you to refer – religion... If you are Muslims, go to the mosque. Sit down there for a few hours. If you are Hindu, go to the temple. Sit down there for a while and meditate or pray. These are things that I believe in and it helps a lot.

These examples indicate that if counsellors are multiculturally aware, knowledgeable, and having deep understanding about the most important aspect in their

clients' cultures, then they can skilfully serve their culturally different clients using culturally sensitive approaches or strategies. For instance, using religious approaches, strategies or places as a focus in counselling diverse Malaysian clients seemed to work well providing that these counsellors are multiculturally competent.

Under the second theme of making culturally-appropriate consultations before (or during) counselling, participants indicated that they sometimes had to consult with others in order to enhance the engagement process throughout the counselling sessions, especially with cases involving culturally different client, culturally sensitive issues (such as religions), or conflicting values with cultural norms. They consulted their friends, counselling peers, former lecturers, and religious experts, among many others, to expand their knowledge base regarding diverse cultures and religions so that they can develop culturally sensitive strategies to help their culturally different clients. For example, when Dharma tried to help a female Malay-Muslim housewife with complex issues involving Muslim-marital problems (polygamy) and depression, he not only consulted his Muslim friends and peers as discussed earlier, but he also liaise with experts from Islamic state department to gain more knowledge and confidence in dealing with the case.

So, making culturally-appropriate consultations with friends, peers, religious experts, or former counselling lecturers in order to better help culturally different clients is another attribute of a multiculturally competent counsellor, especially when dealing with 'sensitive issues' or 'when the ladies are concerned' (Dharma, Interview 4).

Participants also said that sometimes they had to refer their culturally different clients to other experts for several reasons: when the case involved violation of Syariah (Islamic), state, or federal law; when the client preferred on other counsellor due to language restriction; when the case involved supernatural or spiritual phenomena; or generally when they felt that they had reached their multicultural competency boundary. For example, Hidayah eventually had to refer her inter-racial married couple to the legal authority because both husband and wife wanted different things from counselling: the Indian-Hindu husband did not want to end the marriage, but the wife, who was a Kadazan-Sabahan lady, insisted on her decision of becoming a Muslim and ending her marriage with her husband:

[English-translated] The husband did not want to let go. But, the wife was firm with her decision. So, from Islamic perspective, the marriage is automatically dissolved. However, the husband did not want to follow Islamic law because he was a Hindu and wanted to follow his culture. So, I did not have other alternative except to use civil law. So, the case was referred to the court to handle.

Similarly, Dharma, who tried to help a Malay-Muslim married couple with issues related to depression, polygamy and mental torture, had to terminate the session and refer his clients to religious state authority because in consideration of both clients' benefits:

And sometimes, I have to, if I can't, if I come to a stage where I can't proceed further because of a, I can't just take only one-side story you see. So sometimes I refer them to Jabatan Agama lah. Because they also have their own counsellors. So, from the religious point of view, it is easier for them to handle.

These examples highlight the importance of having a wide multicultural knowledge base in order to make quality decisions of whether certain cases should be referred to other experts or not, and to which suitable-and-culturally-relevant experts to

choose, among many others. Multicultural counselling cases involving inter-racial couples or inter-cultural marriages were perceived by these counsellors as among the most difficult cases to handle because of the cultural differences in the marital relationship and also in the counsellor-clients relationship. In the specific socio-political context of Malaysia, power issues due to ethnic politics maybe involved in the inter-racial marital relationship, contributing to the complexity of the case. The notion of ethnic politics is discussed further in the next section.

Overall, it seems that these counsellors had used a systematic and culture-sensitive counselling framework to successfully engage with culture and diversity factors when counselling culturally different clients in the Malaysian context. In this framework, it was noted that both the universal and culture-specific strategies were present depending on which diversity factors that the counsellors had to deal with. It was also found that among the mechanisms that facilitated the counsellors' engagement process were multicultural awareness (including counsellor self-awareness), multicultural knowledge, deep understanding of culture and context, multicultural skills, and practice experience. These helped them decide on and apply the most suitable approach or strategy when helping their culturally different clients in the Malaysian context.

Post-counselling stage: The engagement outcomes.

Under this thematic cluster, participants shared their post-counselling experiences in various ways after the engagement process with culturally challenging clients or issues in their multicultural counselling practices. Three themes emerged from data analysis. These were: perceived changes in former clients, counsellors' satisfaction

with the engagement process, and lessons learnt from the engagement experience. How these indicators helped them to evaluate the engagement outcomes is discussed below.

Perceived changes in former clients.

After the engagement process, most participants were concerned regarding the quality of counselling that they had with their culturally different clients. It seems that these participants expected that if some changes happened to their former clients, then it means that the engagement process was successful (e.g., *Of course, most of the time, the change doesn't come in front of me lah. It may start later on.*). Among the perceived changes that these counsellors attributed to clients' overall satisfaction were their 'willingness of wanting to change', self-acceptance, better understanding of themselves, their feelings after the sessions, and their efforts to continue keeping in touch with their counsellors. For example, Fred said that in most cases of domestic violence, a successful counselling outcome could be perceived based on clients' feedback on their feelings of being happy, being helped, and being empowered by the counsellor and the counselling sessions.

Counsellors' satisfaction.

Participants also assessed their quality of counselling by referring to their satisfaction level. What they felt and how they perceived their competency scores would be after the engagement process contributes to their satisfaction level. For example, some felt good or 'feel satisfied' because they were 'able to handle clients from almost different cultural backgrounds' and felt the process was 'a very enriching experience' and fulfilling for them; while some felt bad such as feeling 'some anger', 'very disappointed', frustrated, helpless and 'pissed off'. So, they used these to self-evaluate

themselves and their practice experience. For example, Ali discussed his comprehensive evaluation strategy, which incorporates several dimensions (i.e., 'clients' presence', clients' achievement, clients' understanding, and a change in clients') of his counselling satisfaction:

My own evaluation is I always look back whether I have justified my clients' presence in the counselling sessions lah. What have they gotten from the sessions that they had with me? If I felt that they have achieved certain enlightenment, they have, they understand their situation better; if there is a change taking place in them, I feel satisfied. So, that is my way of evaluating myself. Is the time spent worth their while or not?

Not surprisingly, most participants rated their practice experience with a score of more than 8 out of ten to indicate their competence level, while some confidently perceived themselves as a multiculturally competent counsellor. This is consistent with their scores from the MCCS-MCE questionnaire (see Appendix L for details), suggesting the majority of them indeed perceive themselves to be multiculturally competent.

Lessons learnt from the engagement experience.

Participants also shared some useful lessons that they learnt from their engagement experience with culture and diversity factors. According to them, these lessons helped them in three ways: by improving their current multicultural counselling practices; by improving their spiritual and mental wellbeing, especially when dealing with culturally challenging cases; and by being able to educate others (the public or other counsellors for professional development). Among the lessons that these participants learnt were having constructive views of mistakes, using a praying strategy, and remaining positive in thinking. For example, Cheng, who sometimes felt very

frustrated and helpless after engaging with culturally challenging cases (such as counselling abused women of domestic violence), turned to cultural praying as a self-developed strategy for professional wellbeing and development:

OK now, I'm going to pray that she's going to find someone and that someone will come and help her one day. I pray then I really found my peace. I'm not saying that I near to the God but, I think, this will keep me alive. Give me alive. Give me strength to move on with my life. Give me strength to help others. This is what I found throughout my practice.

So, the praying strategy seemed helpful for counsellors who felt dissatisfied with the outcomes of their engagement process. This contributes to their spiritual growth and sustains their continuous commitment to help others.

In light of this, Ali, who emphasised having positive and constructive views on mistakes to stay functioning well as a person and also as a professional, shared one of his 'chicken soups for the soul' when he said,

Always treat our counselling sessions as enrichment for us. So, if we go with an open mind, remain objective, there's so much to learn from our clients' experiences. Well, an intelligent person learns from his or her own mistakes. A smart person learns from others' mistakes. So, maybe the clients' mistakes are lessons for us. We can learn from them without going through those negative experiences that they have gone through.

This example has two underlying meanings: to treat all counselling sessions as not only as a helping but also as a learning process and to be thankful to all clients for the valuable lessons that these counsellors had learnt from their clients' life experiences. This is achieved by having multicultural practice experience as the mechanism, which include the multicultural skills and the cross-cultural skills dimensions found from this study).

Another way of understanding participants' lessons from their multicultural counselling practice experience with diverse clients in the Malaysian context is by exploring their general practice evaluation strategies and their recommended tips for other counsellors. Among the strategies that most participants used to self-evaluate their practices with culturally different clients were getting feedback from clients (e.g., making and reviewing follow-up sessions with clients), reviewing case notes and reports, and self-assessing counsellors' satisfaction based on several resources: consulting with others (counselling experts, religious leaders, counsellors, and friends), reading continuously, conducting mini-research, getting feedback from senior counsellors who observed the sessions, web-browsing and surfing the internet. When asked for their recommendations to help other counsellors to becoming a multiculturally competent counsellor, their responses were compiled and are presented in Table 26.

Table 26

Tips and Strategies Recommended by Interview Participants for Full-Practising, Semi-Practising Counsellors, and Counsellor Trainees.

Group	Tips and recommendations
Full-practising counsellors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seek continuous consultation and supervision (Cheng and Kasmah) 2. Continuously participate in seminars, workshop, or conference on multicultural counselling training 3. Read continuously 4. Volunteer for any counselling-related work/jobs (Cheng, Elaine, Rogayah) 5. Reflect constructively and continuously on past and current practices 6. Listen to people's talks (via YouTube or face-to-face) (Fred) 7. Conduct mini-research (Dharma and Fred) 8. Share practice experiences with others in a semi-formal discussion (round table) - peers consultation (Dharma). 9. Carefully select and use culturally appropriate terms during counselling, avoid using terms like 'diagnosis' or 'treatment' as if you are talking to a sick person because such terms can make your clients sicker (Fred). 10. Master basic principles of counselling and basic qualities of a good counsellor. (Ali, Cheng, Dharma, Elaine, Fred, Rogayah, Hidayah) 11. Develop your basic qualities and skills to suit your work culture and clientele market. (Hidayah and Dharma)

Table 26 (cont.)

Group	Tips and recommendations
Semi-practising counsellors	<p><u>For counsellor administrators</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Know your priorities first: Are you a counsellor or an administrator? 13. Focus on helping/counselling clients rather than trying to administrate them - refresh back your basic principles of counselling 14. Take time to practice because sooner or later, your knowledge and skills will be gone; (Fred) <p><u>For counsellor educators</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Screen potential counselling students properly - First, use psychological testing such as personality, interest, and careers to get the right candidates to be future counsellors. Then, proceed with a panel interview with the shortlisted ones.(Ali and Hidayah) 16. Take time to practice because sooner or later, your knowledge and skills will be gone; (Fred) 17. Use innovative and creative ways of teaching so that trainees feel empowered and confidence to move forward and self-explore their strengths and weaknesses, esp. in role-play, (Fred and Rogayah) 18. Don't simply criticise but provide 'constructive feedback' by highlighting the strengths rather than focusing on the weaknesses;(Fred) 19. Let students take turns to be clients and counsellors so that they know the difference experiences and appreciate one another;(Fred) 20. Invite other students or audience to give positive comments and never allow them to provide negative comments.(Fred) 21. Don't simply give your negative comments but try to discuss each one of the negative comments by proposing some strategies to deal with it;(Fred) 22. Always praise your trainee's achievement no matter how small it is. Remember! It takes time to master even the basic skills of counselling.(Fred) 23. Carefully select assignment topics (with a multicultural focus) and carefully assign study group membership to achieve cultural heterogeneity.(Ali) 24. Carefully impose conditions to allow for culturally-mixed groups of students (Ali) 25. Carefully implement culturally-sensitive strategies to teach 'sensitive topics' such as discrimination or stereotype.(Rogayah) 26. Teach and guide the students to be culturally sensitive with their clients, e.g., don't simply extend your hand if you meet your female-Muslim clients unless they are culture-matched.(Rogayah) 27. Promote cultural visits to understand prospective clients' way of life - first-hand experience and invite them to reflect and learn from those experiences by writing a report.(Rogayah)
Counsellor trainees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 28. Develop basic interests and qualities to be a good counsellor 29. Socialise with diverse people regardless of cultures 30. Always seek opportunities to practise counselling with culturally diverse clients. 31. Active listening inside and outside counselling context: "Sometimes, when we listen to people's talking, you understand better than reading you know. Listen to people talking is one way of the good thing." (Fred, Interview 6, p.18) 32. Keep a personal diary or journal (i.e., something like a log book) to record your counselling activities and your thoughts or impression after the activities.

To summarise, this part has discussed how Malaysian counsellors engage with culture and diversity factors in their multicultural counselling practice. Although these counsellors appeared to use a systematic and culture-sensitive counselling framework to successfully engage with culture and diversity factors when counselling culturally different clients in the Malaysian context, the process relied heavily on one condition: the counsellors must have the qualities of a multiculturally competent counsellor (counsellors' background knowledge and experience, multicultural awareness, knowledge of culture and diversity, deeper understanding about cultures, and multicultural skills). These were the drivers needed for successful engagement with culture or diversity factors, which reflected how a multiculturally competent counsellors works. The next section specifically explores how these counsellors respond to power differential issues in multicultural counselling as another reflection of their multicultural competence.

Malaysian Counsellors Responding to Power Differential Issues in Counselling Culturally Different Clients

This interview topic was selected to explore power in multicultural counselling and its implications for counsellors' multicultural competence. During the interviews, participants were asked regarding their perceptions and experiences of being a Bumiputera or non-Bumiputera counsellor and how this experience had influenced the way they respond to power differential issues in the multicultural counselling process. As discussed in Chapter One, the contemporary theorisations of power in multiculturalism suggest 'recognising the importance of power in people and contexts' (W. M. Liu & Pope-Davis, 2003, p. 97) as well as 'awareness of power issues among

groups' (Hays, 2008, p. 101) are crucial in understanding the implications of power for multicultural competence (how to develop the most appropriate strategy to become multicultural). In the Malaysian context, official political ethnic labelling has been argued as one powerful source of power imbalances among Malaysians in various social, economic and educational dimensions (Joseph, 2006). This means that any issues on power related to the socio-political dynamics between the privileged and disadvantaged groups in a specific cultural context can not only pose certain challenges (e.g., political tension, inter-racial discomforts, and cultural misunderstanding) in the teaching and learning of multicultural counselling concept and practice, but may influence the actual practice of counselling with culturally different clients. Hence, the examination of participants' reflections (contemplation and evaluation) on their experiences as a Bumiputera or non-Bumiputera counsellor and its influence on their counselling practice involving power differential issues was chosen as an extra lens to conceptualise MCC.

Personal experiences of being Bumiputera or non-Bumiputera.

Three themes expressed the common social experience of being a Bumiputera or non-Bumiputera counsellor: a sense of injustice, the political sensitivity of the issue and the need to work hard for survival. Participants' reflections on this experience demonstrated their awareness of power issues associated with one's official ethnic labelling or status as a Bumiputera or non-Bumiputera.

As might be expected, the sense of injustice was more prominent within participants' accounts of being a non-Bumiputera counsellor rather than being a Bumiputera counsellor. The overall collective experiences of being a non-Bumiputera

counsellor involved a feeling of being marginalised, discriminated against and judged, especially in the education and work dimensions. For example, Ali, a counsellor who acquired a Bumiputera status through marriage and had prior experience as a non-Bumiputera person during his schooling years, felt that he was being discriminated against when the quota system in the Malaysian education system was first implemented:

When I finished my MCE, I got a grade one. Those days back in 1973. Those days with a Grade One you can just go straight into the university. But that was the year the quota system was imposed. So, my Malay friends who got Grade two grade three got into the University. I couldn't get into any! That was the time that I felt it. A prior to that, it was equal, there was no quota. But it was after the imposition of the quota that is where the decisive elements came in. You feel even scholarships or whatever that is this classification of Bumi and non-Bumi. Prior to that, it is on merits. That was the time.

However, he considered that such experience was very helpful and invaluable to him in his counselling practice with a non-Bumiputera client with a similar problem because the experience helped him to empathise better.

This example clearly shows that this counsellor was aware of the power imbalance associated with his status. The awareness and unpleasant experience, nevertheless, helped him develop deep cultural understanding and empathy to effectively respond to power differential issues in his counselling practice. This empathic understanding is also known as cultural empathy, referring to counsellors' awareness of clients' worldviews, which are acknowledged in relation to counsellors' awareness of their own personal biases (Corey, et al., 2010).

The sense of injustice was also experienced by some Bumiputera counsellors, despite the general perception that being Bumiputera means having special rights and privileges (Joseph, 2006). This was experienced by Rogayah, a Malay-Muslim counsellor, who felt she was being ‘discriminated [against] by the Chinese suppliers’ in the business domain and by her male superiors in the work promotion exercise. This example illustrates the complex reality of power structure among Malaysians in the Malaysian context because besides having race-based monopoly in certain socio-economic dimensions (Malays as an ethnic collective monopolise in politics and social/government sectors, while the Chinese as an ethnic collective monopolise in economics and private sectors), gender bias and sexism are still prominent sources of power imbalances among Malaysians (Decision makers in Malaysia are normally men) (Joseph, 2006). So, recognising the influence of power in one’s culture and specific context can contribute to better practices in multicultural counselling (Hays, 2008; W. M. Liu & Pope-Davis, 2003).

Participants’ collective experience of being a Bumiputera or non-Bumiputera counsellor was also defined as a politically sensitive issue, which was not normally discussed in the counselling context. This might be due to the fact that the official ethnic labelling was embedded in the Malaysian Constitution and later translated into government policies and affirmative action. As a result, some participants seemed somewhat reluctant and uncomfortable about sharing their ‘honest’ response (*As a government servant, even however whatever situations, we are not supposed to talk about that*), while some appeared to totally avoid further discussing the issue (*But politically, I don’t think I want to go into politics*).

However, two non-Bumiputera-Indian participants (Dharma and Fred), who scored high in MCCs, seemed somehow comfortable about sharing their personal thoughts and political views in response to the issue. (In Malaysia, discussing one's political views with someone you have just met or in a public area is an uncommon practice because political issues are classified as a highly sensitive topic among Malaysians). There appears to be three possible reasons for this: the active involvement of both in politics, possible self-selection bias in this study, or the trust and acceptance they appeared to have towards me, the researcher-interviewer, who shared a similar professional background with them in the Malaysian counsellor community group. Despite their differences in religion (Hindu versus Christian), work sector (private versus public) and affiliated political party (pro-government versus opposition), both detailed out their multicultural awareness and knowledge of the history of the affirmative action that led to the introduction of Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera status among Malaysians (*So, it was restructuring of the economic strata of the country*).

In view of the present days and situations, it seemed that both Fred and Dharma raised quite a controversial issue: that the affirmative action persisted long past when it was needed and may need to be reviewed and reformulated to promote social justice and socio-economic equality, especially for two disadvantaged groups:

1. the Indians, as an ethnic collective

To me, I think, there are still a lot of improvements to be done for the Indians... The Indians are successful in life today because of their own efforts, not because of political party (Dharma, Interview 4), and

2. the poor people (regardless of their official ethnic labelling).

...if today, if you were to put aside all the racial, politics, you say, you are only going to help the poor people; I'll tell you honestly, you'll have the majority of the poor you gonna served are the Bumiputeras (Fred, Interview 6)

Fred further explained the types of Bumiputera clients that counsellors must be multiculturally sensitive with. These involved those ‘especially in Sabah, Sarawak, the Orang Asli,... [and] the Malays in the kampung’. Again, analysing these accounts seems to imply two things. First, it involved the awareness that the Bumiputera group is also culturally diverse. The special rights and privileges may not be equally shared among them because some were being marginalised according to their state of origin, their place of residence, and their income. Second, the implementation of the affirmative action appeared to benefit just the elite and upper middle class Malay-Bumiputera instead of helping all poor people, regardless of their ethnicity/status. Hence, it is timely to reformulate the affirmative action for the benefits of diverse Malaysians as a One Nation. These are examples of situations that counsellors should be sensitive to and aware of power differential issues when counselling the Bumiputera clients because the majority of clients in Malaysia come from this group.

Participants’ responses revealed working hard for survival as the final theme. Among the non-Bumiputera participants, ‘working harder’ was their survival mechanism to compete for limited opportunities and places in education across ethnic groups or even among members of their own ethnic group (Example: *We really worked very hard because we know that we had very limited opportunities compared to SMK [majority Malays] students*). They also commented that ‘everybody should work hard’, for example:

But, there has come to a time now even Bumiputeras got to work hard because if don’t, they will lag behind. You have to compete with your own people to come out. You see? As Bumiputera, although you have special privileges, you have to work. You can’t be just sitting there and then you expect of getting the privilege. The same thing goes for the Chinese and the Indians, there is a share for you. Go and find out. Don’t just sit there and wait for things to come to you. Go look for it! (Elaine, Interview 5)

Their background experiences as a non-Bumiputera helped these counsellors to becoming culturally sensitive to their culturally disadvantaged clients better, especially the poor people from a non-Bumiputera group.

Counselling experiences involving power differential issues due to ethnic politics.

When asked to describe their counselling experiences in dealing with power differential issues associated with ethnic labelling of being a Bumiputera or non-Bumiputera counsellor, none seemed to recall any specific cases in response to the question. Although this seems somewhat strange in view of the richness of their personal experiences of being a Bumiputera or non-Bumiputera counsellor, their ‘silence’ may be explained by the sensitivity of the topic as it was perceived as ‘a political issue’ (Rogayah: *But, in counselling, it’s not that we don’t want to entertain it, but it is a government’s policy*) or their dilemma in negotiating between their personal values as a person and their professional values (since most of them are government servants:

But, it’s hard for us to touch on sensitive topics. It’s very very sensitive. Like for example, you know, ‘hak keistimewaan’ [special rights] and things like that. This one will cause stress cause tension in the relationship if we talk about that because I know that they are students who are very sensitive regarding my race (Bee, Interview 2).

Some even questioned the legitimacy of the topic, maybe because they perceived counselling and politics as two separate entities that cannot be mixed:

Cheng: “No. No. In counselling, if you have power, then it’s not counselling anymore”.

Rogayah: “Why should we discuss about that? Why should we be talking about that? That’s a political issue. We don’t understand. It doesn’t have any bearing on counselling”.

Nevertheless, thematic analysis on a small number of participants who were willing to share their real-life counselling experience involving power differential issues revealed two themes: types of power differential issues experienced in multicultural counselling and a culturally sensitive approach for responding to power differential issues.

Other types of power issues experienced in multicultural counselling.

Other types of power differential issues experienced by these counsellors in counselling were due to culture and some diversity factors such as:

1. Differences in social class/SES (from Fred’s and Elaine’s accounts);

I don’t know. But so far when I encountered my friends, my clients; these people they never got their privileges. They are just like ordinary people. People I meet is this kind of people this group of people who were ordinary people with simple life and I don’t see any special things given to them. Maybe I counsel the majority of them from the poor group. I think from the lower income groups. So far, I haven’t. (Elaine, Interview 5)

2. Differences in intelligence;

But when you deal with clients who are very intelligent, intelligent means that they are always challenge throughout the entire sessions, then, you feel the power. But, it is not the power in terms of the status of Bumiputera or non-Bumiputera. No. It’s the power you speak more, I speak more, I want to challenge you. (Cheng, Interview 3)

3. Differences in education and job opportunities (from Ali’s, Cheng’s and Elaine’s accounts);

However, I do tell them that you have special privileges that you have to make use of it. I do tell them. For example, going into colleges. If you worked hard, if you can speak fluent English, you have a very very bright future as a Bumiputera because I feel that you have more opportunities to work, especially in a government department, you have more opportunities. Going to colleges/universities, that part I know that privileges are given to Bumiputera than to the rest. (Elaine, Interview 5)

4. Differences in status/ranks associated with job position; and

If it involved a senior officer and his rank was higher than the client, I think it's not a problem. There's no problem so far. The client would follow the senior officer or the higher-ranked officer such as the uniformed counsellors... However, in the police force, if the client was having a higher rank than the counsellor on duty, then normally we would try our best to find another counsellor with at least a similar rank with the client. We normally practice this because sometimes in any uniformed unit, rank plays a role...but it's also depends on the individual (Translated to English from Hidayah, Interview 8)

5. Differences in accessibility to counselling due to ethnic disparity among providers of counselling (from Dharma's and Fred's accounts).

In counselling is this, because you don't have enough non-Malay counsellors. How come? If you want to provide, if you want to reach out to certain community, you must balance, must be representative of the whole population. Counselling is a dialog-based thing. If you have so many Chinese communities, you must have Chinese counsellors. In that sense, I feel the whole socio-political thing has given a negative thing. (Fred, Interview 6)

Among these factors, most participants felt that the low class or low SES people were the most disadvantaged group. This may be because they did not have the financial nor political means to fight for special rights or places even though they were Bumiputeras. This finding is interesting because of two reasons: firstly, these examples were consistent with participants' understanding of multicultural counselling as a concept that includes not just race/ethnicity but diversity factors such as SES, education

or job status. Secondly, the issues on power differences due to official ethnic labelling are still happening in the education and work dimensions and these were experienced by both the Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera clients (especially among the poor people) of these counsellors.

A culturally sensitive approach for responding to power differential issues.

This approach broadly follows the stages in the general counselling process. However, it was heavily based on some mechanisms, which are discussed later. Table 27 summarises the stages and steps involved in this approach for further discussion.

Before counselling, the model suggests that counsellors should establish the basic conditions for responding to power differential issues. These conditions refer to the specific ingredients needed in order for counsellors to work well with power differential issues when counselling culturally different clients. These were having awareness of and background experience with power imbalances as a Bumiputera or non-Bumiputera counsellor, background knowledge and understanding of Malaysian history, awareness of their own personal biases, political beliefs and opinions, capabilities and life experiences, current political knowledge and understanding, and culturally-sensitive skills and qualities.

Table 27

Summary of Emerging Stages and Steps for Responding to Power Differential Issues in Counselling

Stage and Step (Reference)	Example
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Pre-counselling:</u></p> <p>Establishing the basic conditions for responding to power differential issues (e.g., awareness, background knowledge and experience, cultural understanding and culturally-sensitive skills)</p>	<p>[background knowledge] That's not a problem because I know the arguments from both sides of the divide. Of course, in counselling, people don't bring up this thing. It's day to day problems (Fred)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>During counselling:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Building good rapport with culturally disadvantaged clients by using culturally attending skills (Ali, Interview 1; Cheng, Interview 3; Elaine, Interview 5; & Fred, Interview 6) 2. Performing constructive confrontation with politically-inclined clients to set appropriate counselling goals (Cheng; Fred; & Kasmah, Interview 11) 3. Educating culturally disadvantaged clients regarding the background history of power issues, the need to work hard to survive (Cheng), especially if they are poor (Elaine), and the differences between counselling and politics (Cheng; Rogayah, Interview 7). 4. Creating awareness to make culturally disadvantaged/marginalised clients aware and understand the political ramifications of such issues, which is beyond the purpose of counselling (Cheng, Dharma, Fred, Rogayah) 5. Becoming culturally-skilled helper to detect the 'real' problem and then providing culturally-sensitive and appropriate interventions (Ali & Cheng) or providing appropriate referrals before terminating the counselling process (Bee). 	<p>In counselling, maybe my world is limited being an academician here. So, I don't sense it. In fact, maybe because I treat people the same, not the same, but I treat them as a person (translated to English from Rogayah).</p> <p>I could understand how they feel. I can empathize with them when there is like this discrimination going on. You know the system itself. You know. Like they have got better results than their Malay counterpart, yet they couldn't get into the university. It's very common (Ali).</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Post-counselling:</u></p> <p>Continuing discussion on some politically-sensitive issues (if necessary for the client's benefits)</p>	<p>I don't say you are right or wrong. If you want to discuss, we can discuss but not during our session. After our session, if you want to discuss politics, it's a different story (Dharma).</p>

Most non-Bumiputera participant counsellors, for example, Dharma, highlighted the importance of understanding the history of Malaysia, which led to the introduction of Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera status among Malaysians. According to Dharma, if counsellors did not understand this, then counselling 'will become [a] racial issue'. This is perhaps true in view of the 'unpleasant' personal experiences that some non-Bumiputera counsellors had during their schooling years due to the quota system in the

Malaysian education system back then. Nevertheless, the awareness of their past experience involving power differential issues seemed to positively influence their current practice of multicultural counselling (as earlier discussed based on Ali's experience). The awareness of having potential personal biases due to earlier experience involving power differential issues was also experienced by Bee, another non-Bumiputera counsellor, who was concerned regarding the possibility of imposing her personal values or biases when counselling her clients, who were 90% Bumiputera-Malays:

In my practice also, I don't touch on that. I think if I came across this kind of case, usually I will refer. I'm not in a position to deal with it because one; I cannot understand [then] maybe will cause conflicts.

This confirmed one of the possible reasons why participants were not willing to share their counselling experiences involving power differential issues associated with ethnic labelling of being a Bumiputera/non-Bumiputera counsellor. As most of them are government servants, they might feel some discomfort discussing such issues in the counselling practice with clients, who were mostly Bumiputera-Malays, or they simply took action to avoid any racial conflicts or misunderstandings that could jeopardise the counsellor-client relationship.

Counsellors' self-awareness and current knowledge of politics also play an important role to ensure effective counselling involving power differential issues. Although most participant counsellors appeared to be aware of their personal biases, prejudices, assumptions, capabilities, and political opinions, they could not guarantee that these would not totally affect their counselling. For example, Fred, who talked quite a lot of his political stance and opinions during the interview, said:

I'm just sharing with you some of my own political opinions. Whether this has some influences in my counselling? I would say, definitely 'No!' but I wouldn't know. There could be some unconscious, subconscious, you know. But on a personal conscience 'No'. I take every client seriously.

Yet, in his next account, he confidently claimed that he won't be affected by his own political beliefs and opinions:

Yes, I believe I'm in control of my faculties even in a given situation I know what my position is. I know how to be polite. I know how to, what to pursue, what not to, what doesn't make sense pursuing and just keep quiet. That kind of thing. I won't get affected.

So, this finding implies that if counsellors were politically-inclined (actively involved in race-based politics), they must always do self-checking (checking any personal biases) to remind themselves to always strive to remain objective for upholding ethics and professionalism in counselling practice.

Another important condition revealed by data analysis was having culturally-sensitive skills and qualities. These skills must be expressed in a culturally-sensitive manner during counselling, especially when counselling the 'disadvantaged' clients, who were different in ethnicity, ranks/status, SES, intelligent level, or available opportunities from the counsellor. Among the skills used in a culturally-sensitive way by participants when responding to power differential issues during the counselling process were constructive confrontation, rapport-building, homework, active listening, unconditional acceptance, remaining objective, cultural empathy, and being sincere. Some of these skills were used by Cheng during her counselling sessions with a non-Bumiputera client who felt her children were being discriminated against by the Malaysian education system due to the quota system. Her counselling approach broadly

follows the stages and steps in Table 27:

But that particular kind of client also a Chinese but she mixed. Her parents are a mixture. OK. But she is not Bumiputera. She talks a lot. Yeah, she talks a lot about her non satisfaction about the government and politics. I deal with her fine. She talked about her children you know which got straight As but couldn't enter the university the local university. Couldn't get anything you know. Then, she's a single mum. She has to really 'gadai' [pawn] or whatever just to get her son go to the university overseas. It's quite terrible for her. I understand that. But, I help her to understand that .. I have to accept her frustrations. I just let her release her emotions. I help her to release her emotions and a shoulder to cry on. How difficult she has worked for her son – her son first, her daughter next. Then, her core issues – of course she can complain a lot about the educational, the quote, whatever the quota or whatever – but, the basic issue is it is not easy to cope as a single mother. Her children's educations are all overseas you know. 'Pandai belajar' [clever] some more. Her inability [inability] to cope maybe couple with her inability [inability] to ask for help. Ha, yes. Yes. I help her to set up [pause] to acknowledge her support system where she can get help. So, finally, one day she came to me after I think we ended our sessions many years ago. After I think two or three years later, oh! No No, after one and a half year later, she called me during Chinese New Year and said, I got help you know and what a surprise! She got help from one of the government agencies. You know. I asked her out of curiosity, do you really hate the government? "No. No, I don't". Then, it really tested my theory. It was not about the country. Really! It's about how .. I think everybody got a fair chance. You just need to work harder when you are not having that special status, you need to work harder and look for the right link, then you get help.

A close examination of this example revealed a complex reality of having multiple social identities (having mixed-race by origin, being a non-Bumiputera by ethnicity, being a female by gender, being a single mother by life experience, and being poor by SES) that intersect with individuals, organisations, and society in the socio-political context of Malaysia because power imbalances are associated with not only race/ethnicity but gender, SES, and life experiences. To be able to effectively respond to power differential issues due to these multiple social identities, the counsellor in this example had used several culturally-sensitive skills and strategies such as:

1. demonstrating her cultural empathy by using active listening skills because she was aware of her multicultural upbringing, hometown, and personal life experience as a non-Bumiputera person during her schooling years, who was also being discriminated against by her own ethnic group because her father was a government servant:

Yes. I'm not saying that you know because my dad is the government servant, then I got – not a scholarship – I got the – not sponsorship – it's the scholarship, I mean the loan la from JPA, not because of that. But, well, my dad served his service. He also worked hard but not many Chinese wanted to become the army and you [the Chinese] look down at my father, I mean during my years.

2. having cultural knowledge and deep understanding on the client's background and her presenting problems;
3. having background knowledge on available government services and agencies to meet the client's needs;
4. constructively confronting the client's personal biases and political beliefs to help the client understand the 'real' problem better;
5. becoming culturally-skilled helper because she used her cultural background and knowledge to re-educate her client regarding ethnic politics and to help her client set up her support system.

The counsellor's qualities, self-awareness, knowledge, understanding, background experience, and cultural skills have an impact in her counselling approach and hence contribute to her multicultural competence.

Overall, findings from this section suggest that ethnic politics was played out every day in everyone's lives including in these counsellors' lives. Most of them

personally experienced the sense of injustice, the politically-sensitive issues, which taught them to work harder for survival in their personal and professional lives. In counselling practice, these counsellors claimed limited experiences involving power differential issues due to ethnic politics. Yet, they shared their counselling experiences in dealing with differences in social class, education level, opportunities, status/rank in work organisation, and accessibility to counselling, which are actually the ramifications of the politics of ethnic labelling (i.e., for some it marginalised them and for others, it privileged them). To be able to respond to power differential issues in a culturally-sensitive manner when counselling culturally different clients, these counsellors suggested some necessary conditions (having awareness of and background experience with power imbalances as a Bumiputera or non-Bumiputera counsellor, background knowledge and understanding of Malaysian history, awareness of their own personal biases, political beliefs and opinions, capabilities and life experiences, current political knowledge and understanding, and culturally-sensitive skills and qualities). This means that counsellors must be able to recognise the implications of power to become multiculturally competent.

Summary and Concluding Comments

Overall, this chapter has presented and discussed four overarching interview topics from the participant counsellors' accounts: (1) understanding of multicultural counselling concepts (including MCC), (2) challenges in the understanding and practice of multicultural counselling, (3) the process of how to engage with culture and diversity factors in counselling, and (4) how to respond to power differential issues. The main findings from this chapter can be summarised as follows:

1. The Malaysian counsellors in this study demonstrated good understanding regarding ‘multicultural counselling’ and ‘multicultural competence’ concepts. The most frequently reported definition for multicultural counselling was “counselling culturally different clients”, while the concept of multicultural competence was understood based on several factors such as multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills, experience with and understanding of culture and diversity, and counsellors’ characteristics. They perceived the characteristics of a multiculturally competent counsellor to include both the basic qualities of a good counsellor and the specialised traits of a multicultural counsellor such as multiculturally knowledgeable and understanding, multiculturally aware (be ‘culturally sensitive’), and multiculturally experienced. This supports existing literature that suggests MCC is a broad and multidimensional construct.
2. These counsellors faced various challenges and barriers in their practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia and these challenges were related to counsellor characteristics, to client characteristics, to characteristics of the presenting issues or problems, to third-party characteristics (i.e., clients’ support systems such as community, colleagues and bosses and family members) and to specific counselling contexts (i.e., counselling rooms and work settings). The top three challenges which emerged from the analysis (based on NVivo coding references) were language barriers, lack of practice experience with and exposure to diverse cultures, and counsellors’ perceived multicultural incompetence, which were all clustered under challenges related to counsellor characteristics.
3. These counsellors seemed to develop a systematic and culturally appropriate process to successfully engage with culture and diversity factors when counselling culturally different clients in the Malaysian context. Although the framework resembles the

general counselling approach, the process of engaging with culture and diversity was driven by several mechanisms: multicultural awareness, knowledge, skills, practice experience, and also deep understanding about cultures and specific contexts, which reflects how a multiculturally competent counsellor works;

4. Although a small number of participant counsellors were willing to share their counselling experiences in dealing with and responding to power differential issues associated with Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera official ethnic labelling, they described a culturally-sensitive approach to effectively respond to power differential issues in counselling. This approach involved certain conditions as pre-requisites and these were: background knowledge and understanding of Malaysian history, awareness of personal biases, political beliefs or opinions, capabilities and earlier life experiences, current knowledge and understanding of politics, and culturally-sensitive skills and qualities.

These findings have implications for the education and training of counsellors in Malaysia and the policies and regulations pertaining to the practice of counselling in the Malaysian context. These implications are further discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

(Re)Conceptualising MCC in the Practice of Multicultural Counselling in Malaysia: Discussion and Implications

Introduction

As described in Chapter One, this research aimed at exploring Malaysian counsellors' understanding and practice of multicultural counselling using culturally-relevant methods in the specific cultural context of Malaysia. By doing this study, some indication of participating Malaysian counsellors' MCCs was gained through their self-reports in surveys and interviews and the current limitations of MCCs in the Malaysian counselling profession (which has yet to formulate a list of detailed criteria or standards for judging the quality of multicultural counselling practice in Malaysia) can begin to be addressed. In Chapters Two and Three, a review of the background literature, the context of the study, and the need for professional counsellors to be multiculturally competent when working with diverse clients in the specific cultural context of Malaysia, have been discussed. The design of the study was carefully described and justified in Chapter Four. The results of the research were presented in Chapter Five and Six.

In this chapter, the main and most illuminating results are discussed in relation to the primary research questions and the findings from previous research. Specifically,

the current research findings will be discussed in reference to possible explanations of the findings and their consistency and inconsistency with previous literature. Next, theoretical, practice, and research implications of the study, which are directly related to the education, training and development of counsellors' MCCs will be discussed.

The Understanding of Multicultural Counselling Concepts in Malaysia: Professional Counsellors' Perspectives

As discussed in Chapter Three, multicultural counselling is still in its developing stage in the practice and training of counsellors in Malaysia. Although multicultural counselling courses have been introduced and taught in the counsellor education programs in most Malaysian universities and colleges since the 1990s, there is no information regarding its effectiveness to enhance the practice of multicultural counselling among professional counsellors in Malaysia. Results from surveys on the definition of 'multicultural counselling' term and from interviews on how 12 Malaysian counsellors defined, viewed, and perceived the practice of multicultural counselling revealed that although the majority of professional counsellors in this study were Malay-Muslims government servants, who mostly had completed formal courses on multicultural counselling but lacked recent professional training on culture and diversity, they generally demonstrated good understanding of multicultural counselling concepts. They mostly defined the term multicultural counselling as a process of counselling involving culturally different clients (different in terms of race/ethnicity, gender, religion, education, worldviews, and others). Malaysian counsellors' understanding of multicultural counselling as a concept is consistent with the current thinking in multicultural counselling literature, that is, accepting the inclusive

perspective of multiculturalism to include not just race and ethnicity but other cultural dimensions such as gender, age, education, social class, among many others (Draguns, 2008; Pedersen, 1991).

Indirectly, this finding provides empirical evidence that the multicultural counselling courses taught at universities in Malaysia were able to provide good foundational knowledge regarding the concept and basic practice of multicultural counselling. Perhaps the curriculum standards and guidelines for multicultural courses related to understanding culture and diversity in Malaysian counselling contribute to counsellors' understandings of multicultural counselling concepts. However, it is ironic that counsellors' completion of these courses did not influence nor could it predict perceived MCCs, as demonstrated by results from the t-test and multiple regressions. This finding suggests that the multicultural counselling courses introduced and implemented in the Malaysian universities may be lacking in some practical components. This is further discussed in the next three sections.

The MCC concept: dimensions, characteristics and the extent.

In order to successfully and effectively practise multicultural counselling, counsellors must be multiculturally competent. In Chapter Two, several suggestions by various scholars and researchers in the field on how to become multiculturally competent were presented (e.g., Holcomb-McCoy, 2000; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; D. T. Robinson & Morris, 2000; D. W. Sue, et al., 1992). Acknowledging these suggestions, this research hypothesised that to become multiculturally competent professionals, counsellors must not only perceive themselves to be multiculturally competent, but they must be able to work ethically and effectively with clients from

diverse cultural backgrounds. Collective findings from this study showed that Malaysian counsellors had demonstrated good understanding of MCC as a concept through analysing their (1) rating scores on MCCs, (2) written definitions of the term from the open-ended question in the surveys, (3) written responses on the characteristics of a multiculturally competent counsellor, and (4) reflexive accounts on their understanding and counselling process involving issues on culture and diversity or/and clients from different cultural backgrounds during the interviews. In fact, their understanding of the term multicultural competence is consistent with their definitions of MCC and their perceived characteristics/qualities of a multiculturally competent counsellor, which include several core categories (multicultural skills, multicultural understanding, multicultural knowledge, multicultural awareness, and cross-cultural skills), and sub-categories (e.g. language competency, counsellor characteristics (being non-judgmental, having empathy and wisdom), and multicultural experiences). The findings from statistical, coding and thematic analyses provide evidence to support its broad and multidimensional nature. The collection of data from various methods permits a triangulation process to validate the findings of this research. Hence, the overall results suggests a (re)conceptualisation of the MCC construct to include more than the anticipated three proposed in the literature (multicultural awareness, knowledge and skills).

Among the shared and primary components of MCC found in this study were multicultural awareness, multicultural understanding, cross-cultural skills, multicultural knowledge, and multicultural skills. The multicultural awareness refers to counsellors' self-awareness or self-discovery process on multicultural issues in Malaysia and acknowledging the impact of culture on the development of personally held values,

beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours; and the need to check and challenge those beliefs and attitudes for biases. Furthermore, it refers to counsellors' sensitivity to how these values and biases may influence perceptions of the client. Counsellors' personal beliefs and attitudes towards racial/ethnic minorities in a specific cultural context and the multicultural issues associated with these minority groups are also part of the multicultural awareness dimension of MCC.

The multicultural knowledge refers to having background knowledge or information of universal and specific cultural elements in counselling when working or intending to work with culturally different clients in a specific socio-political context. Results from coding analysis on Malaysian counsellors' definition of the term multicultural competence revealed that multicultural knowledge is closely related to multicultural understanding. The term multicultural understanding can be defined as counsellors' understanding of multiculturalism (cultural differences) and diversity (individual differences) and how these two relate to clients' cultural backgrounds and presenting psychological concerns/problems. Besides being one of the core components of MCC, multicultural understanding also emerged as one of the core characteristics of a multiculturally competent counsellor as perceived by the professional practising counsellors in Malaysia.

The cross-cultural skills refer to counsellors' reflections on their counselling experience with the more readily accessible client groups in a specific cultural context (e.g., counselling ethnically or religiously different clients). Interestingly, results revealed that this component is somewhat different from multicultural skills but they are closely-related. The multicultural skills refer to having both basic and specialised skills

to effectively work with the specialised or minority client groups, which are the less accessible in a specific context (e.g., gay, men, or elderly clients). Counsellors' multicultural experiences and socialisation with culturally different people through their upbringing, schooling, and work seem to contribute to Malaysian counsellors' perceived MCCs, especially their cross-cultural and multicultural skills, as indicated by results from interviews.

Other dimensions of MCC found in this study were language competency and multicultural counsellor qualities. The language competency refers to the ability to communicate in the same language with linguistically diverse clients. As the Malay population itself consists of linguistically diverse people, the counsellors in this study implied that counsellors should also be able to speak more than one language variety in order to become multiculturally competent. This finding is consistent with findings from previous Australian research, which highlighted the need for mental health professionals to be multiculturally competent when working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) clients or patients (Khawaja, et al., 2009; Pelling, 2007).

The counsellor qualities also emerged from this study as another dimension of MCC. The qualities refer to both the basic (e.g., unconditional acceptance, non-judgmental and empathic) and culture-oriented characteristics (e.g., social-justice oriented, respect for culture and diversity, and approachable to all) of a good multicultural counsellor, which contribute to effective working alliance with culturally diverse clients in a specific cultural context. These qualities also emerged as some of the perceived characteristics of a multiculturally competent counsellor presented in Chapter Five and Chapter Six. The collective findings regarding characteristics of a

multiculturally competent counsellor (refer to Figure 11 for details) are consistent with findings from Constantine et al. (2004) and these include open-mindedness, flexibility, active listening, knowledge and awareness of cultural issues, skilfulness in making cultural interventions, commitment to social justice issues, self-awareness, and exposure to broad and diverse life experiences.

To summarise, although the overall finding from the factor analysis indicates more than the three proposed dimensions from the literature, the foundational dimensions of multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills remain the same. This finding is consistent with findings from previous research (e.g., Holcomb-McCoy, 2000; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Sadowsky, et al., 1994), which also found more than three dimensions of MCC, and it broadly follows the Sue et al.'s (1992) model of MCC, which viewed MCC as a product of several core dimensions and multicultural counsellor characteristics.

The most notable and interesting finding of this study was the branching out of multicultural counselling skills into two factors (which I defined as Cross-Cultural Skills and Multicultural Skills dimensions) based on the clients' groups (counselling culturally different clients and counselling culturally specialised client groups, respectively). This finding indirectly indicates that the practice of counselling with dominant client groups such as ethnically or religiously different clients are common among professional counsellors in Malaysia. However, when it comes to specialised client groups, these counsellors have very limited practice experience. Perhaps they simply focus more on voluntary, majority, and easily accessible groups of clients such as those who come from different ethnic or religious groups rather than proactively seek

out practice opportunities with specialised clients who come from minority groups in Malaysia such as gays and lesbian. This also explains why the results in terms of the mean scores (among the lowest scores) and factor loadings (the highest scores) of two items from the Multicultural Skills dimension - counselling gay men and counselling lesbian clients – are consistent.

Such results are not surprising because in the specific cultural context of Malaysia, sex or sexual issues such as gay and lesbian lifestyles are perceived to be ‘culturally sensitive’ and not normally accepted and openly discussed by the locals (Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2003b). Not only these issues are sensitive topics to most Malaysians but the practice of gay and lesbian lifestyle violate the local norms and values, and is against the Islamic teachings and laws, in which Islam is Malaysia’s state religion. This suggests that the awareness, knowledge and skills regarding gay and lesbian community in Malaysia have not yet received equal attention from the Malaysian counselling profession in comparison to other multicultural issues such as counselling ethnically or religiously different clients. Unlike some multicultural contexts such as the USA and Australia, in which people are more westernised and their counselling professions are more advanced and developed, gay and lesbian issues may not be perceived as culturally sensitive as those perceived in Malaysia. Yet, the respective counselling profession from these countries have developed specific guidelines for psychological practice with lesbian, gay, and bisexual clients (American Counseling Association, 2005; American Psychological Association, 2010; Australian Psychological Society, 2007). Therefore, it is timely that the Malaysian counselling profession formulate specific guidelines for counselling gay and lesbian clients in the Malaysian context so that Malaysian counsellors can provide better services to these specialised client groups.

Results from the thematic analysis of interviews also enhanced the findings from PCA on the multicultural skills dimension. Some interview participants reported that they faced difficulties when counselling specialised groups of clients such as victims of domestic violence, single mothers, elderly people, and troubled teenagers, as well as gay and lesbian clients. This means that specialised counselling skills are also needed in order to effectively and ethically work with clients who come from these specialised and minority groups. Therefore, counsellors are encouraged to actively seek opportunities to upgrade their knowledge and skills in general counselling and also in multicultural counselling.

Similarly, the survey items developed based on Sue et al.'s (1992; 1982) theoretical perspective on multicultural knowledge also branched out into two extracted components, which I defined as the Multicultural Knowledge and the Multicultural Understanding dimensions. This clearly suggests that having background knowledge on culture and diversity is insufficient to make an individual a multiculturally competent counsellor. The individual must also be able to understand their cultural knowledge in order to "understand the worldview of his or her culturally different client without negative judgments" (D. W. Sue, et al., 1992, p. 481). This finding provides empirical support to the revised model of Sue et al.'s because the model places more emphasis on the *interplay* between the MCC dimensions (e.g., multicultural knowledge) and the skilled counsellor's characteristics (e.g., understanding of culture). Results from the thematic analysis of interviews cast some light into this finding by emphasising the need for *deep* understanding regarding culture and diversity, for example, Cheng said, "With that understanding, deep understanding about my client, and then I will check myself again" (Interview 3).

Results from surveys and interviews suggest that Malaysian counsellors, as a community, perceive themselves as multiculturally competent. In particular, they perceived themselves to be most competent on the multicultural knowledge and understanding dimensions. This is not surprising, because it has been noted (and reviewed in Chapter Three) that the counsellor education programs in Malaysia place more emphasis on theory-based components, as evidenced by the distribution of credit hours for theory- and practice-based courses in the standards for counsellor training in Malaysia (Lembaga Kaunselor Malaysia, 2003). Therefore, Malaysian counsellors' perceptions of their knowledge regarding culture and diversity are enhanced by their prior education and training in counselling.

In addition, the specific cultural context of Malaysia, which has unique socio-political dynamics, can enhance the multicultural knowledge and understanding of Malaysian counsellors. As Malaysia is a multicultural country, the Malaysian counsellors may have been widely exposed to multicultural education, socialisation and experience in most aspects of their lives across geographical locations, socio-economic dimensions and contexts. This is evidenced further by the personal and professional backgrounds of the 12 interview participants, which suggest that participant counsellors' early exposure to, socialisation and interaction experience with multiculturalism during their upbringing, schooling, and employment years, enhances their multicultural knowledge and understanding.

In contrast, they perceived themselves to be the least competent on the multicultural skills and multicultural awareness (belief and attitudes) dimensions. The current finding is not surprising, because it has been argued that the education and

training of multicultural counselling in Malaysia seemed to place more emphasis on theory (knowing what) than on skills (knowing how or practical dimension). Critiques from Chapter Three and comments from some survey and interview participants (e.g., Rogayah) provide support for this argument, which confirms that there is indeed a lack of practical training components in the current counselling programs offered at most public universities in Malaysia. Thus, this contributes to a limited practice experience with culturally diverse clients during training and internship. In particular, the practice of multicultural counselling is still very limited to a certain group of clients (the readily accessible such as ethnically different clients) rather than to including all possible client groups (the least accessible such as gays) among professional counsellors in Malaysia. Without adequate practical training and practice experience, counsellors cannot develop and enhance their counselling skills with culturally diverse clients, especially those from gay, lesbian, elderly, and disabled groups. Hence, this explains why Malaysian counsellors perceived themselves to be the least competent in the multicultural skills dimension.

This finding can also be explained by the information summarised in Table 12 in Chapter Five. As the majority of Malaysian counsellor and client populations were Malays, it could be argued that the practice of counselling in Malaysia was primarily based on an ethnic-match or culture-match process. This type of counselling does not only limit Malaysian counsellors' practice experience with diverse clients from the specialised and minority groups (e.g., gay and lesbian clients), as discussed earlier, but it also limits their opportunity to explore their multicultural beliefs and attitudes regarding ethnic minorities, need to continuously check and challenge their personal values, biases and stereotypes towards racial/ethnic minorities, and to develop positive

attitudes towards multicultural issues associated with these minority groups. That was why they also scored less on the multicultural awareness (beliefs and attitudes) dimension.

Overall, the current research indicates some similarities and differences with the findings from previous studies (Holcomb-McCoy, 2001, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999), in particular when comparing the American and Malaysian counsellors' perceptions of their MCCs. Although, as a group, both communities of practitioners perceived themselves to be multiculturally competent, their perceptions differed in terms of their highest and lowest mean scores on MCC dimensions. Professional counsellors in the USA perceive themselves to be most competent on the multicultural awareness and skills dimensions of MCC, and they perceive themselves to be less competent on the knowledge and racial identity dimensions, which is the reversed pattern of results found from the present research. This comparison is interesting because it provides empirical support to the influence of culture and specific context in the practice of multicultural counselling. In view of the rapid development of multicultural counselling as a practice in the USA context, as evidenced by numerous documented policies and guidelines on multicultural education and counselling with culturally diverse clients (e.g., American Psychological Association, 2003), it is not surprising that the American counsellors perceived highly of their multicultural awareness and skills as compared to their Malaysian counterparts. In fact, multiculturalism has been seen as "the hottest topic" in the American counselling profession among most scholars and researchers since the late 1980s (D. W. Sue, et al., 1992, p. 478)

Results from the thematic analysis in Chapter Six were consistent with the survey results, especially in relation to the practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia. Both results confirmed that the actual practice of multicultural counselling is still very limited even though the participant counsellors were mostly aware of and understand the cultural ramifications that intersect with their own cultural backgrounds and the diverse backgrounds of their clients or prospective clients. The current practice of multicultural counselling explicitly emphasises ethnic-match or culture-match counselling, suggesting a limited and non-diverse clientele. One possible explanation for this finding is that it could be due to clients' personal preferences because Malaysian clients seem to prefer a counsellor who is linguistically- and culturally-matched with their backgrounds. Dharma's account substantiated this explanation when he said that if given the choice between Ahmad (Malay-Muslim) and Ramasamy (Indian-Hindu or Indian-Christian) as counsellors, if the clients were Muslims, they would rather go to Ahmad, and if they were Indians, they would rather go to Ramasamy (Interview 4). This finding is consistent with findings from S. Sue (1998) and Cashwell, Shcherbakova, and Cashwell (2003), which suggest that ethnic-match, culture-match, or language-match are among the most important factors in clients' preferences for a counsellor in a multicultural context.

Exploring differences in gender, ethnicity, highest education, and multicultural education and training and MCC.

Results showed that gender and completed courses in multicultural counselling did not contribute to differences in the perceived MCC scores among professional counsellors in Malaysia. This means that some demographic variables appeared to have no implications for counsellors' multicultural competence. The insignificant finding

regarding gender and perceived MCC is consistent with finding from previous research (Constantine, 2001d; Holcomb-McCoy, 2005; Robles-Piña & McPherson, 2001).

Perhaps most counsellors in this study practise or prefer to practise culture-match counselling (as discussed in the earlier section), which explicitly emphasises gender-match or culture-match counselling. Hence, this explains why there were no significant differences in their perceived multicultural competence due to gender. This explanation is also supported by the findings from interviews, which suggest that same sex preference might influence the practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia (Elaine, a female Indian-Christian counsellor: *Maybe gender bias is there. For example, we prefer lady but to me, I think, they should not*) and ‘culture-match counselling’ emerged as one of the six categories of definitions of multicultural counselling from surveys.

Similarly, the results indicate that there are no significant differences between the self-perceived MCCs of counsellors who completed multicultural counselling courses and those who did not. This finding is consistent with Holcomb-McCoy’s (2001) finding but it is inconsistent with the previous research finding of the same author (Holcomb-McCoy, 2005). Several conclusions can be drawn from this finding. First, it could be that the syllabus in the multicultural courses and the MCCs are not linked and, thus, address different dimensions of multicultural competence. Second, because the multicultural counselling courses are simply included and not yet infused in the counsellor education programs in Malaysia, the results could imply that these courses have not had sufficient multicultural components needed to develop counsellors’ MCCs. This is evidenced further by contrasting the current finding with the finding from recent program evaluation research, which compared two counsellor education programs (20-year program versus 5-year program) at two public universities

in Malaysia. The study found that there were no significant differences in students' ratings on the adequacy of the social and cultural foundation component (one of the eight core areas in the Malaysian counselling curriculum, which focus on six specific issues on clients in their particular counselling setting: (i) Gender roles and factors influencing role development and change; (ii) changing economic roles and implications for a changing society including sources of conflict and methods of conflict resolution; (iii) differing lifestyles; (iv) racism; (v) ageism; and (vi) major societal concerns such as stress, person abuse and alcohol and drug abuse), but there were significant differences on other components: *adequate understanding* of the helping relationship, develop *skills* in helping relationship, and sufficient *knowledge* about individual appraisal (Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2003a). Surprisingly, these three are among the extracted components of MCC found in the current study.

Both the current and recent findings imply that there are some limitations and inconsistencies in the current counsellor education programmes in Malaysia, which affect counsellors' multicultural competence. Especially, the finding raises concerns, regarding the quality of current multicultural counselling courses in the Malaysian counselling programs. Since there are no specific studies found in the Malaysian context which specifically investigate the effectiveness of the curriculum and teaching delivery of the multicultural counselling courses offered to trainee counsellors in Malaysia, thus the cultural appropriateness of the curriculum and the quality of teaching these courses are still unknown. Thus, this also explains why participants in this study scored high on the overall training needs, especially on the MCC training (M=4.52) and the culture or cultural diversity training (M=4.45), suggesting that the knowledge and skills gained

from those courses are insufficient to make them perceive themselves as multiculturally competent in counselling.

The current results also showed that Malaysian counsellors' perceived MCCs differed significantly by ethnicity, highest education qualification and recent professional training in MC. This finding is consistent with previous findings from several studies conducted in the USA context, which found that trainees and counsellors from ethnic minority groups (people of colour) in various professional fields generally perceived themselves to be more multiculturally competent than their peers' from the dominant group (Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994; Pope-Davis, et al., 1995). Therefore, it is not surprising that the Chinese and Indian counsellors in the present study also generally perceived themselves to be more multiculturally competent than their Malay peers as indicated by their MCC mean scores. Similarly, it is not surprising that educated counsellors (preferably a Masters or PhD qualification) perceived themselves to be more multiculturally competent than those who were less educated and the reason will be discussed in the next section.

The most intriguing finding was the effect of significant differences in participation in recent multicultural training on counsellors' perceived MCCs. The finding suggests that as a professional in a multicultural context, Malaysian counsellors have to seek more opportunities to get continuous and up-to-date education and training in multicultural counselling in order to become multiculturally competent. Although the majority of the Malaysian counsellors had some kind of exposure in multicultural counselling, there was a significant number of them (54%; n=274) who did not have any recent education and training in multicultural counselling. There could be some

plausible explanations to account for this result. First, perhaps multicultural counselling practice is not yet recognised in Malaysia even though there are some scholarly works emerging in the area. As reviewed earlier in Chapter 3, there were a limited number of emerging subspecialties in the Malaysian counselling profession. At present, only school counselling, career or vocational counselling, rehabilitation counselling, mental health counselling, and professional counselling are recognised in the Malaysian context.

Second, there seems to be a lack of multicultural training in the Malaysian counselling profession. This is evidenced further by the findings on counsellors' training needs, which suggest that specialised training on diversity and Malaysian culture, and multicultural competency are highly needed and should be made available for counsellors and trainees.

Overall, these results imply that there is a strong relationship between ethnicity and MCC and between counsellor professional development training and MCC. To revisit Holcomb-McCoy and Myers's (1999) question of 'where and when do counsellors acquire their multicultural competence?' (p.299). Emergent themes from interviews and empirical evidence from surveys indicates that counsellors acquire and develop their multicultural competence through a socialisation process during the development of their racial/ethnic identity, completion of postgraduate counselling programs and recent participation in professional development training on culture and diversity. This relationship is further discussed in the next section by referring to findings from multiple regressions.

Correlates of MCC: Relationships between MCCs and selected demographic, education and training, and work-related variables.

The following discusses the findings from multiple regression analyses using each component of MCC (i.e., perceived multicultural understanding, multicultural knowledge, multicultural skills, multicultural awareness, and cross-cultural skills) as dependent variables. The discussion involves possible explanations to account for the correlates of perceived MCC among the three sets of predictors (demographic, MC education and training, and work-related variables).

Demographic variables and MCC.

Ethnicity was found to be a factor which influenced and predicted MCC among professional counsellors in Malaysia. Among the three major ethnic groups in Malaysia, only being Indian was significantly and positively correlated with perceived multicultural awareness, but being Malay and/or Chinese were significantly and positively correlated with perceived multicultural skills. This former finding is interesting because it is consistent with the general perception that being a member of an ethnic minority group enhances counsellors' multicultural competence (Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999). Perhaps their personal and professional backgrounds and experiences contribute to their high ratings on perceived multicultural awareness. The Indians, as an ethnic collective, are not only an ethnic-minority in the client population (11.4%), but they are also an ethnic-minority in the counsellor and general Malaysian population (roughly 4%) (Refer to Table 12 for details). So, being Indian counsellors appeared to have broadened their multicultural socialisation process during their upbringing, schooling, and employment through daily contact with culturally different

persons, and they were assumed to have practised more multicultural counselling compared to their Malay and Chinese counterparts because Malaysian clients are mainly Malays. Therefore, it can be concluded that the life experiences of being a member of an ethnic minority group contribute to continuous multicultural training in vivo and hence enhance Indian counsellors' perceived MCCs. This finding is consistent with the findings from previous research (e.g., Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Pope-Davis, et al., 1995; Sadowsky, et al., 1998), which support the conclusion that counsellor ethnicity is predictive of MCC.

Similarly, among the three ethnic groups of participant counsellors in the interviews, only the Indian counsellors (especially Fred) demonstrate high level of multicultural awareness or self-awareness on multicultural issues in Malaysia and acknowledging the impact of culture on the development of their personally held values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. Perhaps the commonality of these Indian counsellors lies in the notion that their socialisation process and exposure to diverse cultures during their upbringing, schooling, and employment years contributed to the development of their multicultural awareness. Or, perhaps most Indians who chose counselling as a profession come from a multicultural background and this background experience enhanced their self-awareness when working with culturally different clients. This explains why being Indian can significantly improve counsellors' multicultural awareness in the survey.

However, a notable and interesting finding of this study was the effect that ethnicity had on multicultural skills: Being Chinese and being Malay are positively predictive of multicultural skills. Perhaps this finding can be explained by some

findings from interviews and statistical information on most providers and users of counselling in Malaysia, which is discussed as follows.

Being Chinese is positively predictive of multicultural skills. This can be explained by referring to some interview findings. It was found that among the three ethnic groups of participant counsellors, only the Chinese counsellors (Ali, Bee and Cheng) claimed that they had worked with the least accessible groups of clients in Malaysia such as gay and lesbian clients (see also Table 25 in Chapter 6). For example, Cheng said, “I have clients who are gay. Many clients who are eventually gay or lesbians you know”. This could explain why being Chinese can significantly predict counsellors’ multicultural skills because they seem approachable to diverse clients including gays and lesbians. Perhaps the Chinese counsellors, as an ethnic collective, were more westernised in thinking and behaving, hence making them somewhat comfortable and confident in discussing culturally sensitive issues in Malaysia. This greater exposure could in turn contribute to the development of their multicultural skills.

Being Malay is also positively predictive of multicultural skills. Perhaps some statistical information from Lembaga Kaunselor and from surveys could account for this finding. Statistics showed that while 75.1% of professional counsellors in Malaysia are Malays, only 64.6% of clients come from the Malay ethnic group. Thus, there is a possibility that the Malay counsellors may be involved in multicultural counselling (dealing with culturally specialised minority clients or engaging with sensitive multicultural issues in counselling) as well as in culture-match or ethnic-match counselling, as previously claimed. Both practices enhance Malay counsellors’ multicultural skills in dealing with diverse clients.

Overall, the discussion on the relationship between ethnicity and MCC dimensions supports the conclusion that counsellor ethnicity is indeed predictive of perceived MCCs. However, among the five dimensions of MCC extracted from this study, the effect of ethnicity is not predictive of multicultural knowledge, understanding and cross-cultural skills. This implies that these factors were not influenced by the effect of ethnicity. The finding is inconsistent with Holcomb-McCoy and Myers' (1999) specific finding, in which suggests that all the three foundational dimensions of MCC proposed in the literature (multicultural awareness, knowledge and skills) were influenced by ethnicity. Instead, this study found the effect of ethnicity was statistically significant and influenced the multicultural awareness and skills dimensions only.

In addition, having bachelor, Master and PhD qualifications were also found as good predictors for counsellors' perceived MCCs, especially on the multicultural knowledge and the multicultural skills dimensions. This means that the higher the education qualification the counsellors have, the more multiculturally knowledgeable and skilled they become when counselling culturally diverse Malaysian clients. This is not surprising because education does improve knowledge as well as skills. One possible explanation for this could be that by pursuing higher education (especially post-graduate education), counsellors have better opportunities to keep abreast with current thinking and issues in multicultural counselling. Hence, the knowledge and skills garnered from postgraduate education programs help them to improve their current practices with culturally diverse clients. Furthermore, most postgraduate counselling programs in Malaysia emphasise the practical aspects of counselling (Rogayah, Interview 7) rather than the theoretical components. That is why those counsellors who are graduates from a Masters or PhD program perceived themselves to

be more multiculturally competent than others. Perhaps they complement their multicultural knowledge from their respective postgraduate programs with their reflections on practice experience (because most postgraduate counselling students in Malaysia are in-service practising counsellors) and, hence perceived themselves as more multiculturally competent than the undergraduates. Thus, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that there is a strong relationship between counsellors' highest education and multicultural competence.

Several conclusions can be drawn from this finding. First, the finding suggests that counsellors in Malaysia should at least have a Masters qualification in order to be more knowledgeable and skilled in multicultural counselling. Having this qualification generally improves counsellors' multicultural competence, but it does not guarantee that they would be more aware and understanding of multicultural issues or more skilful in dealing with clients from different cultural backgrounds. Second, this finding indirectly implies that there is a lack of practice in cross-cultural counselling among educated counsellors. This could be due to the nature of most educated counsellors' occupation and the work specifications that describe their job. For example, most educated counsellors in Malaysia work as academics in university settings or administrative officers or heads in government departments or agencies. The academic work normally involved teaching psychology and/or counselling courses, conducting psychology- or counselling-related research, and doing some administrative work. Thus far, there are no specific policies from the Malaysia Public Service Department and the top management of universities that offer counselling courses to recognise the importance of continuing clinical practice among counselling lecturers in universities to enhance their MCCs. Similarly, the work of most administrative counselling officers or heads of counselling

departments normally focused more on managing staff and carrying administrative duties. Hence, this limits their practice experience. Fred, who mostly works in the government sector, commented on the danger of this practice negligence due to blindly following the organisational work culture:

In the government service, there is some inbuilt self-destructive mechanisms. One of it is, the moment you are an officer, you are considered as a professional. You are considered as an administrator. Officer meaning it's with a degree and they have got this horrible culture whereby the moment you've got your degree, you are an officer, you don't seek clients. You want to administrate people who see clients. You feel that dealing with the public, dealing with the clients is only you gonna do it when there's a problem. You're an administrator. So, you administrate other people who deal with clients. Horrible! I think, especially in the helping services, even if you are a director general. You are the number one person in the department, who must have your caseload.

He further said, "if you want to be a counsellor, you must do counselling. If you don't do counselling, you don't call yourself a counsellor" (Interview 6). Overall, this finding suggests that it is timely that the relevant counselling work policies should be reformulated to give room for most counselling lecturers and administrators, or heads in government departments to practice multicultural counselling as part of their work specifications and duties. How can these counsellors become multiculturally competent if they themselves do not practice cross-cultural counselling on a continuous basis?

Besides ethnicity and highest education, the effect of gender and monthly family income were specific to multicultural skills and multicultural understanding, respectively. Perhaps most clients from lesbian, gay, elderly, and disabled groups in Malaysia prefer male counsellors and hence contribute to their perceived multicultural skills. And, perhaps having more money makes it possible for counsellors to participate in training or workshop on culture or diversity that would improve their multicultural skills with diverse clients and their understanding of culture and cultural differences, the

influence of culture on thinking and behaving, and the impact of culture on culturally different clients. Overall, this finding suggests that gender and monthly family income should also be considered as potential factors that could influence counsellors' multicultural competence.

The effect of age group was observed only on counsellors' perceived multicultural skills, suggesting the older the counsellor the more multiculturally skilled they become in handling specialised issues such as gays', lesbians', and elderly persons' needs. Perhaps life experience and practice experience indirectly contributes to counsellors' perceptions of their multicultural competence in dealing with culturally diverse populations. For example, Ika's and Jasmi's accounts from interviews explained the possible relationship between counsellors' age and perceived multicultural skilled because both perceived the more experienced (i.e., older or senior) counsellors to be more competent.

MC Education and training variables and MCC.

Previous research studies suggest that completing multicultural courses increase the multicultural competence of counsellors (D'Andrea, et al., 1991; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Robles-Piña & McPherson, 2001; Sadowsky, et al., 1998). However, the finding from this study and from Holcomb-McCoy (2001) did not support the relationship between completion of multicultural courses and counsellors' perceived multicultural competence. Instead, it was found that only counsellors' participation in recent multicultural training was the only good predictor of perceived MCCs. In particular, results showed that counsellors' participation in recent multicultural training was significantly and positively correlated with perceived multicultural understanding

and skills. Perhaps by participating in recent workshops or seminars on culture or diversity factors after they graduated from their respective counsellor education programs helps counsellors to improve their current understanding and skills regarding dealing with culturally diverse clients. Through these multicultural training activities and experiences, counsellors become more multiculturally skilled in dealing with clients who come from diverse backgrounds and more understanding regarding issues on culture or diversity. This finding is consistent with the findings from previous research (e.g., Constantine, 2001a; Constantine, 2001b, 2001c; Holcomb-McCoy, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Pope-Davis, et al., 1995; Sadowsky, et al., 1998), which found multicultural training activities to significantly increased perceived multicultural competence. The finding implies that professional development training on culture or diversity is highly needed among Malaysian counsellors and more education and training workshops or seminars in the field of multicultural counselling should be made available to counsellors on a continuous basis.

Work-related variables and MCC.

Work-related variables that were investigated in this study are counsellors' work settings (i.e., schools, colleges/universities, and public agencies/departments) and their years of practice in counselling. Overall results suggest that only counsellors' perceived multicultural skills is negatively influenced by the school settings while their perceived multicultural awareness is negatively influenced by the years of practice experience. Schools as work settings do limit counsellors' practice opportunities with specialised client groups such as gays, lesbians, elderly, and disabled people. This finding suggests that counsellors working in the school settings have to proactively seek opportunities to widen their practice experience with culturally diverse clients, especially those who

come from specialised minority groups. This finding is inconsistent with the findings from Robles-Piña and McPherson (2001), who found no significant correlation between work setting and perceived MCCs.

The years of practice variable was significantly and negatively related to perceived multicultural awareness. This finding is interesting because it suggests that counsellors, who had longer years of practising counselling, become lesser aware regarding issues on culture and diversity. Why the number of years spent in practising counselling was inversely proportionate to counsellors' perceived multicultural awareness (beliefs and attitudes) could be explained by the possible effect of habituation. This effect refers to losing sensitivity (or decrease in responsiveness) upon repeated exposure to certain stimuli. In this research, counsellors who spent longer years practising counselling with culturally diverse clients are assumed to reach a stage whereby they no longer need to continuously checking and challenging their personal beliefs, attitudes, or values. This is because they can articulate their own biases in cross-cultural counselling and hence, experience less need to constantly challenging their personal beliefs and attitudes.

Surprisingly, the years of practice was found to be not significant with either the multicultural skills or cross-cultural skills, suggesting that counsellors' counselling experience does not improve their multicultural counselling practice. In contrast, previous research such as Sadowsky et al. (1998) and Wheaton and Granello (1998) found considerable evidence for the significant contribution of years of counselling experience to higher self-perceived multicultural competence. However, more recent studies by Holcomb-McCoy (2001) and Robles-Piña and McPherson (2001) did not find

experience to relate to participants' perceived multicultural competence in a statistically significant manner, which is consistent with the current finding.

Overall, this finding suggests that to successfully predict counsellors' multicultural competence, several potential factors must be considered and these are counsellors' demographics, recent training in multicultural counselling, and years of practice.

Understanding Multicultural Counselling Practices in Malaysia through How Counsellors Engage With and Respond To Issues on Culture or Diversity

Results from interviews on how Malaysian counsellors engage with culture and diversity and respond to power differential issues in counselling suggest that these counsellors described their multicultural counselling process by following three broad stages in the general counselling process (i.e., cross-cultural therapeutic relationship resembles counsellor-client relationship, multicultural case conceptualisation focuses on understanding the real problem based on clients' cultural framework and background, and developing culturally sensitive and responsive interventions), but emphasised the influence of culture and context in each stages and steps. There are three possible explanations to account for these findings. First, it could be that the general claim in the existing literature (e.g., Draguns, 2008, p. 22; W. M. L. Lee, et al., 2007; D. W. Sue, et al., 1996) that there are some universal and culture-specific 'threads' in counselling individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds is valid. As the knowledge regarding general counselling had long existed before the multicultural counselling movement

began, it seems logical that the generic elements of the general counselling process may still be the main structure for the process of counselling culturally different clients. However, the focus, contents and mechanisms of the process are specific to the practice of multicultural counselling in a specific cultural context. This is because the central focus in multicultural counselling is on culture as this relates to understanding clients' cultural backgrounds and understanding the cultural ramifications in the clients' presenting psychological concerns/problems (American Psychological Association, 2003). This finding suggests that both the generic and culture-specific elements of counselling are needed to work well with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds in a specific cultural context. The current finding is consistent with findings from Lee and Tracey (2008), whose analogue research revealed the interplay of both general and multicultural case conceptualisation skills when psychotherapist trainees responding to multicultural cases. They also found that these skills were dependent on whether culture was implicitly or explicitly presented in the demographic information and presenting concerns.

Second, the finding can be explained by the description of participants' education and training background. Although most of these participants were locally trained, their counselling education programs resembled the models used in the USA context (a place where the general counselling process was first developed), as previously argued in Chapter Three. Therefore, the multicultural components (especially the culture-specific aspects) of counselling education were not yet infused in the whole curriculum, but simply included as multicultural counselling courses. So, there is a high tendency that the participant counsellors perceived that the general stages of counselling would be applicable to the process of multicultural counselling, but

perhaps with a different focus (i.e., culture become the central focus in multicultural counselling) and conditions for practice (i.e., counsellors' MCCs were needed as drivers for the counselling process involving culturally different clients).

Third, perhaps the participants wanted to impress the researcher-interviewer, who is also a counselling lecturer that used to teach psychology and counselling courses in a university setting, by using their knowledge on the general counselling process. So, they described how they engaged with culture and diversity factors and respond to power differential issues in the cross-cultural counsellor-client relationship by following the specific stages involved in the general counselling process. Perhaps they thought that by describing the process in such a manner, they had successfully translated their knowledge and understanding into their current practices with culturally different clients. After all, the focus of inquiry was on their reflections on counselling practices involving clients from different cultural backgrounds that they had conducted throughout their counselling career.

The most notable finding of this part of the study is the emergence of six mechanisms - counsellors' background knowledge and multicultural experience, multicultural awareness, knowledge of culture and diversity, deeper understanding about cultures, and multicultural skills - as drivers for the multicultural counselling process. Most of these mechanisms were found to be consistent with the extracted components of MCC from the MCCS-MCE scale and with the core characteristics of a multiculturally competent counsellor as perceived by the Malaysian counsellors. This discovery highlights the importance of developing MCCs to improve current practice of multicultural counselling in the Malaysian context. It also provides evidence to support

one of the current debates in the multicultural counselling literature: Do the perceived MCCs differ from general counselling competencies? (Refer to Chapter Two for details). The current finding suggests that MCCs are indeed different from the general competencies but they both play a role in the multicultural counselling process.

The Challenges in the Practice of Multicultural Counselling

A notable finding of this study was the high percentage of counsellors (93% of survey participants) who reported having encountered some challenges or potential challenges in the practice of multicultural counselling. Several potential explanations can be drawn from this finding. First, this finding indicates that the practice of multicultural counselling is indeed very challenging because it requires mastery of basic and specialised skills to be able to work well with culturally different clients. So, this has several implications for counsellor preparation, which is further discussed in a separate section of this chapter. Second, it seems that the practice of multicultural counselling is still in its infancy among professional counsellors in Malaysia. If counsellors have adequate practice experience in the field of multicultural counselling, they would have learnt some useful strategies from their practice experience with culturally diverse clients to minimise the foreseeable challenges in multicultural counselling practice. The experience can also contribute to enhancing their multicultural competence in dealing with culturally diverse issues and clients in the Malaysian context. Instead, the majority of survey participants perceived and experienced numerous difficulties when asked to document the challenges they had encountered when counselling culturally different clients. This is evidenced further by the various views that some interview participants had on the practice of multicultural counselling: the practice as somewhat in line with general and culture-matched counselling, but

emphasised more on awareness about culture; the practice is most suitable to non-Malay counsellors rather than the Malays due to language restriction among Malays; and the practice is not easy to be carried out even though counsellors have had adequate understanding of multicultural counselling as a concept.

Detailed documentation of the challenges involved in the practice of multicultural counselling suggests that these challenges emerged from several categories (clients' characteristics, third-party's characteristics, and specific counselling contexts or work cultures), but the most frequently reported challenges are embedded in counsellors' perceptions of their current MCCs. This finding is interesting because it proves that counsellor preparation seems to contribute to most of the key challenges faced by these Malaysian counsellors in the practice of multicultural counselling. Several possible explanations are useful to be considered to account for this finding. First, perhaps Malaysian counsellors were not trained properly during their previous counselling education and training. This has direct implications for the education and training of counsellors, especially in terms of the adequacy of counselling curriculum, the credibility and qualifications of the educators or trainers, and the quality of teaching in the counselling programs. Second, this finding could indicate that the current multicultural counselling courses may have unclear focus and hence, do not contribute to developing counsellors' MCCs. This is evidenced further by a critique on Malaysian counselling literature, which states that there is lack of empirical evidence regarding the state and extent of multicultural education and training in the counsellor education programmes in Malaysia (Aga Mohd Jaladin, 2003a, 2008; Ng & Stevens, 2001; See & Ng, 2010).

To summarise, the main and most notable findings of this study, as discussed in this section, suggest that they have direct implications for MCC theoretical development, multicultural counselling practice, and counsellor education and training. These implications are discussed in the following section.

Research Implications

The knowledge garnered from this study indicates that MCC is a broad and multidimensional construct and is a very important foundation in the practice of multicultural counselling. This has direct implications for MCC theoretical development, multicultural counselling practice, counsellor preparation in the field of professional counselling in Malaysia, and future multicultural research. This section discusses these implications, which can be drawn from the results of this study. It is hoped that these research implications contribute to better understanding of MCC as a construct, better practice, and better education, training and professional development in the field of multicultural counselling in Malaysia.

Implications for MCC theoretical development.

The findings of this study seem to suggest two important implications for MCC theoretical development. First, drawing on findings from previous (e.g., Holcomb-McCoy, 2000; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999) and this research, it seems that the constituents of MCC are more than the three core dimensions of beliefs and attitudes, knowledge, and skills, as proposed in the literature (D. W. Sue, et al., 1982). This implies that the existing model of Sue et al. (1982) may no longer be valid as a framework to conceptualise MCC, especially in the specific cultural context of

Malaysia. However, the results of MCC self-assessment (from surveys) and MCC practice reflections (mostly from interviews) seemed to be consistent and complementing each other and both are consistent with Sue et al.'s (1992) model, the revised version of Sue et al. (1982) MCC model. This provides empirical evidence to the robustness of the Sue et al. (1992) model, but perhaps with some further elaboration on the process of developing appropriate intervention strategies and techniques component. This research indicates that 'developing appropriate intervention strategies and techniques' is not just one of skilled counsellors' core characteristics but it reflects how counsellors actually engage with culture and diversity factors in counselling.

Second, results from the current research have provided evidence that the construct of MCC is complex and can be holistically understood from two complementary perspectives: *what* are the characteristics or core qualities of a multiculturally competent counsellor (theory-based components focusing on defining constituents of MCC) and *how* does a multiculturally competent counsellor work with a culturally different client (practice-based components focusing on understanding multicultural counselling process). This is an important contribution of this study, which extends the previous literature and theoretical understanding of MCC, because it has explored both perspectives: knowing what constitutes MCC and knowing how MCC operates in a counselling process. The majority of literature that has assessed MCC has neglected to include practice-based reflections focusing on the role of MCC in a counselling process (e.g., Glockshuber, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999). This study argues that both components are equally important to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of MCC as a construct and prepare counsellors to be multiculturally competent. Therefore, it is timely to (re)conceptualise

MCC to include not just the multicultural awareness (beliefs and attitudes), knowledge and understanding, and both multicultural and cross-cultural skills as dimensions of MCC and core characteristics of a multiculturally competent counsellor, but also the multicultural counselling process (i.e., how a multiculturally competent counsellor engages with culture and diversity factors).

In light of the overall results, MCC can be defined as referring to the interplay of specific competence dimensions (e.g., multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills) and qualities of a multiculturally competent counsellor (e.g., self-awareness, cultural understanding, and multiculturally skilled), which are needed to operate and facilitate the engagement process with culture or diversity factors when counselling a culturally different client in a specific socio-political context. Figure 14 depicts the diagrammatical representation of MCC (re)conceptualisation framework based on the findings of this study.

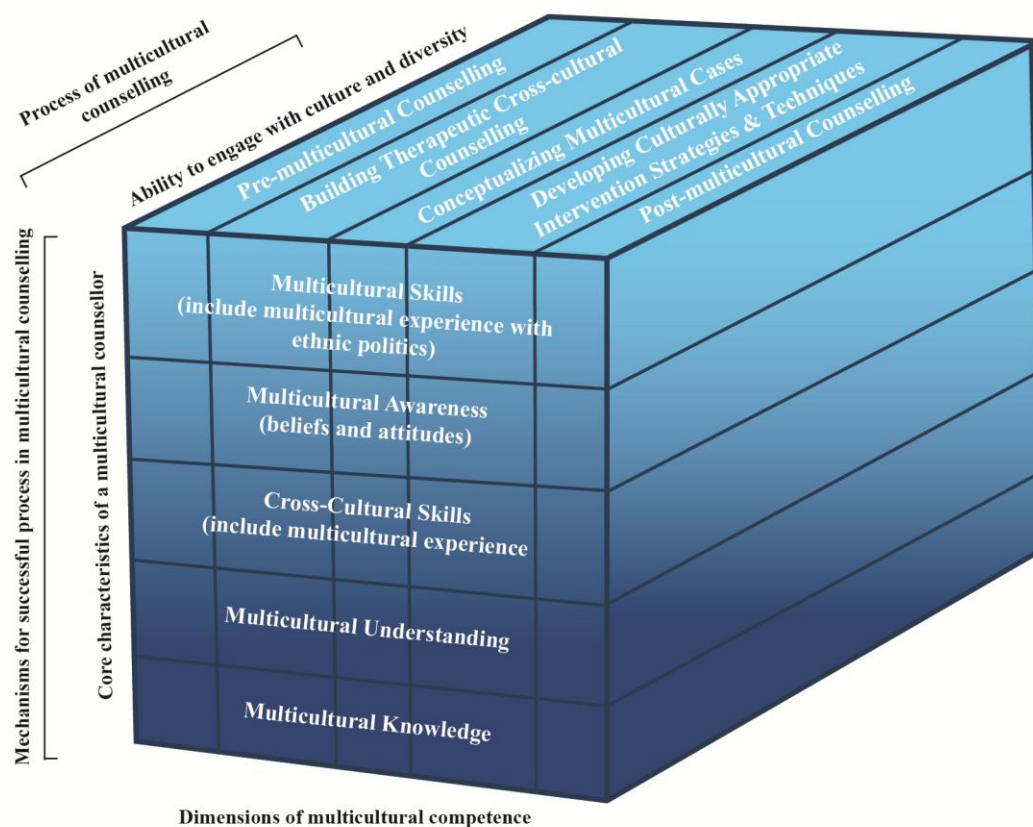


Figure 14. A 5(dimensions) x 5(characteristics) x 5(stages) model for (re)conceptualising MCC.

The model metaphorically (re)conceptualises the dimensions of MCC and the core characteristics of a multiculturally competent counsellor as two sides of a coin because of the similarity of findings revealed in this study. These shared and primary components of MCC become the mechanisms for successful process in multicultural counselling. According to the model, there are five basic stages in a multicultural counselling process, which reflect how a multiculturally competent counsellor works in a specific cultural context.

Overall, this (re)conceptualisation of MCC has direct implications for counsellor training in Malaysia. Therefore, the teaching and learning of counselling among pre-

service (trainees) and in-service counsellors should be directed at developing these dimensions and core qualities to improve current counsellor education programs and multicultural counselling courses in Malaysia.

Implications for practice and recommendations.

This study's findings have several significant implications for registered practising counsellors in Malaysia. The most notable and significant results pertaining to counsellors' participation in seminars and workshops on culture or diversity seem to suggest three implications for professional development of practising counsellors in Malaysia. First, the positive influence of multicultural training for professional development on Malaysian counsellors' perceived MCCs indicates the need for Malaysian counsellors to engage in professional development training activities (e.g., seminars and workshops) on a continuous basis to enhance their multicultural competence. This will help them to continuously upgrade their existing knowledge and skills pertaining to multicultural issues in Malaysia, and hence becoming more multiculturally competent professionals. If completion of multicultural counselling courses cannot significantly influence and predict a counsellor's multicultural competence, then counsellors' should continue to participate in seminars, workshop, or conference on multicultural counselling as part of their professional development training, as suggested by some interview participants in this research (see Table 26 for details). Therefore, the Malaysian counselling profession should be vigilant about providing practising counsellors with ongoing educational and professional support on relevant diversity and multicultural topics. For example, providing training opportunities related to counselling ethnic minority or specialised client groups (e.g.,

gays, lesbians, elderly and disabled persons) would enhance Malaysian counsellors' multicultural awareness and multicultural skills.

Second, it is recommended that Malaysian counsellors should pursue higher academic qualification in counselling (at least a Masters qualification) because obtaining postgraduate academic qualification improves counsellor perceived multicultural competence. If possible, they should pursue their studies overseas in order to have a sense of counselling from an International perspective. This will enhance their multicultural awareness and skills from both an emic as well as an etic perspective.

Third, Malaysian counsellors are encouraged to actively seek practice opportunities with culturally diverse clients, especially those who come from specialised client groups such as gays, lesbians, elderly people, disabled and men, because counselling these groups received the lowest MCC mean ratings. So, actively doing volunteering work at various government or non-government organisations would be helpful, especially for those semi-practising counsellors such as counselling lecturers and administrators, to enhance their multicultural practice experiences with diverse clientele and issues because the nature of their work overlooks the importance of continuous clinical practices.

Implications for counsellor education and training.

To better educate and train counsellors to become multiculturally competent practitioners in the field of multicultural counselling, the findings suggest several potential implications. These implications, which are an extension of the self-help tips

provided by interview participants in this study (refer to Table 26 for details), will directly benefit counsellor educators and trainees.

First, the findings seem to suggest that the counsellor education and training programs should place more emphasis on both the theoretical and practical components of counselling in the curriculum. Currently, according to the standards for accreditation of counsellor education and training programs in Malaysia (Lembaga Kaunselor Malaysia, 2003), the allocated hours for the practical component in a bachelor and Master degree program are 66 (out of 120 total hours) and 33 (out of 48 total hours), respectively. This raises some concerns regarding the quality of the graduates produced by these theory-based programs. Perhaps policy makers need to review the relevant policy pertaining to standards in counsellor education and training in Malaysia. It is recommended that the allocated hours for the practical components for both bachelor and masters programs should be increased in order to make sure that the trainees have sufficient practical training with culturally diverse clients during their preparation time. By doing this, Malaysian policy makers would not only address the comments made by some participant counsellors in this study (e.g., *To understand is too easy, just put in the words; but to practise it, I think it is not easy as understanding*) but they would show their understanding regarding the importance of both theory and practice in the educational and professional objectives of counsellor education programs.

Second, the teaching and learning process should place more emphasis on the multicultural components of the counsellor education and training programs. In light of the results of this study, it seemed that the inclusion of the Cultural and Social Diversity component or multicultural counselling courses is insufficient to contribute to

counsellors' multicultural competence. So, the solution for policy makers is two-fold: by increasing the allocated number of credit hours for the social and cultural diversity component from six hours for the bachelor and three hours for Masters programs to 12 and 6 hours, respectively; and by infusing and emphasising the multicultural components in the teaching-and-learning of the other seven core components of the counsellor education programs.

Third, perhaps the way that multicultural counselling courses are developed and taught does not focus on all the dimensions of MCC revealed in this study. So, course coordinators and counsellor educators should include training in the curriculum that focuses on all the core components of MCC (multicultural understanding, knowledge, skills, awareness, and cross-cultural skills) when they develop multicultural counselling courses at their respective faculties/universities. In particular, they should place more emphasis on issues pertaining to multicultural awareness (beliefs and attitudes) and multicultural skills because these dimensions received the lowest MCC mean ratings.

Perhaps for the theoretical component of these courses, counsellors/trainees should be first introduced to the core qualities of MCC (multicultural and cross-cultural skills, multicultural knowledge, multicultural awareness (and beliefs and attitudes), and multicultural understanding) revealed in this study, which underlie the dimensions of MCC, core characteristics of a multiculturally competent counsellor and specific mechanisms for successful multicultural counselling process. This can be successfully achieved through an experiential teaching-and-learning process or infusing these qualities in the current curriculum of counsellor education programs or current policies pertaining to counsellor training in Malaysia. For example, when teaching the general

theories of counselling, trainees should be encouraged to view each theory or approaches using a multicultural perspective (Glauser & Bozarth, 2001; Guanipa, 2003; MacDougall, 2002) and educators should be able to generate relevant hypothetical multicultural cases for each theory for practice demonstration. Based on these cases, counsellors/trainees can develop and enhance their multicultural skills, knowledge, awareness (beliefs and attitudes), understanding as well as experience. In addition, counsellor educators should incorporate and provide for in vivo learning experiences because interview results confirm that these multicultural background experiences are related to higher self-perceived MCC ratings among professional counsellors, especially the ethnic minority persons. This can be achieved by encouraging counsellors/trainees to self-reflect on their personal experiences dealing with multiculturalism and diversity and use these reflections to better handle multicultural cases.

For the practical component of multicultural courses, counselling students should be trained to translate these qualities into their practice with culturally different clients in various potential work/practice settings. This can be achieved by using the theoretical model for successful engagement with culture and diversity presented and discussed in Figure 13 in Chapter Six. Perhaps this model should be taught in multicultural counselling courses to widen the knowledge base on how to ethically and effectively deal with culturally different clients or multicultural issues in counselling process. The aspects of a multiculturally competent model for engaging with culture and diversity can be summarised into the following five stages:

1. **Making culturally appropriate preparations for counselling (pre-multicultural counselling stage).** To be well-prepared and confident before counselling culturally different clients, counsellors must have awareness and

background knowledge regarding their prospective clientele (including clients' cultural backgrounds), self-awareness regarding their own cultural background and their personal beliefs and attitudes towards others, which are the ramifications of ethnic politics, self-perceived attributes (strengths and weaknesses) and general competence, understanding regarding culturally challenging cases (especially culturally sensitive and complex ones), and multicultural skills (i.e., knowing how) for handling these problems/issues based on their experiences in multicultural training or life experiences in Malaysia;

2. **Building a therapeutic multicultural counselling relationship (beginning stage).** To successfully build a therapeutic cross-cultural counselling relationship, results of this study suggest that counsellors should have the characteristics and qualities of a multiculturally competent counsellor, which comprise the following: being multiculturally knowledgeable, skilled (e.g., multicultural sensitivity in attending and responding to clients' needs and language competency (ability to speak in clients' cultural language or language varieties)), aware and experienced, having multicultural understanding and basic qualities of a good counsellor (e.g., the Rogerian qualities);
3. **Conceptualising the multicultural case (intermediate stage).** Based on the results of this study, the process to successfully conceptualise a multicultural case involves counsellors' understanding of clients' cultural backgrounds and the cultural ramifications of the clients' presenting psychological concerns/problems and abilities and skills to explore a client's presenting problems from his/her cultural framework, to feel that they 'can wear the

clients' shoes', and to negotiate culturally appropriate goals for continuing the cross-cultural counselling process;

4. **Initiating and facilitating culturally appropriate approaches and intervention strategies (ending stage).** To be successful at this stage, the results of this study suggest relying on counsellors' multicultural personal and professional experiences and multicultural skills (i.e., knowing how to deal with culture and diversity in counselling); and
5. **Evaluating the cross-cultural counselling process and outcomes (post-multicultural counselling stage).** Results of this study suggest that counsellors should be vigilant about their perceived positive changes in clients, satisfaction with the overall counselling process, learnt lessons and strategies from the cross-cultural counselling process.

The model could be culturally relevant for use in other multicultural contexts which have similar socio-political dynamics to Malaysia. Although the model broadly follows the basic stages of and some generic elements from a general counselling process, the main contents and focus of this model are specific to multicultural or cross-cultural counselling.

Fourth, it could be that the way that these multicultural courses are taught does not meet the prescribed standards to produce multiculturally competent counsellors. The findings seem to suggest three recommended solutions for counsellor educators. The first involves screening the MCCs of all counsellor educators/trainers involved in the education, training, and professional development of counsellors or trainees first before they are qualified to teach, especially teaching multicultural courses. This will ensure

that these educators have strong theoretical knowledge of MCC as well as the relevant multicultural abilities. The second lies in the teaching lesson plans, in which counsellor educators should carefully develop to incorporate and provide for in vivo learning experiences and activities as well as emphasising multicultural skills using hypothetical cases. Finally, there should be a standard assessment procedure to determine graduating students' MCC level based on their self-report ratings in order to preliminary predict the quality of their multicultural counselling practices after graduation. The use of a self-report instrument such as the MCCS-MCE can be a valuable tool for counsellor educators and trainees unsure of their level of multicultural competence. By doing this, counsellor educators contribute to prepare future counsellors to be multiculturally competent when counselling diverse clients in the Malaysian context.

These recommendations have direct implications for the Malaysian counselling policies pertaining to the education and training of counsellors. Thus far, the standards for accreditation of counsellor education and training programs in Malaysia have briefly described some of these qualities in Schedule Two: Curriculum of Counsellor Training (pp.12-13). However, the description explicitly emphasises more on the 'knowing what' aspects of the courses rather than provides some suggestions on the 'knowing how' of counselling, which contribute to the development of the MCC qualities. Therefore, it is timely that these standards should be reviewed to equally emphasise both theoretical and practical components, and more constructive suggestions and strategies for developing MCCs among professional counsellors and trainees in Malaysia should be included.

Overall, it is timely for the Malaysian counselling profession to impose a requirement for all institutions that offers counsellor education programs to consistently review their existing programs and courses in order to keep abreast with the current thinking and development in the multicultural counselling field. All these can be achieved if the Malaysian counselling profession formulates a set of culturally relevant standards or guidelines to evaluate multicultural counselling courses as well as multicultural counselling practices in Malaysia.

Summary and Concluding Comments

This chapter has discussed the findings of the main and supplemental analyses in reference to possible explanations of the findings and their convergence or divergence with previous literature. It was found that Malaysian counsellors' perceived MCCs were significantly influenced by ethnicity, highest academic qualification and professional training on culture and diversity in the past five years. The implications for counsellor preparation, especially in the education, training, and professional development programs were discussed with an emphasis on both the theoretical development of MCC and the practical implications for practitioners. The discussion has highlighted several limitations in the counsellor education programs and the development and implementation of multicultural counselling courses in Malaysian institutions, which suggested policy review and proper monitoring from the Malaysian counselling profession. The next chapter is the final chapter for this thesis. I will present and discuss several conclusions drawn from this study, which pose as a call for immediate action from the Malaysian counselling profession.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Summary and Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter begins with a summary of all individual chapters in this thesis and a summary of the main findings. Then, the methodological strengths and limitations of the current study, which have had several implications for future research, are reviewed and discussed. To address the methodological limitations and delimitations of this study, some recommendations for future directions within applied psychological expertise research (psychotherapy and counselling) are presented. Finally, several conclusions are drawn from this study based on the previous discussion of the main findings and research implications.

Summary of Chapters

This thesis comprises eight individual chapters: one for introduction, two for literature review, one for research methodology, two for presenting results and interpretation, one for discussion and implications, and one for summary and conclusion.

In the first chapter, I have introduced the research, presented the context of the study and provided detailed rationale for the research. In particular, I have provided several justifications on why multicultural counselling research is important in Malaysia

by drawing on some facts, observations, and my personal experience regarding the current status and practice of counselling in the Malaysian context. My main argument lies in the notion that there is an urgent need for a multicultural focus in the Malaysian counselling profession. Thus, a detailed set of standards and guidelines on how to better address diversity and multicultural issues in Malaysian counselling should be made readily available to all members of the Malaysian counselling community.

In the second chapter, I have presented an extensive literature review on understanding multicultural counselling as a concept, the various attempts to address and incorporate culture and diversity in the contemporary counselling theories and practices, and critiques on the MCC research in various cultural contexts. The most important aspect which I have highlighted in this review chapter is the development of multicultural counselling literature and research in specific cultural contexts and the associated issues and challenges emerging from this rapid development of MCC that mostly takes place in the Western contexts.

The third chapter reviews literature focused on understanding the Malaysian counselling profession. The main argument that I have highlighted in that chapter is the fact that the Malaysian counselling profession has overlooked the importance of addressing multicultural and diversity issues in the counselling policies, practice, education and training, and research.

In the fourth chapter, I have detailed the research methodology, ranging from the selected design and justification to addressing issues on validity, reliability and trustworthiness of the present mixed-methods research. The selected methodology has

been justified based on extensive review of literature and current critiques on multicultural counselling and MCC research.

The fifth chapter deals with the presentation of survey results and interpretation based on mostly statistical tests or analyses. Among a number of main findings obtained are the 5-factor solution of MCC to include dimensions such as the multicultural awareness (beliefs and attitudes), multicultural knowledge, multicultural and cross-cultural skills, and understanding of culture and diversity.

The sixth chapter, on the other hand, mostly deals with the presentation and analysis of interview data. The most notable findings are two: (a) the various ways on how Malaysian counsellors understand multicultural counselling as a concept, which include counselling culturally different clients across cultures, counselling culturally diverse clients, and all counselling is multicultural; and (b) the stages of multicultural counselling process, which strongly resembled the general process of counselling, but the focus and mechanisms of the engagement process relied heavily on the MCC dimensions mentioned above. In this chapter, I have presented the proposed model on how to successfully engage with culture and diversity when counselling diverse clients in the Malaysian context. The mechanisms that facilitate the process of engaging with culture and diversity within the counselling context have also been described.

The seventh chapter is the general discussion, in which I have provided possible explanations to account for the main findings of the present study. In this chapter, I have also included a discussion on research implications mainly those related to MCC theory development, multicultural counselling practice and counsellor education and training. I

introduced an empirical model to further clarify the MCC construct based on the overall findings from this research. The model views MCC as a multi-dimensional as well as performance-based construct. Some suggestions to improve the education and training of counsellors and to provide better practice in the area of multicultural counselling are also included.

Last but not least is the summary and conclusion chapter. In this chapter, I have provided a brief summary of all individual chapters in this thesis and of the main findings, and included a discussion on methodological strengths and limitations, which leads to several suggestions for further research. I recognise the current study as a phase in the continuum of intellectual scholarship in the area of multicultural counselling and MCC in specific contexts. While I am confident that I can generalise some findings to the registered practising counsellor population in Malaysia, I conclude this chapter by issuing a call to the Malaysian counselling profession to begin addressing the need for MCC standards based on my PhD research.

Summary of Findings

The main findings of this research can be generally summarised as follows:

1. Malaysian counsellors generally demonstrated good understanding of the multicultural counselling concepts. They mostly defined the term multicultural counselling as a process of counselling involving culturally different clients (different in terms of race/ethnicity, gender, religion, education, worldviews, and others);

2. The computed dimensions of MCC were more than the anticipated three and these were very similar to their definitions of the multicultural competence term. The core dimensions revealed in this research were multicultural understanding, multicultural knowledge, multicultural skills, multicultural awareness, and cross-cultural skills;
3. The professional counsellors in this study generally perceived themselves as multiculturally competent: They felt the most competence on the multicultural knowledge dimension, but felt least competent on the multicultural skills dimension;
4. The professional counsellors' perceived MCCs did not differ significantly by (a) gender and (b) completion of multicultural education, but differed significantly by (c) ethnicity, (d) highest education level, and (e) participation in multicultural training;
5. The correlates of MCC revealed in this study were mostly demographic variables (e.g., gender, ethnicity, highest education level, and age group were key predictors of multicultural skills) and training experience (i.e., having recent multicultural training was positively predictive of multicultural skills and understanding). Counsellors' completion of multicultural courses was not statistically predictive of MCC;
6. Barriers and challenges (or potential challenges) of multicultural counselling practice were experienced by about 93% of professional counsellors in this study and these were generally related to counsellors' perceived attributes and capabilities (e.g., perceived multicultural incompetence especially in cross-cultural counselling relationship), clients' characteristics, clients' presenting

problem(s), third-party's characteristics, and specific counselling contexts or work cultures; and

7. This study revealed a culturally competent model for (a) engaging with culture and diversity and (b) responding to power differential issues in the counselling practice with culturally different clients. Although the structure of multicultural counselling broadly followed the general counselling process, the multicultural counselling process focused more on culture and diversity in cross-cultural relationship, multicultural case conceptualisations and culture-oriented intervention assessments; and relied on certain necessary mechanisms: the counsellors' MCCs as an add-on of their general counselling skills.

Methodological Strengths and Limitations of the Study

This study has several methodological strengths and limitations that can inform future research in the area of multicultural counselling. The strengths have involved several factors.

First, the use of mixed-method research design allows the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data from the sample and hence making the research findings more comprehensive and meaningful (Haverkamp, et al., 2005; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008; Worthington, et al., 2007). This is an important contribution to existing literature on MCC because about 90.1% of empirical research in MCC was quantitative and only 4.9% used mixed-methods designs (Worthington, et al., 2007).

Second, the use of triangulation method to generate deep understanding of MCC enhances the research findings, hence making them more reliable and valid (robust). This study used MCC ratings, MCC definitions, perceived qualities of a multiculturally competent counsellor, and interview data to generate holistic understanding regarding the construct of MCC.

Third, the use of a large sample size (N=508) which was representative of the Malaysian counsellors' general population allows for the generalisation of findings to the whole study population (refer to Table 12 for comparative percentages based on ethnicity).

Fourth, the collection of detailed background information from participant counsellors that included their demographics, education and training background, and work-related characteristics helps to determine the representativeness of the sample and this had an important contribution to the analysis and interpretation of statistical data.

Fifth, the newly developed MCCS-MCE is a culturally-specific instrument and it provides information that can be used for (1) a proper scale development study (perhaps to further improve the somewhat low Cronbach alpha coefficients of the multicultural awareness ($\alpha=.52$) component) and (2) a replication study on larger scales or using other study populations in Malaysia such as clients and trainee counsellors, with minor modification, to validate the MCCS-MCE instrument. Further exploration of MCC factor structure using split samples method (not reported in this thesis) may help to confirm the validity and robustness of the factor structure of the MCCS-MCE scale.

As with all studies, this study has several limitations which are important to consider when interpreting the results. The most notable limitation was that the study addressed only counsellors' points of view and neglecting the clients' perceptions of counsellors' multicultural competence. Thus, it could be argued that the collected responses may be biased. In view of this, it is recommended that future research should include clients' experiences of multicultural counselling and their opinions about and expectations of counsellors' multicultural competence which has received minimal attention in research (Owen, et al., 2010; Pope-Davis, et al., 2002; Worthington, et al., 2007).

Second, the use of self-report measures without directly controlling for the social desirability factor could indicate that the collected responses might be produced in a socially desirable manner. However, this limitation has been addressed (minimised) by using various response scales and qualitative methods (such as open-ended questions, comment boxes, and interviews).

Third, despite using several mailing strategies, the return rate was somewhat low (34%) but representative of Malaysian counsellors population. However, it was found that this rate was: (a) similar to other survey studies (Robles-Piña & McPherson, 2001), lower than other studies (Pelling, 2007) and higher than other studies (Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Yu, et al., 2010).

Fourth, due to time constraint and scope of research issues, the quantitative data analyses focused on the exploratory nature of MCC, thus was unable to generate a specific structural theoretical model of how the extracted factors interact with each

other. Therefore, it is recommended that future research should extend the scope of this research to consider the use of Structural Equation Modelling as part of the procedure for analysing the quantitative data.

Suggestions for Future Research

There are several recommendations for future research that are evident from this study. First, a replication of this study should be implemented to further examine the significance of ethnicity and multicultural competence because, despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference in mean scores between ethnic groups and the effect size (calculated using eta squared) was very small. Although the interview data provided a useful tool for further understanding the effect of ethnicity and multicultural competence, it was arguably subjected to pre-selection bias. Furthermore, additional background information regarding their licensure status (holders of a practising license or not), types of professional training experiences, gender of clients mostly counselled, and settings of internship placement that may influence counsellors' self-perceived MCC are greatly needed.

Second, a replication of this study should be conducted using other study populations as participants to determine the external validity of the MCCS-MCE instrument. For example, it is highly recommended to conduct this study using graduating counsellor trainees or clients (or prospective clients) as study participants.

Third, further studies examining the relationship between the extracted factors of MCC from the MCCS-MCE are necessary in order to develop the structural model of MCC. This would contribute to comprehensive understanding of MCC as a construct.

Finally, qualitative research other than using reflections on previous practices as inquiry approach is needed to further explore the process of multicultural counselling in the specific cultural context of Malaysia. For example, observing counselling sessions involving a Malay counsellor with an ethnically different client would generate deep understanding regarding how a Malay counsellor engages in a cross-cultural counselling process. As a result, the multicultural competence of Malay professional counsellors, who make up the majority of the counsellor population in Malaysia, when counselling clients of specific ethnic or cultural groups could be examined and determined. In addition, a qualitative study which could test more directly actual competency of counsellors or trainees is greatly needed. For example, participants could be given a multicultural case vignette and then they were asked to write or voice out aloud details on how they are going to respond/handle the case in a real counselling situation.

Conclusion

Several conclusions can be drawn from this research. Firstly, it has provided important information regarding the nature and extent of MCCs among professional counsellors in Malaysia. Empirical evidence obtained from this study suggests that the nature of MCC is characterized by five components, rather than just the three dimensions of awareness, knowledge and skills proposed in the literature. These are multicultural awareness (beliefs and attitudes), multicultural knowledge, multicultural skills, multicultural understanding, and cross-cultural skills. These components are necessary to be the drivers and facilitators of the multicultural counselling process (see Figure 14 for a (re)conceptualisation model of MCC proposed in this study).

Regarding the extent of MCCs, this study has shown that Malaysian counsellors generally perceived themselves to be multiculturally competent [$M=3.55$, $SD=.33$; range: 1 (least competent) to 5 (most competent)]. They perceived themselves to be most competent on the knowledge dimension and the least competent on the skills dimension. This calls for immediate action from policy makers, practitioners, counsellor educators (the faculty) and trainee counsellors to:

1. Formulate specific MCC standards to guide the practice of counselling with a culturally diverse population;
2. Upgrade their knowledge and skills through participation in seminars, workshops, or short course on culture and diversity;
3. Infuse multicultural principles in counselling curriculum, across diverse courses and various levels of practicum or training;
4. Seek opportunities to practise counselling with culturally different clients, especially those who come from specialised client populations such as gays, lesbians, and elderly people to improve multicultural skills; and
5. Reflect continuously on their practices and lived experiences to identify the strengths and limitations regarding multicultural counselling understanding and practices.

Secondly, among the various demographic variables explored, this study has provided empirical support on the influence of ethnicity in explaining and predicting counsellors' MCCs. This adds to existing evidence and support to recognise the impact of ethnicity in the understanding and practice of multicultural counselling. Therefore, future research should focus on ethnic group understanding and practice of multicultural counselling in order to generate knowledge on culture-specific model of multicultural

counselling. Perhaps a qualitative or mixed-methods approach would be suitable design to conduct such research.

Thirdly, among the multicultural education and training variables explored in this study, only counsellors' participation in seminars or workshops (as part of their professional development) was found to be the significant explanatory and predictive factors for counsellor multicultural competence. The fact that counsellors' completion of multicultural courses was not found to be significant factor to explain and predict self-perceived MCCs raises concerns regarding the quality and standard of current multicultural education and training in various counsellor education programs in Malaysia. Perhaps future research should investigate how do the multicultural counselling courses/subjects intended by the Malaysian counselling profession and how these courses do are represented in the curricula of counsellor education programs in the Malaysian public universities. This calls for immediate actions from the Malaysian counselling profession to:

1. Upgrade the quality and standard of current multicultural education and training (multicultural counselling courses) in the curricula of counsellor education programs in Malaysia, perhaps by, (a) increasing the credit hours allocated for such courses according to the pre-determined standards, and (b) infusing more multicultural principles and cases in the teaching and learning of all courses so that each course would have a multicultural focus;
2. Increase the number of available seminars or workshops on culture and diversity to help practising counsellors develop and enhance their MCCs in accordance with current development and thinking in multicultural counselling literature.

Once these courses, seminars or workshops are made readily available to the

Malaysian counsellor community, perhaps the LKM would impose an additional requirement that multicultural training should be required for certification, practising license application or license renewal. This action would ensure that the counselling services offered by Malaysian practising counsellors are based on multiculturally competent practices.

3. Encourage in-service and pre-service counsellors to actively seek practice opportunities to widen the knowledge base and expertise areas in multicultural counselling. This study has provided evidence that by doing volunteering counselling work at various government or non-government agencies enhances counsellors' MCCs and helped them to become more confident and comfortable in discussing issues of culture or diversity in the counselling process.

Fourthly, this study has provided evidence to acknowledge the presence of both cultural universal and culture-specific elements of multicultural counselling in the therapeutic process. The emergent model of cross-cultural engagement with culture and diversity seems to follow broadly on the general stages of counselling. The only difference is in terms of the drivers or specific mechanisms to facilitate the cross-cultural counselling process.

Fifthly, the study has provided important information regarding some barriers and challenges encountered by professional counsellors when working with a culturally diverse clientele in the Malaysian context. Such barriers and challenges were generally a direct result of counsellors' limited practice experience in multicultural counselling, despite having positive perception of their general multicultural competence, high scores on the understanding and knowledge dimensions of MCC, and adequate

understanding of the multicultural counselling concepts. This provides support for recognising multicultural practice experience as one of the additional components of MCC.

Sixthly, this study has provided evidence that ethnic politics are also experienced by professional counsellors within the counselling context. For some counsellors, especially those from ethnic minority groups, their learned experiences of being Bumiputera or non-Bumiputera enhance their multicultural competence. However, for some other counsellors, their experiences of being Bumiputera or non-Bumiputera pose some challenges and difficulties to effectively and ethically practise multicultural counselling. This calls for future research to investigate further the power issues and dynamics in the cross-cultural counselling relationship in the specific cultural context of Malaysia. It is recommended that practising counsellors and trainee counsellors should continuously challenged their personal biases, stereotypes, and prejudiced beliefs regarding ethnically different clients to enhance their MCCs when working with these clients. By doing constructive confrontation, as suggested by Sue et al. (1992), counsellors would be confident, comfortable, and prepared to engage with issues on culture or diversity and would be able to effectively and ethically respond to power differential issues due to ethnic politics in the counselling process.

Overall, the results of this study underline that the field of multicultural counselling is progressively being recognised in the specific cultural context of Malaysia. However, its development has been somewhat slow. In general, Malaysian counsellors tend to use a Universalist perspective when counselling culturally different clients in the Malaysian context. However, they also acknowledged the need to use culture-specific approach and strategies when dealing with culturally different clients,

especially those from the micro cultures (e.g., single parents) and culturally complex and sensitive issues (e.g., sexuality in Islam). Multicultural counselling competency needs to be integrated into all aspects of counselling in Malaysia, such as theory, practice, education and training, and research, to ensure that the services provided to diverse Malaysian clients are multiculturally competent and the future counsellors are mostly multiculturally competent professionals.

Practising counsellors, counsellor educators and training institutions, government and non-government bodies show continuing support to embrace multiculturalism in counselling. The Malaysian counselling profession, in particular, the LKM and PERKAMA, should play proactive role to promote multicultural counselling and enhance counsellors' understanding and practices in the field. Therefore, this thesis issues a formal call for immediate action to the Malaysian counselling profession to formulate the specific multicultural competence standards to be endorsed as guidelines for judging the quality of multiculturally competent practices. These guidelines can be used to improving current practices with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds and improving current training of counsellors in the university and non-university settings. In view of the current need in the multicultural counselling literature and research, future research should continue to investigate counsellor multicultural competence by including both counsellor and client perspectives.

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Appendix A: Research Permission Letter from LKM



لَمْبَاگَا كَاؤنْسَلُور
LEMBAGA KAUNSELOR
KEMENTERIAN PEMBANGUNAN WANITA, KELUARGA DAN MASYARAKAT

Tingkat 3, Wisma Sime Darby
Jalan Raja Laut
50350 Kuala Lumpur
Tel : 03-2614 3000
Fax : 03-2698 2925
Laman Web : www.lkm.gov.my

24 June 2009

Mrs Rafidah Aga Mohd Jaladin
Faculty of Education
Monash Universikty Clayton campus
Wellington Road, Clayton
Victoria 3800
AUSTRALIA

Dear Madam,

Thank you for your request to recruit participants from the Malaysian Board of Counsellors for the above named research.

I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement regarding the research CF09/1270 – 2009000655 and hereby give permission for this research to be conducted.

The Malaysian Board of Counsellors has also given the permission for this research to use the contact details of all the registered licensed counselors (KB, PA) in our database as we believe that this research can help to generate useful information for the betterment of our Malaysian counseling profession. Please come and see me personally to get these contact details when you are in Kuala Lumpur.

Yours Sincerely,



Registrar
Malaysia Board of Counsellors
Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development
Level 3, Wisma Sime Darby
Jalan Raja Laut
50350 Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA

Telephone :

Faxs :

Email :

Cc : Dr. Janette Simmonds
Principal research supervisor

(Sila sebutkan rujukan kami bila menjawab surat ini)

Appendix B: Ethics Approval Letter from SCERH



MONASH University

Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans (SCERH)
Research Office

Human Ethics Certificate of Approval

Date: 18 June 2009
Project Number: CF09/1270 - 2009000655
Project Title: Professional counsellors' understanding and practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia
Chief Investigator: Dr Janette G Simmonds
Approved: From: 18 June 2009 To: 18 June 2014

Terms of approval

1. The Chief investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, and a copy forwarded to SCERH before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation. **Failure to provide permission letters to SCERH before data collection commences is in breach of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.**
2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by SCERH.
4. You should notify SCERH immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must contain your project number.
6. **Amendments to the approved project (including changes in personnel):** Requires the submission of a Request for Amendment form to SCERH and must not begin without written approval from SCERH. Substantial variations may require a new application.
7. **Future correspondence:** Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.
8. **Annual reports:** Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. This is determined by the date of your letter of approval.
9. **Final report:** A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. SCERH should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
10. **Monitoring:** Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by SCERH at any time.
11. **Retention and storage of data:** The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.


Professor Ben Canny
Chair, SCERH

cc: Ms Rafidah Aga Mohd Jaladin

Postal – Monash University, Vic 3800, Australia
Building 3E, Room 111, Clayton Campus, Wellington Road, Clayton
Telephone +61 3 9905 5490 Facsimile +61 3 9905 1420
Email scerh@adm.monash.edu.au www.monash.edu/research/ethics/human/index/html
ABN 12 377 614 012 CRICOS Provider #00008C

Appendix C: Survey Questionnaire

CF09/1270 - 2009000655



MONASH University
Education

17 August 2009

Dear fellow registered counsellor,

My name is Rafidah Aga Mohd Jaladin (KB, PA), and I am a doctoral student in Counselling at the Monash University, Australia. For my PhD thesis, I am conducting research on multicultural counselling in Malaysia, and I would greatly appreciate your input on this topic. The purpose of my research is two-fold: To explore (1) how do registered practising counsellors understand multicultural counselling in Malaysia, and (2) how do they use this understanding into their current practices with the Malaysian clients from different cultural backgrounds. (Refer to the Explanatory Statement for details)

I would greatly appreciate your participation in this research. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. If you prefer a paper-and-pen version of the survey, simply complete the enclosed survey questionnaire booklet (based on your preferred language, i.e., either using the Malay or English version) and return the completed survey within two weeks (by **15 September 2009**) in the enclosed, self-addressed, reply paid envelope. Alternatively, if you prefer an online version of the survey, the following survey web page links will take you to a site where you can complete the Multicultural Counselling Survey online:

For a Malay version of the survey (Tinjauan Kaunseling Perbagai Budaya):

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=1inK1YVDu_2bw1uCdRNxdbLg_3d_3d

For an English version of the survey (Multicultural Counselling Survey):

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=VJPS3le0ksEj87_2fFaGJn9Q_3d_3d

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your confidentiality and anonymity are assured. Return of the completed survey to me is your consent for your responses to be compiled with others. Although the returned surveys will be assigned a code number, you will not be identified with your questionnaire or responses. Please understand that use of this data will be limited to this research, as authorised by Monash University, Australia, although results may ultimately be presented in formats other than the thesis, such as journal articles or conference presentations.

If you have any questions or comments concerning this study, please contact either me or my principal supervisor at the contact details below. My principal supervisor of this research is Dr Janette Simmonds at the Faculty of Education, Monash University, Australia (email: Janette.Simmonds@education.monash.edu.au). This study was approved by the Standing Committee on Ethics in Research involving Humans of Monash University and the Malaysian Board of Counsellors. I very much hope that you will kindly assist this research by completing this survey, as I believe your response can greatly enhance and contribute to our understanding of working with clients in the Malaysian context.

Thank you for your interest and participation in this research. I genuinely appreciate your time and prompt return of the completed survey.

Rafidah Aga Mohd Jaladin
Dept. of Educational Psychology & Counselling
Faculty of Education, University of Malaya
50603 Kuala Lumpur,
MALAYSIA.
Email: [REDACTED]

Faculty of Education
Monash University Clayton campus
Wellington Road, Clayton
Victoria 3800, AUSTRALIA

Cover letter- Survey Participants

Copyright@Rafidah Aga(2009)

MULTICULTURAL COUNSELLING SURVEY

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

This survey is designed to help the researcher understand your current opinion regarding diversity and multicultural issues in your current practices with the Malaysian clients in Malaysia. It also helps the researcher to understand your multicultural counselling competency when working with clients from different cultural backgrounds.

The survey consists of three sections. Section A involves completing 15 demographic items. Please complete Section A before moving on to the other two sections.

Section B is comprised of 32 items that are related to your understandings regarding multicultural counselling practice in the socio-political context of Malaysia. Please read each instruction carefully and tick/click the response that best reflects your own reaction to it.

Section C is comprised of nine questions (open-ended and multiple-choice) concerning your reflection of your current knowledge and practices when counselling Malaysian clients in your work settings.

This questionnaire is not a test; therefore, there is no right or wrong answer. Please respond to the statements honestly.

Thank you for taking your time to respond to this questionnaire. All your responses will be kept confidential and only be used for the purpose of this research.

Your time and cooperation in completing this survey are highly appreciated.

Rafidah Aga Mohd Jaladin
Student Researcher
Faculty of Education
Monash University, Australia.

MULTICULTURAL COUNSELLING SURVEY

2. SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Instruction: Please respond to each of the following by inserting the answer in the provided space or click/tick the appropriate number/button corresponding to your answer.

1. Gender:

- ☐ Male
☐ Female

2. Ethnicity:

- ☐ Malay
☐ Chinese
☐ Indian
☐ Other (please specify)

3. Religion:

- ☐ Islam
☐ Christian
☐ Buddha
☐ Hindu
☐ Other (please specify)

4. Age:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Less than 20 years old | <input type="radio"/> 40 – 49 years old |
| <input type="radio"/> 20 – 29 years old | <input type="radio"/> 50 – 59 years old |
| <input type="radio"/> 30 – 39 years old | <input type="radio"/> 60 years old and more |

5. Highest education level:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) | <input type="radio"/> Bachelor degree |
| <input type="radio"/> Certificate | <input type="radio"/> Master degree |
| <input type="radio"/> Diploma | <input type="radio"/> PhD degree |

Specify the field of study of your highest qualification

MULTICULTURAL COUNSELLING SURVEY

6. Where did you get your HIGHEST education and training in counselling?

6.a. LOCAL INSTITUTION:

- ☐ UM
- ☐ UKM
- ☐ UPM
- ☐ UIA
- ☐ UTM
- ☐ USM
- ☐ UUM
- ☐ UMS
- ☐ UNIMAS
- ☐ Other (please specify)

7. 6.b. OVERSEAS INSTITUTION:

- ☐ UK
- ☐ USA
- ☐ Australia
- ☐ Other (please specify)

8. Current job title:

MULTICULTURAL COUNSELLING SURVEY

9. What is your current employment setting?

- ☐ Schools
- ☐ Colleges and Institutes of higher learning
- ☐ Drug rehabilitation Centres
- ☐ Hospitals
- ☐ Public agencies or organisations or departments
- ☐ Private sector/factories/companies
- ☐ Private counselling centres
- ☐ Other (please specify)

10. What is your monthly family income (gross estimates)?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Less than RM2000 | <input type="radio"/> RM6000 - RM7999 |
| <input type="radio"/> RM2000 - RM3999 | <input type="radio"/> RM8000 - RM9999 |
| <input type="radio"/> RM4000 - RM5999 | <input type="radio"/> RM10000 and more |

11. Have you taken and completed a course/subject on multicultural counselling or cross-cultural counselling before?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

12. Have you attended any professional development workshops or seminars on cultural diversity or multicultural counselling in the past 5 years?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

13. How many years have you practised counselling in Malaysia?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Less than a year | <input type="radio"/> 11 - 15 years |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 - 5 years | <input type="radio"/> 16 - 20 years |
| <input type="radio"/> 6 - 10 years | <input type="radio"/> More than 20 years |

MULTICULTURAL COUNSELLING SURVEY

14. What type of counselling services do you MOSTLY provide to your clients? (You may click more than one)

- ☐ Family and marriage counselling
- ☐ Agency/organisational counselling
- ☐ Academic-related counselling
- ☐ Addiction and Rehabilitation counselling
- ☐ Career/vocational counselling
- ☐ Other (please specify)

15. My clients are mainly:

- ☐ students
- ☐ in-patients or hospitalised persons
- ☐ community people
- ☐ drug abusers
- ☐ prisoners
- ☐ staff or employees
- ☐ the elderly
- ☐ Other (please specify)

16. My clients are mainly:

- ☐ Malays
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Indians
- ☐ Other (please specify)

MULTICULTURAL COUNSELLING SURVEY

3. SECTION B: MULTICULTURAL COUNSELLING COMPETENCY

Instruction: The following statements are related to a variety of multicultural issues in the Malaysian context. Please read each statement carefully. From the available choices, tick/click the response that best reflects your own reaction to each statement.

1. Use the following scales for statements B1 to B8.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
B1. Being born a Bumiputera or majority in this society carries with it certain privileges and advantages.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B2. Being born a non-Bumiputera or minority in this society brings with it certain challenges that Bumiputera people do not have to face.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B3. Persons in ethnic minority groups have problems in accessing counselling services from counsellors who are predominantly female Malay-Muslim.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B4. There are stigmas and taboos in the clients' perceptions towards counselling in the Malaysian context.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B5. Counsellors should treat clients equally regardless of their cultural backgrounds (e.g., Counselling a Malay man is the same as counselling an Indian man in the Malaysian context).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B6. The Malaysian way of life is strongly influenced by its unique socio-political aspects.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B7. The Malaysian counselling profession has overlooked the counselling needs of ethnic minorities in Malaysia.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B8. Potential racial tension/conflicts exist between my clients and myself in terms of ethnic privileges and oppression.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any further comment?

MULTICULTURAL COUNSELLING SURVEY

2. Use the following scales for statements/questions B9 to B15.

At present, how would you rate your understanding regarding:

	Very Limited	Limited	Average	Good	Very Good
B9. Malaysian culture.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B10. Differences in ethnicity among Malaysians.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B11. Differences pertaining to religion and spirituality.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B12. Gender differences in counselling.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B13. Racism issues in Malaysia.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B14. How your cultural background has influenced the way you think and act.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B15. The impact of the way you think and act when interacting with persons from different cultural backgrounds.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any further comment?

3. Use the following scales for statements B16 to B22.

	Totally Not True	Somewhat Not True	Possibly True	Somewhat True	Totally True
B16. Differences exist between my clients and myself regarding ethnicity and beliefs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B17. Individual differences in values, beliefs, and practices exist among members within a particular ethnic group.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B18. Cultural assumptions inherent in major schools of counselling may conflict with values of culturally diverse Malaysian clients.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B19. There are initial barriers and challenges related to the cross-cultural counselling relationship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B20. Culture and racism play a role in the development of identity and worldviews among minority groups in Malaysia.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B21. There are culture-specific (or traditional indigenous) strategies of counselling for various racial/ethnic groups in Malaysia (e.g., yoga, ayurveda, Qigong, Bomoh therapies or Islamic therapies).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B22. Certain issues such as personal biases, language dominance, or rigidity in ethnic identity development may require referral of the minority client to a member of his/her own racial/ethnic group.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any additional comment?

MULTICULTURAL COUNSELLING SURVEY

4. Use the following scales for statements B23 to B32.

	Very Limited	Limited	Average	Good	Very Good
B23. How would you rate your ability to effectively treat a client whose ethnic background is significantly different from your own?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B24. How would you rate your ability to effectively treat a client whose cultural background is from the non-Bumiputera group?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B25. How would you rate your ability to accurately assess the counselling needs of persons from different religious backgrounds?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B26. How would you rate your ability to accurately assess the counselling needs of women?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B27. How would you rate your ability to accurately assess the counselling needs of men?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B28. How well would you rate your ability to accurately assess the counselling needs of the elderly?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B29. How well would you rate your ability to accurately assess the counselling needs of gay men?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B30. How well would you rate your ability to accurately assess the counselling needs of lesbian clients?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B31. How well would you rate your ability to accurately assess the counselling needs of persons with disabilities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B32. How well would you rate your ability to accurately assess the counselling needs of persons who come from very poor socioeconomic backgrounds?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any additional comment?

MULTICULTURAL COUNSELLING SURVEY

4. SECTION C: REFLECTION OF COUNSELLING UNDERSTANDING AND PRACTICE

Instructions: The following questions cover your understanding and practices in multicultural counselling. Please respond to each of the following by writing/typing your answer in the provided column or click/tick the appropriate number/button corresponding to your answer.

1. How would you define the term 'multicultural counselling'?

--	--

2. How would you define the term 'multicultural competence'?

--	--

3. What do you see as the characteristics of a multiculturally competent counsellor?

--	--

4. What are the challenges or difficulties that you have encountered when counselling clients who are culturally different from you?

--	--

MULTICULTURAL COUNSELLING SURVEY

The following case vignette is for answering questions 5 to 8:

Mr M is a 65-year old pensioner who has intense anger towards the Malaysian government regarding social justice issues. He blames the government because of his previous difficulties in life during the schooling and employment years. He experienced racism and oppression and feels very angry when the pension money that he receives from the government cannot adequately support him or his family in the current economic recession. Blaming the government makes him feel good and this has reinforced his anger and made him an abusive person even towards his family and friends. Sometimes, when he sees a person of different cultural background, he verbally abuses them without any particular reason. This behaviour has caused many problems to his wife and daughters before they decided to bring him to you.

5. Have you encountered a case similar to this situation?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

6. Would you be prepared and confident to deal with this situation?

- ☐ Yes, because ____
- ☐ No, because ____
- ☐ Not sure, because ____

Please explain your answer.

7. How would you respond to this situation if Mr M's ethnicity is different from yours?

- ☐ Provide appropriate counselling
- ☐ Make appropriate referrals
- ☐ Seek appropriate consultations
- ☐ Other (please specify)

MULTICULTURAL COUNSELLING SURVEY

8. What type of training do you need to better prepare you to respond to this situation, and why?

	Definitely Don't Need	Don't Need	Not Sure	Need	Definitely Need
a. Training on general counselling competencies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Training on multicultural counselling competencies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Training on culture or cultural diversity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Upskills training on counselling skills and techniques.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Any trainings related to the process of counselling.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please give more detail regarding your answers.

9. Overall, do you have any further comments that you would like to include regarding any aspects of this survey?

MULTICULTURAL COUNSELLING SURVEY

5. CONSENT FOR A FOLLOW-UP PARTICIPATION

1. If you have had any experiences dealing and responding to diversity and/or multicultural issues in counselling, I would like to learn more from you. By agreeing to be interviewed for about 30 to 60 minutes, you would help this research in identifying practice strategies that are workable and useful when counselling clients from different cultural backgrounds. Your responses are highly valued and they contribute towards developing guidelines and standards for counselling Malaysian clients in the Malaysian context. If you are interested in sharing your opinions and experiences, please fill in your contact details below. I will contact you shortly to arrange for a follow-up interview.

Name:

Preferred address:

City/Town:

State/Province:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

Consent Form – Semi-structured Interview Participants

Title: Professional Counsellors' Understanding and Practice of Multicultural Counselling in Malaysia

NOTE: This consent form will remain with the Monash University researcher for their records

I agree to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that:

1. I agree to be interviewed by the researcher ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. I agree to allow the interview to be audio-taped and/or video-taped ☐ Yes ☐ No
3. I agree to make myself available for a further interview if required ☐ Yes ☐ No

I understand that in the interview I will be asked questions about my personal and professional backgrounds, general opinions regarding counselling in Malaysia, multicultural counselling concepts, multicultural competence, work experience in multicultural counselling, particularly relating to the process of engaging with diversity and the way I respond to power differential issues in the socio-political context of Malaysia.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I understand that I will be given a transcript of the data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write up of the research.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party.

I understand that data from the interview will be kept in secure storage and accessible only by the research team. I also understand that the data will be destroyed after a 5 year period unless I consent to it being used in future research.

Participant's name:

Preferred contact details:

Office address:

Telephone (Office): (area code)-(phone numbers)

Mobile:

Email:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix D: Explanatory Statement for Survey

Participants



MONASH University

7 August 2009

Explanatory Statement – Survey Participants

Title: Professional Counsellors' Understanding and Practice of Multicultural Counselling in Malaysia

This information sheet is for you to keep.

My name is Rafidah Aga Mohd Jaladin and I am conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr Janette Simmonds and Dr Cynthia Joseph, both are senior lecturers in the Faculty of Education, towards a PhD degree at Monash University. This means that I will be writing a thesis which is equivalent of a 100000 word book.

I have been granted permission to conduct this research from the Malaysian Board of Counsellors or commonly known as Lembaga Kaunselor. In addition, Lembaga Kaunselor has also provided me your contact details because your participation and responses can greatly enhance and contribute to our understanding of working with clients in the Malaysian context.

The purpose of my research is two-fold: To explore (1) how registered practising counsellors understand multicultural counselling in Malaysia, and (2) how they use this understanding into their current practices with the Malaysian clients from different cultural backgrounds. Besides this survey questionnaire, the study involves audio taping semi-structured interviews and document examination.

The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. If you prefer a paper and pen version of the survey, simply complete the enclosed survey questionnaire booklet and return the completed survey within two weeks (by 1 September 2009 in the enclosed, self-addressed, reply paid envelope).

Alternatively, if you prefer an online version of the survey, the following survey web page link will take you to a site where you can complete the Multicultural Counselling Survey online:

For a Malay version of the survey:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=1inK1YVDu_2bw1uCdRNxdbLg_3d_3d

For an English version of the survey:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=VJPS3le0ksEj87_2fFaGJn9Q_3d_3d

Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. However, if you do consent to participate, you may only withdraw prior to the questionnaire being submitted. Your confidentiality and anonymity are assured. Return of the completed survey to me is your consent for your responses to be compiled with others. Although the returned surveys will be assigned a code number, you will not be identified with your questionnaire or responses. Storage of the data collected will adhere to the University regulations and kept on University premises in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for 5 years. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

Please understand that use of this data will be limited to this research, as authorised by Monash University, Australia, although results may ultimately be presented in formats other than the thesis, such

as journal articles or conference presentations. If you have any queries or complaints concerning this study, please contact either me or my research supervisors at the contact details below. This study was approved by the Standing Committee on Ethics in Research involving Humans of Monash University. I very much hope that you will kindly assist this research by completing this survey, as I believe your response can greatly enhance and contribute to our understanding of working with clients in the Malaysian context.

If you would like to be informed of the aggregate research finding, please contact me using any of the contact details below. The findings are accessible for five years.

Thank you for your interest and participation in this research. I genuinely appreciate your time and prompt return of the completed survey.

<p>If you would like to contact the research supervisors about any aspect of this study, please contact the following:</p>	<p>If you have a complaint concerning the manner in which this research CF09/1270 – 2009000655 is being conducted, please contact:</p>
<p>Dr Janette Simmonds Principal research supervisor Faculty of Education Monash University Clayton campus Wellington Road, Clayton Victoria 3800, AUSTRALIA</p> <p>Tel: [REDACTED] Fax: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED]</p> <p>Dr Cynthia Joseph Co-research supervisor Faculty of Education Monash University Clayton campus Wellington Road, Clayton Victoria 3800, AUSTRALIA</p> <p>Tel: [REDACTED] Fax: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED]</p>	<p>Dr. Shahrir Jamaluddin Head Dept. of Educational Psychology & Counselling Faculty of Education, University of Malaya 50603 Kuala Lumpur MALAYSIA</p> <p>Tel: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED]</p>

Thank you.

[REDACTED]
Rafidah Aga Mohd Jaladin
Researcher
Dept. of Educational Psychology & Counselling
Faculty of Education, University of Malaya
50603 Kuala Lumpur
MALAYSIA

Tel: [REDACTED] hp : [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]

Or,
Faculty of Education
Monash University Clayton campus
Wellington Road, Clayton
Victoria 3800, AUSTRALIA

Tel: [REDACTED] Fax: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Appendix E: First Reminder Letter to Survey

Participants



MONASH University

24 September 2009

Dear fellow registered counsellor,

FRIENDLY REMINDER 1: A Survey on Professional Counsellors' Understanding and Practice of Multicultural Counselling in Malaysia

My name is Rafidah Aga Mohd Jaladin (KB, PA), and I am a doctoral student in Counselling at Monash University, Australia. For my PhD thesis, I am conducting research on multicultural counselling in Malaysia, and I would greatly appreciate your input on this topic. The purpose of my research is two-fold: To explore (1) how do registered practising counsellors understand multicultural counselling in Malaysia, and (2) how do they use this understanding into their current practices with the Malaysian clients from different cultural backgrounds. (Refer to the previously sent Explanatory Statement for details)

More than two weeks ago you received a survey package inviting you to assist me in exploring the understanding and practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia by filling out either a web-based survey or an enclosed pen-and-paper survey. If you have filled out the survey, thank you! If you have not had a chance to take the survey yet, I would appreciate your spending some time reading the Explanatory Statement and completing the survey. Only you can assist this research in generating knowledge regarding multicultural counselling in the specific cultural context of Malaysia.

This letter has gone to everyone in the selected sample population in order to thank those who had completed and returned the survey, and those who might have forgotten about it or those who might not have a chance yet to complete it. To take the web-based survey, please click on either:

1. http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=1inK1YVDu_2bw1uCdRNxdbLg_3d_3d
(For Malay version); or
2. http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=VJPS3le0ksEj87_2fFaGJn9Q_3d_3d
(For English version)

Alternatively, if you prefer to complete the survey off line (i.e., using the pen-and-paper version) you may contact me personally using the emails below (or hp: [REDACTED]) so that I can re-send the survey questionnaire to your preferred address.

Thank you for your interest and participation in this research. I genuinely appreciate your time in completing the survey.

[REDACTED]
Rafidah Aga Mohd Jaladin
Dept. of Educational Psychology & Counselling
Faculty of Education, University of Malaya
50603 Kuala Lumpur,
MALAYSIA.
Email: [REDACTED]

Faculty of Education
Monash University Clayton campus
Wellington Road, Clayton
Victoria 3800, AUSTRALIA

Appendix F: Second Reminder Letter to Survey Participants



MONASH University

24 September 2009

Dear fellow registered counsellor,

Friendly Reminder 2/Thank You: A Survey on Professional Counsellors' Understanding and Practice of Multicultural Counselling in Malaysia

Have you completed and returned my mailed survey questionnaire that I've sent to you about two months ago? If yes, I thank you for your time and cooperation in contributing towards this research and please ignore the remaining of this letter.

For those who haven't had time and a chance to complete and return my mailed survey questionnaire, I am pleased to inform that the deadline for the survey has been extended to 25 October 2009 (for mailed survey) and 30 November 2009 (for the web-based/online survey). Thus far, I have received only 25% response rate out of 1500 survey packages mailed to selected counsellors who are registered with the Lembaga Kaunselor Malaysia since two months ago. This means that I still need your cooperation and inputs in making this research a success. To be honest, I need more completed surveys in order to proceed with data analysis and complete my PhD research.

I would like to invite those who haven't participated in my survey yet to participate in my online survey which is accessible through my blog (<http://www.MulticulturalCounsellingSurvey.blogspot.com/>) or simply type one of the following web page links to direct you to the online survey based on your preferred language:

For the Malay version:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=1inK1YVDu_2bw1uCdRNxdbLg_3d_3d

For the English version:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=VJPS3le0ksEj87_2fFaGJn9Q_3d_3d

Alternatively, you can just simply fill out the enclosed survey questionnaire and return the completed survey using the self-addressed reply paid envelope. If you require further assistance or information regarding this survey, kindly contact me at the following numbers [REDACTED] or email to [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] My alternative email address is [REDACTED]

Your cooperation and commitments in making multicultural counselling in Malaysia a success is very much needed and highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Rafidah Aga Mohd Jaladin
Dept. of Educational Psychology & Counselling
Faculty of Education, University of Malaya
50603 Kuala Lumpur,
MALAYSIA.
Email: [REDACTED]

Faculty of Education
Monash University Clayton campus
Wellington Road, Clayton
Victoria 3800, AUSTRALIA

Appendix G: Interview Protocol

Project title: Professional counsellors' understanding and practice of multicultural counselling in Malaysia

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Brief description of the project:

The purpose of the research is two-fold: (a) to explore the understandings of Malaysian counsellors regarding multicultural counselling and its defining concepts; and (b) to explore their practices based on those understandings when working with clients in the Malaysian context. The participants of the research are mostly registered practising counsellors in Malaysia. Besides this one-to-one semi-structured interview, the survey questionnaire is another method used for data collection. Both the quantitative and qualitative data will be used to answer the central research question: How do Malaysian counsellors understand concepts regarding multicultural counselling; and how do they translate this understanding into their practices with clients in the Malaysian context? Collected data will be safeguarded to protect the confidentiality of the interviewees and survey participants. The interview will take about 30 to 45 minutes and it will be audio-taped and transcribed for analyses and interpretation.

Do you have any questions or concerns regarding any parts of the project description?

If you do not, please read and sign the consent form.

Shall we start? [Turn on the tape recorder]

Semi-structured Interview Topics & Questions:

Rapport topics: Background (personal and professional) or general opinion regarding Malaysian counselling

1. Could you share with me your personal and professional background?

Research Topic 1: understanding of multicultural counselling concepts (including MCC)

2. What do you see as being involved in multicultural competence? [Prompts: dimensions of cultural competency? Aspects of multicultural competence? Factors that define multicultural competence?]
3. Do you consider yourself as a multiculturally competent counsellor? Why, or why not?

4. What do you see as the characteristics of a multiculturally competent counsellor?

Research Topic 2: challenges in the understanding and practice of multicultural counselling

5. What are the barriers and challenges that you have encountered when counselling culturally different clients in Malaysia?

Research Topic 3: counsellors engaging with culturally different clients

6. Could you share one case regarding multicultural issues that you have encountered and describe how you engaged with it? [Prompt: Relationship building? Case conceptualisation? Possible intervention strategies?]

Rationale: To revisit previous research findings (e.g., To revisit previous research findings (e.g., Allen-Meares & Burman, 1999; Burkard et al., 2006; Constantine & Ladany, 2000; Neufeldt et al., 2006; Constantine, 2001)

Research Topic 4: counsellors responding to power differential issues.

7. What does it mean to you being a Bumiputera/non-Bumiputera counsellor in Malaysia?
8. As a Bumiputera/non-Bumiputera counsellor, what kind of power differential issues have you encountered when counselling clients who come from diverse cultural backgrounds, and describe how you deal with such issues in the counselling process? (Probes: feeling about such issues? Comforts in dealing with such issues? Any difficulties encountered?)

Concluding topics: practice evaluation strategies and useful tips for other counsellors

9. How do you normally evaluate your practise? [Prompt: what are your criteria or standards for evaluating your counselling practices?]
10. Do you have any suggestions on how to better serve culturally diverse clients in the Malaysian context? Can you share some?

Appendix H: Explanatory Statement for Interview

Participants



MONASH University

10 September 2009

Explanatory Statement – Semi-structured Interview Participants

Title: Professional Counsellors' Understanding and Practice of Multicultural Counselling in Malaysia

This information sheet is for you to keep.

My name is Rafidah Aga Mohd Jaladin and I am conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr Janette Simmonds and Dr Cynthia Joseph, both senior lecturers in the Faculty of Education, towards a PhD degree at Monash University. This means that I will be writing a thesis which is equivalent of an 80000 to 100000 word book. I have funding from Monash Research Graduate School (i.e., Postgraduate Travel Grant) for travelling expenses and Faculty of Education (i.e., Faculty Research Fund) for research related expenses. I have been granted permission to conduct this research from the Malaysian Board of Counsellors or commonly known as Lembaga Kaunselor.

I have your contact details from the signed consent form that you sent back to me when you returned the completed survey a few weeks ago. You have been chosen to participate in this interview because your personal and professional backgrounds fit the criteria of this research.

As you would have known, the purpose of my research is two-fold: To explore (1) how registered practising counsellors understand multicultural counselling in Malaysia, and (2) how they use this understanding into their current practices with the Malaysian clients from different cultural backgrounds. Besides this semi-structured interview, the study involves survey questionnaire and document examination.

The semi-structured interview will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes to complete. It will be audio taped and later transcribed for data analysis and interpretation. There are no foreseeable risks of harm or side-effects to the potential research participants. All possible effort will be made to maintain anonymity of participants.

Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. However, if you do consent to participate, you may withdraw prior to having approved the interview transcript.

Your confidentiality and privacy of individuals are respected. By signing the consent form and handing it to me is your consent for your responses to be compiled with others. Although the interview is transcribed, you will not be identified by your names because pseudonyms will be used. Your institution or organisation will also be given a pseudonym.

Storage of the data collected will adhere to the University regulations and kept on University premises in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for 5 years. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

Please understand that use of this data will be limited to this research, as authorised by Monash University, Australia, although results may ultimately be presented in formats other than the thesis, such as journal articles or conference presentations. If you have any queries or complaints concerning this study, please contact either me or my research supervisors at the contact details below. This study was approved by the Standing Committee on Ethics in Research involving Humans of Monash University.

I very much hope that you will kindly assist this research by agreeing to be interviewed, as I believe your response can greatly enhance and contribute to our understanding of working with clients in the Malaysian context.

If you would like to be informed of the aggregate research finding, please contact me using any of the contact details below. The findings are accessible for five years.

Thank you for your interest and participation in this research. I genuinely appreciate your time and responses to this interview.

If you would like to contact the research supervisors about any aspect of this study, please contact the following:	If you have a complaint concerning the manner in which this research <insert your project number here> is being conducted, please contact:
<p>Dr Janette Simmonds Principal research supervisor Faculty of Education Monash University Clayton campus Wellington Road, Clayton Victoria 3800, AUSTRALIA</p> <p>Tel: [REDACTED] Fax: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED]</p> <p>Dr Cynthia Joseph Co-research supervisor Faculty of Education Monash University Clayton campus Wellington Road, Clayton Victoria 3800, AUSTRALIA</p> <p>Tel: [REDACTED] Fax: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED]</p>	<p>Dr. Shahrir Jamaluddin Head Dept. of Educational Psychology & Counselling Faculty of Education, University of Malaya 50603 Kuala Lumpur MALAYSIA</p> <p>Tel: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED]</p>

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Rafidah Aga Mohd Jaladin
Researcher
Dept. of Educational Psychology & Counselling
Faculty of Education, University of Malaya
50603 Kuala Lumpur
MALAYSIA

Tel: [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]

Or,
Faculty of Education
Monash University Clayton campus
Wellington Road, Clayton
Victoria 3800, AUSTRALIA

Tel: [REDACTED] Fax: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Appendix I: Survey Codebook

No	SPSS variable name	Variable full name	Codes (Coding instruction)
1	id	Participant's identification number	Running number starting from 1.
2	code	Participant's code	Unique code assigned for researcher's reference
3	mode	The survey mode	1 = mailed survey 2 = online survey
4	language	Participant's preferred language	1 = Malay 2 = English
5	gender	Sex of the participant	1 = male 2 = female
6	ethnic	Ethnic identity of the participant	1 = Malay 2 = Chinese 3 = Indian 4 = other
7	religion	Religious identity of the participant	1 = Islam 2 = Christian 3 = Buddhism 4 = Hindu 5 = other
8	age	Age (in years) of the participant	1 = less than 20 years old 2 = 20-29 years old 3 = 30-39 years old 4 = 40-49 years old 5 = 50-59 years old 6 = 60 years old or more
9	educ	Highest level of education	1 = SPM 2 = certificate 3 = diploma 4 = bachelor 5 = Masters 6 = PhD
10	institution	Institution of the highest education	1 = local institution 2 = overseas institution
11	university	Name of participant's university in Malaysia	1 = UM 2 = UKM 3 = UPM 4 = UIA 5 = UTM 6 = USM 7 = UUM 8 = UMS 9 = UNIMAS 10 = other
12	country	country of overseas institution	1 = UK 2 = USA 3 = Australia 4 = other

13	job	Current job title of participant	1 = school counsellor/ teacher 2 = lecturer/counsellor educator 3 = psychology officer 4 = counselling officer 5 = counsellor 6 = administration counsellor 7 = police/army counsellor 8 = private practitioner 9 = other
14	employ	Current employment setting of the participant	1 = schools 2 = colleges/universities 3 = drug rehabilitation centres 4 = hospitals 5 = public agencies/departments 6 = private agencies/sector 7 = private counselling centres 8 = other
15	income	Monthly family income of the participant	1 = less than RM2000 2 = RM2000-RM3999 3 = RM4000-RM5999 4 = RM6000-RM7999 5 = RM8000-RM9999 6 = RM10000 and more
16	mc_subject	Completion of MC subjects	0 = no 1 = yes
17	mc_seminar	Attendance to Professional development workshops or seminars on MC	0 = no 1 = yes
18	practice	Years of practising counselling	1 = less than a year 2 = 1-5 years 3 = 6-10 years 4 = 11-15 years 5 = 16 – 20 years 6 = more than 20 years
19	service	Types of counselling services mostly provided	1 = family and marriage counselling 2 = agency/organisational counselling 3 = academic-related counselling 4 = addiction and rehabilitation counselling 5 = career/vocational counselling 6 = other
20	clientgrp	The main client group of the participant	1 = students 2 = in-patients or hospitalised persons 3 = community people 4 = drug abusers 5 = prisoners 6 = staff or employees 7 = the elderly 8 = other
21	clientethnic	The ethnic background of the main clients	1 = Malay 2 = Chinese 3 = Indian 4 = other
22	B1 to B8	Item 1 to Item 8 in MCCS-Mal scale	1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree

			3 = undecided 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree
23	B9 to B15	Item 9 to Item 15 in MCCS	1 = very limited 2 = limited 3 = average 4 = good 5 = very good
24	B16 to B22	Item 16 to Item 22 in MCCS	1 = totally not true 2 = somewhat not true 3 = possibly true 4 = somewhat true 5 = totally true
25	B23 to B32	Item 23 to Item 32 in MCCS	1 = very limited 2 = limited 3 = average 4 = good 5 = very good
26	C1 to C4	Four open-ended questions on definitions, counsellor characteristics and challenges in practice.	0 = no response 1 = responses recorded
27	casencount	Previous encounter with similar case	1 = yes 2 = no 3 = not sure
28	caseconfid	Preparedness and confidence to deal with similar case	1 = yes 2 = no 3 = not sure
29	caserespond	The way to respond to the case if different ethnicity	0 = no response 1 = provide appropriate counselling 2 = make appropriate referrals 3 = seek appropriate consultations 4 = other
30	T1 to T5	Five areas of training in multicultural counselling (general competencies, MCCs, culture and diversity, upskills, and counselling process)	1 = definitely don't need 2 = don't need 3 = not sure 4 = need 5 = definitely need

Appendix J: Correlation Matrix for the 32-Item in the MCCS-MCE Scale

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	
1	1.0																																
2	.26	1.0																															
3	.12	.23	1.0																														
4	.03	.11	.21	1.0																													
5	.02	.03	-.01	-.05	1.0																												
6	.17	.08	.17	.11	.18	1.0																											
7	.08	.11	.31	.18	-.02	.14	1.0																										
8	.01	.16	.28	.14	-.12	.08	.25	1.0																									
9	.16	.02	.02	-.02	.04	.03	.15	-.11	1.0																								
10	.17	.03	.02	.03	.03	.16	-.12	-.13	.56	1.0																							
11	.08	-.01	.00	-.04	-.00	.05	-.10	-.13	.47	.63	1.0																						
12	.05	.03	.02	-.02	-.01	.10	-.09	-.12	.40	.53	.57	1.0																					
13	.14	.02	.03	-.04	.08	.14	-.11	-.14	.42	.52	.52	.65	1.0																				
14	.13	.03	.02	-.02	.08	.05	-.07	-.05	.38	.35	.24	.28	.30	1.0																			
15	.14	-.01	.00	-.01	.11	.04	-.11	-.10	.40	.37	.41	.32	.42	.52	1.0																		
16	.02	.14	.06	.10	-.14	.09	.08	.18	.00	.06	.03	.12	.09	.14	.02	1.0																	
17	.11	.12	.04	.07	-.10	.15	.01	.08	.07	.12	.07	.20	.17	.13	.11	.59	1.0																
18	.11	.14	.11	.15	-.04	.07	.05	.14	-.04	-.04	-.03	.08	.03	.07	.04	.39	.39	1.0															
19	.14	.08	.02	.13	-.12	.04	.10	.17	-.04	.01	-.08	.07	.05	.08	.03	.33	.40	.43	1.0														
20	.18	.08	.04	.10	-.07	.18	.02	.10	-.02	.08	-.01	.18	.15	.09	.05	.27	.39	.36	.51	1.0													
21	.11	-.02	.09	.10	-.04	.15	.05	.14	-.05	-.01	-.01	-.00	.02	-.00	.02	.19	.13	.21	.26	.25	1.0												
22	.13	.00	.10	.09	-.04	.22	.14	.10	-.06	-.04	-.08	-.04	-.04	.06	.02	.17	.22	.23	.29	.25	.28	1.0											
23	.03	-.03	-.10	-.07	.08	.10	-.12	-.19	.26	.31	.30	.22	.27	.23	.29	-.07	.03	-.05	-.07	.01	-.04	-.04	1.0										
24	.06	.07	-.11	-.07	.09	.09	-.09	-.20	.25	.32	.30	.23	.30	.21	.29	-.01	.05	-.04	-.04	.05	-.10	-.07	.73	1.0									
25	-.01	-.03	-.11	-.10	.07	.02	-.11	-.27	.23	.21	.26	.17	.19	.21	.25	-.10	-.05	-.08	-.11	-.03	-.09	-.10	.60	.62	1.0								
26	.04	.06	-.08	-.06	-.02	.03	-.04	-.08	.27	.20	.28	.31	.23	.21	.28	-.04	.02	-.08	-.05	.05	-.06	-.06	.40	.43	.46	1.0							
27	.02	-.05	-.05	-.04	.17	.05	-.09	-.11	.24	.21	.23	.26	.31	.23	.28	-.00	.02	.03	-.03	.07	.03	-.04	.36	.36	.42	.37	1.0						
28	.05	-.05	-.05	-.11	.10	.01	-.09	-.11	.21	.19	.22	.18	.23	.14	.25	-.03	-.04	-.02	-.12	.01	.05	-.08	.33	.34	.36	.36	.54	1.0					
29	.00	-.04	-.02	-.06	.08	.04	-.07	-.13	.20	.18	.27	.12	.14	.12	.21	-.06	-.00	-.05	-.05	-.02	.06	-.05	.31	.28	.36	.29	.32	.48	1.0				
30	.02	-.04	-.01	-.06	.04	-.01	-.05	-.09	.18	.16	.26	.12	.16	.12	.20	-.04	.02	-.07	-.06	-.01	.02	-.05	.29	.29	.35	.36	.28	.45	.90	1.0			
31	-.01	-.01	-.03	-.04	.09	.02	-.00	-.02	.18	.19	.24	.15	.14	.15	.22	-.01	-.03	-.08	-.09	.00	-.02	-.05	.29	.31	.32	.36	.41	.53	.60	.62	1.0		
32	.04	.02	-.06	-.12	.11	.10	-.06	-.11	.17	.18	.22	.18	.20	.18	.22	-.03	-.01	.04	-.05	.04	-.08	-.07	.37	.41	.38	.47	.46	.46	.37	.38	.52	1.0	

Appendix K: Initial Codes from First-Cycle Coding of the Interview Data

Initial codes/interviewees	Ali	Bee	Cheng	Dharma	Elaine	Fred	Rogayah	Hidayah	Ika	Jasmi	Kasmah	Lazim
"racial-mixed clientele"	✓		✓	✓	✓							
Acceptance		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓				
Accommodative or flexible				✓			✓					
Acculturation into mainstream	✓		✓	✓	✓							
Advocacy in MC						✓						
Background experience with culture and diversity	✓		✓			✓			✓	✓		
Background knowledge is important				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Basic counselling skills			✓			✓		✓				
Basic qualities				✓		✓		✓				
Between-group differences										✓		
Bumi or non-Bumi experiences	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Challenges from third party		✓		✓	✓	✓						
Challenges in the early counselling career		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Challenges of being multicultural			✓									
Clientele market	✓			✓		✓		✓		✓		
Clients' willingness to change		✓						✓	✓			
Comfortable with culturally-mix people	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓		✓	
Comfortable with youngsters					✓							
Conduct research				✓							✓	
Confidence						✓			✓			
Consultations with experts			✓	✓	✓				✓			
Continuous learning			✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	
Counselling across age groups		✓			✓					✓	✓	
Counselling across cultures					✓							
Counselling among police				✓				✓	✓			
Counselling children					✓					✓		
Counselling culturally different clients		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Counselling diverse clients	✓				✓						✓	
Counselling elderly people	✓		✓						✓			
Counselling goals or objectives				✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		

Initial codes/interviewees	Ali	Bee	Cheng	Dharma	Elaine	Fred	Rogayah	Hidayah	Ika	Jasmi	Kasmah	Lazim
Counselling in hospital setting				✓	✓						✓	
Counselling in Malaysia Now and Then												
Counselling in schools										✓		
Counselling is multicultural						✓						
Counselling juvenile offenders						✓						
Counselling men				✓	✓							
Counselling minority groups			✓								✓	
Counselling single mums			✓		✓							
Counselling supervision or mentoring	✓										✓	
Counselling the micro cultures	✓		✓		✓	✓						
Counselling women			✓		✓		✓					
Counsellor qualification				✓								
Counsellors' work				✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Counsellor's worldview			✓		✓	✓	✓					
Countertransference			✓	✓		✓		✓				
Crisis worker training			✓									
Cultural empathy	✓											
Cultural identity	✓						✓	✓				
Cultural knowledge	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Cultural visits							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Culturally appropriate intervention strategies	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Culturally encapsulated background		✓					✓	✓				
Culturally sensitive					✓		✓					
Culturally-mixed clientele			✓								✓	
Culture is the focus of counselling			✓		✓							
Culture-match counselling		✓		✓						✓	✓	✓
Culture-specific history												
Differences in life experience			✓			✓						
Differences in upbringing			✓		✓							
Differences in values		✓	✓			✓						
Differences in worldviews		✓	✓									

Initial codes/Interviewees	Ali	Bee	Cheng	Dharma	Elaine	Fred	Rogayah	Hidayah	Ika	Jasmi	Kasmah	Lazim
Dimensions of MCC			✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Earning client's trust and acceptance	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	
Empathy				✓		✓		✓				
Empowerment						✓						
Enjoy learning		✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	✓	
Ethical	✓	✓		✓								
Falling in love with counselling again		✓										
Feedbacks from clients							✓	✓		✓		
Genuine										✓		
Giving up counselling		✓										
Good understanding of religions		✓		✓		✓					✓	
History of counselling in hospital setting				✓								
History of counselling in PDRM								✓				
Hometown	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		
Honest											✓	
Indicators of competency	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Intake interview session						✓			✓		✓	
Internship experience	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓			
Inter-racial marital problems				✓				✓				
Language competency	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	
Lessons learnt from experiences	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓	
Listening actively			✓			✓					✓	
Majority clients		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Making culturally appropriate referral	✓			✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	
Making follow-up										✓	✓	✓
Malay life	✓						✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Malaysian-trained counsellor				✓				✓				
MC experiences	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Multicultural attitudes				✓		✓						
Multicultural awareness						✓	✓					
Multicultural background	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓

Initial codes/interviewees	Ali	Bee	Cheng	Dharma	Elaine	Fred	Rogayah	Hidayah	Ika	Jasmi	Kasmah	Lazim
Multicultural beliefs	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	
Multicultural case conceptualisation	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Multicultural counselling relationship	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Multicultural skills	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Multifaith clientele	✓	✓		✓		✓						
Multiple roles				✓		✓						
Multiracial clientele	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	
Non-judgmental	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓						
Open-minded		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Patience and perseverance						✓					✓	✓
Patriotism			✓		✓							
Perceived challenges	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Perceived incompetence		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Personal diary or journal						✓						
Physical appearance	✓	✓									✓	
Physical setting						✓		✓				
Pioneers in organisation based counselling				✓				✓				
Political issues			✓	✓		✓	✓			✓		
Post-counselling outcome	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	
Practice makes perfect		✓			✓	✓	✓		✓			
Praying strategy			✓									
Pre-counselling preparation				✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	
Pre-marital sex and pregnancy among teenagers					✓							
Problem exploration								✓				
Problem solver misconception		✓				✓						
Professionalism	✓	✓		✓							✓	
Quality of counselling				✓							✓	
Reading				✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	
Religious secondary education									✓			
Remain objective	✓											
Respect culture and diversity	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	

Initial codes/Interviewees	Ali	Bee	Cheng	Dharma	Elaine	Fred	Rogayah	Hidayah	Ika	Jasmi	Kasmah	Lazim
Respectful professional				✓		✓					✓	
Review case notes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	
Self-awareness			✓									
Self-check	✓					✓						
Self-talk												
Self-therapy			✓									
Seminars workshop attendance	✓				✓						✓	
Sharing counselling experiences					✓		✓					
Sincere			✓					✓			✓	
Socialisation process	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Spiritual phenomena			✓			✓						
Stressful life		✓				✓						
'Tak kenal maka tak cinta'	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Training	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓			
Transcultural context for upbringing		✓	✓			✓	✓			✓		
Transcultural working environment		✓	✓			✓	✓			✓		
Transition period from school to work		✓		✓								
Translator											✓	
Transparent							✓	✓				
Understanding client's worldviews		✓	✓						✓	✓		
Understanding of culture	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Unfinished business			✓									
Unisex secondary education							✓	✓				
Upbringing			✓									
Use of psychological testing								✓	✓			
Useful quotation for chapter 1				✓							✓	✓
Volunteer counselling work	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓					
Wanting to learn about multi-culture		✓		✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	
Warm person											✓	
Western-trained counsellor							✓				✓	
Willingness to help others			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Within-group differences		✓	✓		✓					✓	✓	
TOTAL	44	46	65	63	53	68	45	48	40	39	57	11

Appendix L: Summary of Interview Participants’ Personal and Professional Backgrounds (N=12)

Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Ethnic	Religion	Education level	Job	Work setting	Y.O.P. ,	MCC level	MCC total score
Ali	M	50-59	Chinese	Islam	PhD	Counsellor educator	University	16-20	High	133
Bee	F	30-39	Chinese	Buddhism	masters	Counsellor	Secondary school	6-10	High	133
Cheng	F	40-49	Chinese	Buddhism	masters	Freelance counsellor	Varies – NGO, School, Company	1-5	High	136
Dharma	M	50-59	Indian	Hindu	bachelor	Lecturer (counsellor)	Private college and Hospital	11-15	High	132
Elaine	F	50-59	Indian	Christian	masters	Psychology officer /Counsellor	Government department	6-10	Moderate	119
Fred	M	50-59	Indian	Christian	bachelor	Psychology officer /counsellor	Government department	6-10	High	151
Rogayah	F	50-59	Malay	Islam	PhD	Counsellor educator	University	16-20	High	133
Hidayah	F	50	Malay	Islam	PhD	Uniformed Counsellor	Uniformed force unit	11-15	High	132
Ika	F	20-29	Malay	Islam	bachelor	General counsellor	Uniformed force unit	1-5	Moderate	114
Jasmi	M	40-49	Malay	Islam	bachelor	Counsellor	Secondary school	6-10	High	130
Kasmah	F	30-39	Malay	Islam	masters	Lecturer	University	1-5	Moderate	115
Lazim	M	30-39	Malay	Islam	masters	Assistant Manager	Private company	1-5	Low	102

Note:

1. The abbreviated term ‘Y.O.P.’ stands for years of practising counselling;
2. In the MCC level column, ‘high/low’ refers to the mean of total MCC scores ($M=113.45$) plus/minus one standard deviation ($SD=10.42$), and ‘moderate’ refer to the scores between the high and low score ranges.