

# Assessing Intercultural Competence: A Review

By Marissa R. Lombardi, Bentley University

*Editors' Note: We accepted this article for the Journal because we believe that many of the challenges schools face related to increasing the diversity of their students and professional staffs can be related to perceptions of differences making people uncomfortable. We believe this review will prove useful.*

Educators and employers increasingly acknowledge the value of intercultural competence. While most higher education institutions consider these skills as important outcomes for their graduates, few have specifically addressed the means by which to measure the wide variety of results. Having and using intercultural assessment tools will allow educators to understand and measure the effectiveness and outcomes of their initiatives and will also aid them in developing appropriate interventions and responses at a variety of levels.

There are several instruments that are specifically designed for the assessment of intercultural sensitivity or competence of students, faculty, or staff. Five of the most common instruments appropriate for use in higher education institutions are: the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI), Cross-Cultural World-Mindedness Scale (CCWMS), Intercultural Sensitivity Inventory (ISI), and the Assessment of Intercultural Competence (AIC). The IDI and CCAI are two commercially available tools that have dominated the research landscape in recent years. The latter three instruments represent the emerging non-commercial sector. The purpose, application, availability, reliability, and scoring of each of these assessment tools are reviewed.

## **The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)**

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman, 2003), developed by intercultural scholar Dr. Milton J. Bennett, is a culture-general and developmental model of intercultural competence that was created as a framework to explain the reported and observed experiences of individuals in intercultural situations. It is a framework for understanding reactions of people

towards cultural difference and is based on "meaning-making" models of cognitive psychology and radical constructivism.

The DMIS is divided into six stages of increasing sensitivity to cultural difference. The first three stages are "ethnocentric," meaning that a person tends to use his/her own cultural values and customs to judge all people. The second three stages are "ethnorelative," meaning that one is able to recognize and adapt to a variety of cultural values and customs.

Created by intercultural communication scholars Dr. Milton J. Bennett and Dr. Mitchell Hammer, and grounded in the theoretical constructs of the DMIS, the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) is among the most prevalent intercultural sensitivity tools discussed in the literature. The IDI can be used to effectively measure orientation towards cultural differences. It is a statistically reliable, cross-culturally valid measure of intercultural competence. The measurement is useful for assessing training needs, guiding interventions for individual and group development of intercultural competence, aiding in personnel selection, and evaluating programs.

The DMIS and IDI have been used in numerous educational contexts, including study abroad debriefings, intercultural communication workshops, and curriculum design. It allows educators to assess the developmental readiness of their students to pursue various types of intercultural learning and to select and sequence learning activities that contribute to their development of intercultural competence (Bennett, Bennett, & Allen, 2003).

The IDI can be used to assess intercultural competence at the individual, group and organizational level. It consists of 50 statements that



*Marissa Lombardi, M.A., teaches cross-cultural communication and understanding at Bentley University in Waltham, MA, where she is an adjunct professor. She may be reached at [mlombardi@bentley.edu](mailto:mlombardi@bentley.edu).*

respondents score using a 5-point response set ranging from "agree" to "disagree," and can be taken either in paper form or online. The IDI has alpha coefficients of .80 to .84 for the five scales (Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman, 2003).

A three-day qualifying seminar, with a tuition of \$1300-\$1500, is mandatory for those who wish to use the IDI, and each instrument costs \$10. The instrument must be trainer-scored or scored by the Intercultural Communication Institute, and is available in various languages. Information on trainings and purchasing the instrument can be found at <http://www.idiinventory.com/>.

### **Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI)**

The Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI) is a self-assessment tool developed by Kelley and Meyers (1995b). It is designed to assess an individual's effectiveness in cross-cultural interaction and communication. Respondents understand the qualities that can increase intercultural effectiveness, develop intercultural communication skills, and make an informed decision about one's readiness to live/study/work abroad. This instrument is used in academia, business, and government settings to strengthen cultural and diversity training programs and to promote cultural awareness within the classroom.

The CCAI measures four variables: Emotional Resilience, Flexibility and Openness, Perceptual Acuity, and Personal Autonomy. Emotional Resilience refers to one's ability to cope with the stresses and ambiguity inherent in new cultural environments. Flexibility and Openness reflects the extent to which these abilities are present with regard to new ways of thinking and behaving in diverse cultural contexts. Perceptual Acuity assesses one's ability to identify and interpret both verbal and nonverbal cultural communication cues. Personal Autonomy measures an individual's sense of identity and ability to respect differing cultural values.

The CCAI is a 50-item survey that uses a 6-point Likert scale response format ranging from "definitely not true" to "definitely true." Kelly and Meyers (1995a) reported the results of their study with a normative sample (N = 653). Internal consistency reliability coefficients ranged from .68 to .82 on the four scales and .90 overall. Formal

training is not required to use the CCAI, although users should have a training background and/or undergraduate degree (Kelley and Meyers, 1995a). Each instrument costs \$9-10 dollars (Sinicrope, C., Norris, J., Watanabe, Y., 2006). The instrument may be purchased through a variety of companies that specialize in development and assessment such as Vangent (<http://www.jvrcatalogue.com/?p=352>).

### **Cross-Cultural World-Mindedness Scale (CCWMS)**

The Cross-Cultural World-Mindedness Scale (CCWMS) evaluates attitudes towards race, religion, world government, war, patriotism, and global education. World-mindedness is defined as "positive attitudes towards issues such as immigration, world government, and world economic justice" (Paige, 2004, p 113). The scale is used for study-abroad, pre-departure and re-entry programs to detect value orientations and shifts, and can also be used to test study-abroad outcomes. The CCWMS draws on the earlier work of Sampson and Smith (1957) and Silvernail (1979).

The 26-item CCWMS scale, developed by Der-Karabetian (1993), uses a 6-point Likert-style response format ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Based on a survey conducted by ten nations, Der-Karabetian (1992) reports that the CCWMS internal reliability varied between countries from .69 (India) to .90 (England), while the alpha coefficients were .80 to .85 for two U.S. samples. There are no training requirements for the CCWMS, and it can be either trainer scored or self-scored. The CCWMS is available at no cost in Der-Karabetian (1992).

### **Intercultural Sensitivity Inventory (ISI)**

The Intercultural Sensitivity Inventory (ICSI) (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992) measures a person's ability to modify behavior in culturally appropriate ways when coming into contact with diverse cultures. Specifically, the ICSI measures the cultural constructs of individualism, collectivism, and flexibility and open-mindedness. The ICSI offers an opportunity to explore cultural identity through the assessment of one's cultural value orientations and flexibility in adapting to new cultures or people. The instrument measures intercultural sensitivity, while the role of language competence and developmental aspects of intercultural competence over time are not considered.

The 46 question self-report instrument uses a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "very strongly agree" to "very strongly disagree." The instrument is divided into two parts. In the first part, the respondents answer 16 questions twice, once while imagining living and working in Japan, and again while imagining living and working in the U.S. In the second part, participants respond to statements intended to measure flexibility and open-mindedness. Based on Bhawuk & Brislin's study (1992) that used two culturally heterogeneous samples, results show strong internal consistency reliability with Cronbach alphas for two the samples of .82 and .84 (Paige, 2004). The ICSI does not require any specific training, is available at no cost in Bhawuk & Brislin (1992), and can be self-scored.

### The Assessment of Intercultural Competence

The Assessment of Intercultural Competence (AIC) is a self-assessment tool that measures how intercultural sojourners change over time. The instrument was developed by the Federation of the Experiment in International Living (FEIL) as part of assessing the intercultural outcomes of its programs. FEIL researchers defined intercultural competence as "a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from one's self" (Fantini, 2006, p 12). Fantini identified different components from within this definition including dimensions of intercultural competence (knowledge, attitude, skills, and awareness), characteristics of intercultural competence, domains of intercultural competence (relationships, communication, and collaboration), language proficiency, and developmental level (Sinicrope, Norris, & Watanabe, 2007).

In its initial version, this AIC employed both self and other-reported procedures and interviews lasting approximately one hour. Fantini (2006) reported reliability estimates of .70 and greater factor loadings of .60 and greater for each item on the four dimensions of intercultural competence: knowledge, attitudes skills, and awareness. All components of the AIC are available at no cost in the Fantini (2006) appendix.

### References

Bhawuk, D.P.S., & Brislin, R.W. (1992). The measurement of intercultural sensitivity using the concepts of individualism and collectivism. *The International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 16(4), 413-436.

Bennett, J.M., Bennett, M.J., & Allen W. (2003) Developing intercultural competence in the language classroom. In D.L. Lange & R.M. Paige (Eds.), *Culture as the Core: Perspectives on culture in second language learning* (pp 237-270). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.

Der-Karabetian, A. (1992). World-mindedness and the nuclear threat: A multinational study. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 7, 293-308.

Der-Karabetian, A., & Metzger, J. (1993). The cross-cultural world-mindedness scale and political party affiliation. *Psychological Reports*, 72, 1069-1070.

Fantini (2006) Exploring and Assessing Intercultural Competence. Retrieved June 13, 2010, from [http://www.sit.edu/SITOccasionalPapers/feil\\_research\\_report.pdf](http://www.sit.edu/SITOccasionalPapers/feil_research_report.pdf).

Hammer, M.R., Bennett, M.J., & Wiseman, R. (2003). Measuring Intercultural Sensitivity: The intercultural development inventory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27, 421-443.

Kelley and Meyers (1995a). *The cross-cultural adaptability inventory: Manual*. Minneapolis: MN: NCS Pearson.

Kelley and Meyers (1995b). *The cross-cultural adaptability inventory: Self-assessment*. Minneapolis: MN: NCS Pearson.

Paige, M.R. (2004). Instrumentation in Intercultural Training. In Dan Landis, Janet. M. Bennett, & Milton J. Bennett (Eds.), *Handbook of Intercultural Training* (3rd ed., pp 147-165) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sampson, D. & Smith, K.P. (1957). A scale to measure world-minded attitudes. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 45, 99-106.

Silvernail, D.L. (1979) The assessment of teachers' future world prospective values. *Journal of Environmental Studies*, 10, 7-10.

Sinicrope, C., Norris, J., Watanabe, Y. (2007). Understanding and assessing intercultural competence: A summary of theory, research, and practice. *Second Language Studies*, 26 (1), 1-58.