Variations in Multicultural Experience: Influence of Bicultural Identity Integration on Socio-Cognitive Processes and Outcomes

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter provides a comprehensive framework that integrates research on the socio-cognitive processes and outcomes of biculturalism. First, this chapter offers an overview of the psychology of multiculturalism, including early definitions and typologies of multicultural experiences. Second, this chapter examines how Bicultural Identity Integration (BII), the degree to which biculturals perceive their two cultural identities as compatible versus oppositional and fused versus compartmentalized, influences biculturals’ cognitive and motivational processing. Third, a theoretical model called the Integrative Psychological Model of Biculturalism (IPMB) is proposed as a comprehensive framework for understanding the social-cognitive correlates of biculturalism. Specifically, the IPMB examines individual and contextual antecedents of variations in bicultural experience, and how these processes influence self-concept, cultural frame switching, knowledge bridging, cognitive complexity, motivation as well as their psychological, social, and behavioral outcomes. The IPMB has implications beyond biculturals to those managing multiple identities around gender, religion, and profession as well.

Keywords: bicultural, multicultural, bicultural identity integration (BII), integrative psychological model of biculturalism (IPMB), cultural frame switching (CFS)

Variations in Multicultural Experience

Multiculturalism has become a reality of life in today’s world. Many individuals have migrated to a different culture than the one in which they were born, move regularly between cultures (e.g., transnationalism), live in nations colonized by a different cultural group, have parents from different cultures, or reside within close proximity with people from a variety of cultural backgrounds. According to the 2010 U.S. census, for example, 4.2 million children are multiracial; this group has grown almost 50% since 2000, when the very first time respondents were allowed to check more than one box regarding their race (Williams, 2012; see also Sanchez, Shih, & Wilton, this volume). An increasing number of people are now known as “third-culture kids,” “global cosmopolitans,” or “global nomads”; these are people who do not identify with only one culture, but associate with multiple cultures or a combination of different cultures (Brimm, 2010). To complicate the picture further, these individuals manage their multiple cultural identities in different ways; some find it easy to integrate their multiple cultural identities and feel proud of their multicultural status, whereas others struggle between the cultural groups with which they are associated, deciding to identify with one or neither, or switching between them (Benet-Martínez, 2012).

A comprehensive psychology of culture must take into account how multiculturalism is experienced, managed, and negotiated in these people’s everyday lives. Indeed, a thriving psychological scholarship of biculturalism has emerged during the past decade (see Benet-Martínez, 2012; Hong, Wan, No, & Chiu, 2007; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2010 for recent reviews). Some scholars have focused on individuals with multicultural demographic or sociological characteristics—for example, individuals who have a mixed racial or ethnic background, have lived in more than one country or immigrated from one country to another, have parents from different cultures, or have lived in societies where they are exposed to multiple cultural groups (e.g., Berry, 2003; Padilla, 2006; Phinney &
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Devich-Navarro, 1997; Rockquemore, 1999; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). Others have focused on the psychological processes involved in negotiating between multiple cultural identities and competencies (e.g., Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Cheng & Lee, 2009; Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martínez, 2000). Here, multiculturalism is broadly construed as the experience of having been exposed to and having internalized two or more cultures (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2007). In this line of work, multiculturals have been considered as individuals who have multicultural competence (i.e., have knowledge, language skills, social-networks, values and attitudes, media preferences, value systems, and so forth, that are representative of two or more cultures; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993). Multiculturals also have been considered as individuals whose self-labels (e.g., "I am multicultural") or group self-categorizations (e.g., "I am American" and "I am Chinese;" "I am Chinese-American") reflect cultural pluralism (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2007).

Relatedly, multicultural identity is the condition of having attachments with and loyalties toward different cultures (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Note, then, that multicultural identity is only one component (albeit a very important one) of the more complex and multidimensional notion of multiculturalism (Benet-Martínez, 2012). Acquisition of knowledge from a new culture does not always produce identification with that culture (Hong et al., 2007). In short, an individual who has been exposed to and has learned from more than one culture is a multicultural person; but we say that the individual has a multicultural identity only when this individual expresses an attachment to these cultures. Although multicultural identity involves a significant degree of identification with more than one culture, it does not presuppose similar degrees of identification with all the internalized cultures.

Often, demographic, sociological, and psychological conceptualizations of biculturalism overlap—many people who identify with multiple cultures also have been exposed to these cultures via their life experiences, and are seen by others as belonging to different cultural groups. However, this is not always the case, and sometimes these conceptualizations of multiculturalism can diverge. For example, consider first—and second-generation Asian American immigrants. Even though their demographic characteristics may be similar, research suggests that some self-identify as Asian, some self-identify as American, some self-identify as bicultural (both Asian and American), and others just self-identify as human beings without reference to any cultural groups (Shih, Bonam, Sanchez, & Peck, 2007). Moreover, one’s own identification with cultural groups may be different from others’ perceptions (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009). For instance, a second-generation Asian American may have never lived in Asia and self-identify as American, but others may see her as Asian.

In this chapter, we focus specifically on multiculturalism as a psychological process, defined by an individual’s subjective sense of belonging to more than one cultural group. That is, we use an individual’s own perceptions of his or her behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, and sense of belongingness within a cultural group to define bicultural identity. One of the earliest theoretical frameworks using this approach was developed by Berry (1990), who examined the extent to which immigrant values and participate in their ethnic (home or original) culture and the dominant (host or mainstream) culture. Drawing on immigrants’ self-reports, Berry identifies four strategies immigrants use to manage their potential dual-cultural membership: (a) integration refers to the strategy of retaining the traditions and values of their ethnic culture and also developing competencies and participating in the dominant culture; (b) assimilation refers to the strategy of developing competencies in and involvement with the dominant culture but not retaining their ethnic culture; (c) separation refers to the strategy of retaining their ethnic culture but not establishing or maintaining a relationship with the dominant culture; and (d) marginalization refers to the strategy of retaining neither their ethnic culture nor the dominant one. According to Berry’s model, those who adopt the integration strategy by being involved with both cultures are defined as biculturals.

Empirical work on these four acculturation attitudes or strategies reveals that, at least at the individual level, the most common strategy used by immigrant and cultural minorities is integration/biculturalism, followed by separation, assimilation, and marginalization (e.g., Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). Further, there is now robust evidence supporting the psychometric validity of the multidimensional model of acculturation and its advantages over unidimensional models in predicting a wide array of outcomes (Flannery, Reise, & Yu, 2001; Ryder, Allen, & Paulhus, 2000; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, Szapocznik, 2010). Cross-national acculturation studies have found a zero or even positive association between national/mainstream identity and ethnic identity in settler countries such as the United States (r = .15), Canada (r = .09), or New Zealand (r = .32), which have long traditions of immigration (see Table 4.1 in Phinney, Berry, Vedder, & Liebkind, 2006). However, this association is often moderately negative in nonsettler countries such as France (r = -.13), Germany (r = -.28), and The Netherlands (r = -.27; Phinney et al., 2006). This pattern of associations speaks to the prevalence of multicultural identities.
across countries, which may result from the interaction of two factors: the climate of the receiving country, such as how long it has been receiving and incorporating immigrants (e.g., Canada vs. Germany), and the type of predominant immigrant group, such as how much this group poses a threat to the mainstream cultural values (e.g., Muslim Moroccan and Turkish in Europe versus predominantly Christian Asian and Latin American groups in the United States and Canada). These results also speak to the different forms that multicultural identity may take (e.g., negative, zero, or positive correlation between ethnic and dominant orientations), and how structural factors may play a role in fostering one form over another (Benet-Martinez, 2012).

I. Biculturalism: Being of Two Minds

The psychology of biculturalism arose from long-standing research showing that people from different cultures differ greatly in how they think, feel, and behave (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Cross-cultural differences have been observed in a variety of psychological processes—ranging from higher-level processes such as values to lower-level processes such as perception—and have been shown to occur very early in life (e.g., Hofstede, 2001; Ji, Peng, & Nisbett, 2000; Masuda & Nisbett, 2001; Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001; Peng & Nisbett, 1999; Schwartz, 2004). It is not within the scope of this chapter to provide a comprehensive review of these differences, but next we offer a few examples to illustrate the pervasiveness and robustness of cross-cultural differences in the psychological literature, and provide a background for understanding why being bicultural can be seen as having two distinct and even oppositional “minds.”

Self-concept, or the idea of “I” as an active agent in the social world, varies greatly by culture (Mead, 1934). East Asians have a predominantly interdependent self-construal; they see the self as inherently connected with others and inseparable from a social context, which leads to an emphasis on being attentive to others, fitting in, and interpersonal harmony. In comparison, North Americans possess a predominantly independent self-construal; they perceive the self as a unique and separate entity from others, and seek to maintain their independence by attending to the self and by downplaying others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). For example, when asked to recall autobiographical memories, Americans provided more references to themselves and their own internal states (Han, Leichtman, & Wang, 1998; Wang, 2001; Wang & Brockmeier, 2002). People from Australian, Ghanaian, Malaysian, and other non-Western cultures also have been shown to have self-construals distinct from people from Western cultures (e.g., Adams & Dzokoto, 2003; Bochner, 1994).

Cross-cultural differences also have been observed in how people express, experience, appraise, and judge emotions. Compared to their Western counterparts, East Asians experience more negative emotions, and also are less emotionally expressive, especially in terms of expressing negative emotions to in-group members (Suh, Diener, Oishi, & Triandis, 1998). East Asians are more likely to experience self-critical emotions such as guilt, shame, and embarrassment when negative events occur, and other-enhancing emotions such as admiration and gratefulness when positive events occur (Scherer, Walbott, Matsumoto, & Kudoh, 1988). East Asians are also more likely to incorporate information in the context when judging others’ emotions than are Westerners (Masuda, Ellsworth, Mesquita, Leu, Tanida, & van de Veerendonk, 2008).

Similarly, culture has been shown to affect cognitive processes. For example, East Asians are more apt to adopt holistic attention and thinking styles, whereas North Americans are more prone to adopt analytical attention and thinking styles (e.g., Masuda & Nisbett, 2001; Nisbett, et al., 2001). These different thinking styles have implications for how individuals assess their emotional experiences and themselves. For instance, Schimmack, Oishi, and Diener (2002) found that the link between the frequency of positive emotions and negative emotions was significantly more negative among Westerners than among East Asians. Apparently, the latter group experiences positive and negative emotions more independently, which is supportive of a dialectical view of the self; Similarly, Spencer-Rodgers, Peng, Wang, and Hou (2004) found that East Asians endorse both positive and negative statements measuring self-esteem and well-being, whereas European Americans endorse either positive or negative aspects, supportive of an analytic orientation that is less tolerant of contradiction and duality.

In addition, East Asians are less likely to exhibit the correspondence bias, or the tendency to attribute other people’s behaviors internally to their dispositions; East Asians tend to make more external attributions, and they generally consider more causes as well as consequences of social events (Choi, Dalal, Kim-Prieto & Park, 2003; Choi & Nisbett, 2000; Choi, Nisbett, & Norenzayan, 1999; Maddux & Yuki, 2006; Morris & Peng, 1994). In...
categorization tasks, East Asians tend to categorize objects by their functional associations, whereas North Americans categorize objects by shared features. For example, when asked to group a television, a computer, and an antenna, East Asians group the television and the antenna together, while Americans group the television with the computer (e.g., Chiu, 1972; Ji, et al., 2000).

Furthermore, culture has been found to influence motivation, or the study of why people initiate, persist in, and terminate specific actions in a given circumstance (e.g., Atkinson, 1958). Cross-cultural comparison research shows that people in Western cultures are predominantly motivated by the desire to maintain a positive view of the self (e.g., James, 1890; Steele, 1988), but self-enhancement and self-promotion are perceived negatively in Japanese culture (Yoshida, Kojo, & Kaku, 1982). In a similar vein, the self-serving bias is more salient in Western cultures such as the U.S. than in Eastern cultures such as Japan (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

This voluminous literature documenting pervasive, basic, and fundamental cultural differences raises the question of how multicultural, people who have two or more cultures, psychologically bridge these different ways of being. For example, how would an East-West bicultural negotiate between the normatively Western independent self-construal and the normatively-Eastern interdependent self-construal? It may be possible that bicultural individuals possess “two cultural minds”—they have two sets of cultural knowledge, use two cultural schemas to guide their thoughts and behaviors, and can activate these two cultural frames of references.

The “two cultural minds” theory of biculturalism has been well supported in research demonstrating biculturals’ tendency to fluidly move between different cultural frameworks in response to cultural cues. This phenomenon, known as “cultural frame switching” or CFS, has been observed in a variety of psychological processes, cultural groups (e.g., Asian American, Greek Dutch, Latinos), and types of cultural cues (e.g., visual icons, language). For example, when exposed to Asian cultural cues such as pictures of the Great Wall of China, East-West biculturals made more external attributions, a prototypically Eastern attribution style. In comparison, when exposed to Western cultural cues such as pictures of a cowboy, East-West biculturals made more internal attributions, a prototypically Western attribution style (Hong et al., 2000). In a similar study, Verkuyten and Pouliasi (2002) found that activating the Greek identity led bicultural Greek-Dutch children to make more external attributions, to have stronger identification with friends, and to possess a more positive evaluation of social identity—all prototypically Greek values—than when activating the Dutch identity.

Beyond attributions (Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002; Cheng, Lee, & Benet-Martínez, 2006; Hong, Benet-Martínez, Chiu, & Morris, 2003; Hong et al., 2000; Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2006), CFS effects have been reported in the domains of personality self-views and evaluations (Ramírez-Esparza, Gosling, Benet-Martínez, & Pennebaker, 2006; Ross, Xun, & Wilson, 2002; Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2006), ethnic identity (Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2002), emotional experience (Perunovic, Heller, & Rafaeli, 2007), self-construals (Kemmelmeier & Cheng, 2004), acculturation (Lechuga, 2008), values (Fu, Chiu, Morris, & Young, 2007; Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2006), cooperation (Kim-Jo, Benet-Martínez, & Ozer, 2010; Wong & Hong, 2005), autobiographical memory (Bender & Ng, 2009), decision making (Brilley, Morris, & Simonson, 2005), word-meaning associations (Ringberg, Luna, Reihlen, & Peracchio, 2010), and other psychological processes. Further, CFS has been demonstrated when cultural cues were presented explicitly (i.e., above participants’ level of conscious awareness, Pouliasi & Verkuyten, 2007) and implicitly (i.e., below participants’ level of conscious awareness, Devos, 2006).

In summary, there is solid evidence supporting CFS, or the process by which multicultural individuals move back and forth between their distinct cultural mindsets depending on situational cues; under the right conditions, East-West biculturals can behave in ways that are indistinguishable from monocultural Easterners or monocultural Westerners. Importantly, for CFS to occur, and for a particular cultural cue to influence behavior, three conditions should be fulfilled: (a) the relevant cultural schemas have to be cognitively available (i.e., the individual has internalized cultural values, norms, attitudes), (b) associations relevant to that culture have to be cognitively accessible (the schemas have been recently activated by explicit or implicit contextual cues), and (c) associations relevant to that culture should be perceived as applicable to the situation (Hong et al., 2000; 2003).

CFS can be habitual and automatic. For example, one can imagine a bilingual individual who can fluidly switch languages depending on the audience. However, that is not always the case. Individuals may sometimes manage the CFS process by actively and consciously controlling the accessibility of cultural schemas. For instance, immigrants and expatriates hoping to adapt quickly to their new cultural environments engage in self-priming,
surrounding themselves with symbols and situations that prime the meaning system of the host culture (e.g., by reading newspapers in the new language and supporting the local sports team). Alternatively, those who wish to sustain their original ways of thinking and feeling may activate a sense of “cultural nostalgia” by surrounding themselves with stimuli (e.g., food, art, or music) priming their home culture (Sedikides, Wildschut, Routledge, Arndt, & Zhou, 2009). These active processes of culturally priming oneself may help multicultural individuals in their ongoing effort to negotiate and express their cultural identities (Hong et al., 2000).

II. Individual Differences in the Psychological Management of Multiculturalism

Navigating multiple cultural memberships is a complex and multifaceted psychological process. Even within the biculturals who adopt Berry et al.’s (2006) integration/biculturalism strategy, large individual differences exist. For example, early acculturation and popular work on multicultural individuals find that the experience of dual cultural membership is mixed; for some, these experiences are associated with positive feelings (e.g., pride in one’s cultural backgrounds, feelings of uniqueness and belonging to a rich community), for others they are associated with negative feelings (e.g., identity confusion, dual expectations, value clashes), and for still others they are associated with both positive and negative feelings (e.g., Chavez, 1994; LaFromboise et al., 1993; O’Hearn, 1998; Padilla, 1994). Clearly, multicultural individuals vary in how they deal with the implications of coming from different cultural communities each with their own cognitive, affective, and behavioral expectations (LaFromboise et al., 1993). An important issue, then, is how particular individual differences impact the process of multicultural identity formation and the meanings associated with this experience.

There are several individual difference models of bicultural identity formation and negotiation. Early theoretical work on this issue is worth discussing, even if briefly. Using qualitative, interview data from 46 Mexican-American and 52 African-American adolescents, Phinney and Devich-Navarro (1997) found empirical evidence for three bicultural types: blended biculturals, alternating biculturals, and separated biculturals. Blended biculturals affirm their biculturalism, express pride in their background, and consider themselves equally ethnic and mainstream in their cultural orientations. They see the mainstream and ethnic cultures as different but not in conflict, and they are reluctant to choose one culture over the other. In comparison, alternating biculturals find it more difficult to have two cultures at the same time. Alternating biculturals perceive the mainstream and ethnic cultures as highly disparate, with distinct values, ideas, and norms, and they experience conflict between the two. The way they see themselves changes in response to the situation. For example, they feel more American at school and more ethnic at home. For alternating biculturals, their cultural identification is not fixed. Rather, it switches in response to contextual demands (see also Collins, 2000; Cross, 1978; Poston, 1990). Separated biculturals are not truly bicultural as defined by their psychological identification and attachment; they do not feel welcome in the larger society and do not see themselves as part of the dominant culture. In short, they identify with their ethnic cultures only.

In another extension of Berry’s model, Roccas and Brewer (2002) proposed that individuals manage dual identities using one of four strategies: (a) intersection or identification with the intersection of multiple social groups (e.g., Asian-American biculturals who mainly identify with others who also are Asian-American biculturals), (b) dominance or identification with one social group (e.g., Asian-American biculturals who mainly identify with American culture), (c) compartmentalization or identification with either social group depending on the social context (e.g., Asian-American biculturals who identify with Asians in one setting and with Americans in another setting), and (d) merger or identification with both social groups simultaneously (Asian-American biculturals who identify with both Asians and Americans).

Research on mixed-race individuals, individuals who belong to two racial groups, supports this taxonomy of strategies. Mixed-race individuals manage their two racial identities by: (a) having one foot in each of the two racial groups [similar to Roccas & Brewer’s (2002) merger strategy], (b) shifting the foreground and background as they move between different racially defined contexts (similar to compartmentalization), (c) choosing a hybrid “border” racial identity (similar to intersection), or (d) identifying with one “camp” while visiting other camps when necessary (similar to dominance; Binning, Unzueta, Hui, & Molina, 2009; Renn, 2000; Root, 1996; Wallace, 2001).

These seminal typological studies underscore the existence of individual variations in multicultural and multiracial identities and experiences, and have significant heuristic value. At the same time, these typologies suffer from an
important conceptual limitation: they confound differences in identity and behavior. Specifically, whereas labels such as “blended” and “fused” refer to subjective, identity-related aspects of the bicultural experience (e.g., seeing oneself as Asian American or Chicano), labels such as “alternating” or “shifting” refer to the behavioral domain, that is, the ability to engage in cultural frame-switching by alternating behaviors (and perhaps even identities) depending on the cultural cues of the situation (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002). Naturally, individuals’ subjective experiences of their bicultural identity and their bicultural behaviors or competencies do not have to map onto each other (Boski, 2008). For instance, the third author of this chapter has a bicultural upbringing in Barcelona, which included paternal Catalan and maternal Spanish cultural influences. When asked about her native or biracial cultural identity, she reports having a relatively stable “blended” or fused Catalan-Spanish identity. Accordingly, she often jokingly labels herself as “xarnega,” a formerly derogatory term used to describe immigrants to Catalunya coming from other parts of Spain and their children (Niño-Murcia & Rothman, 2008). However, she also describes her biculturalism in terms of “alternating” cultural frames, as she often alternates or switches between Catalan and Spanish languages, behaviors, and even identity components; depending on the cultural demands of the situation. Thus, researchers should consider to what extent the two labels “blended” and “alternating” tap into different components of the bicultural experience (i.e., identity in the case of “fused” and behaviors in the case of “alternating”) rather than different types of bicultural individuals.

III. Individual Difference in Bicultural Identity Integration

Phinney and Devich-Navarro’s (1997) study identified bicultural types differing in their cultural identification patterns and in how they perceived the relationship between the two cultures to which they belong (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2007). The individual difference dimension underlying differences between two of these types is best captured by the concept of Bicultural Identity Integration (or BII) (see Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Huynh, Nguyen, & Benet-Martínez, 2011 for reviews). BII is defined as the degree to which “biculturals perceive their mainstream and ethnic cultural identities as compatible and integrated vs. oppositional and difficult to integrate” (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002, p. 9). Typically measured using self-report questionnaires, biculturals high on BII (high BII) perceive overlap rather than disassociation between their two cultural orientations (sample items include “I am a Chinese-American” versus “I see myself simply as a Chinese in the U.S.”), and perceive harmony rather than tension between their two cultures (sample items include “I do not see conflict between Chinese and American ways of doing things” versus “I feel trapped between the two cultures” (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). In comparison, biculturals low on BII (low BII) perceive disassociation and tension between their two cultural orientations.

Bicultural identity integration clearly draws from previous acculturation work examining variations in acculturation patterns and biculturalism (LaFromboise et al., 1993; Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). However, whereas previous frameworks typically focus on individual differences in the cultural group(s) with which biculturals identify, how much they identify with those groups, and when they identify with those groups, BII taps into individuals’ perceptions and feelings about the relationship between their different cultural identities. The emphasis here is on subjective perceptions and experiences of cultural overlap and compatibility because, as was found in a study of over 7,000 acculturating adolescents in 13 countries, objective differences between ethnic and host cultures do not seem to relate to adjustment (Berry et al., 2006).

It is important to note also that both high and low BII’s endorse the mainstream (e.g., American) and ethnic (e.g., Chinese) cultures, even if not always equally, but differ in their ability to create a synergistic, integrated cultural identity. For example, high and low BII’s consistently emerge as similar in their endorsement of Berry’s integrative acculturation strategy (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Benet-Martínez, Lee, Lee, 2006; Benet-Martínez et al., 2002). However, compared with high BII’s, low BII’s tend to be less proficient in English and less identified with American culture. This pattern suggests that competence in the host, majority culture is a key component of BII.

Studies on BII (e.g., Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Miramontez, Benet-Martínez, & Nguyen, 2008) showed that BII is not a unitary construct as initially proposed (e.g., Benet-Martínez et al., 2002). Instead, BII involves two relatively independent psychological constructs, cultural harmony versus conflict and cultural blendedness versus compartmentalization, each representing unique aspects of the dynamic intersection between mainstream and ethnic cultural identities within bicultural individuals (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Cultural harmony versus conflict captures the degree of harmony versus tension or clash felt between the two cultural orientations.
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(e.g., “I find it easy to balance both Chinese and American cultures” versus “I feel caught between the two cultures”). Cultural blendedness versus compartmentalization, on the other hand, captures the degree of overlap versus dissociation or distance perceived between the two cultural orientations (e.g., “I feel part of a combined culture” versus “I am simply a Chinese who lives in the U.S.”). [See Table 2 in Benet-Martínez and Haritatos (2005) for original items and their factor structure, and the later section in this chapter for a discussion of the newly expanded Bicultural Identity Integration Scale–Version 2 or BIIS-2.]

Figure 1. An Integrative Psychological Model of Biculturalism (IPMB)

BII’s components of cultural harmony and blendedness are relatively independent, with correlations between the two scales ranging between 0.02 and 0.40. This suggests that these two constructs are formative (i.e., causal) rather than reflective (i.e., effect) indicators of BII (Bollen & Lennox, 1991). In other words, BII is not a latent construct with two resulting facets or narrower dimensions (cultural harmony and blendedness) but, rather, an observed construct emerging or resulting from (but not leading to) differences in cultural harmony and blendedness (see Figure 2 in Benet-Martínez, 2012). Thus, behaviors, attitudes, and feelings described by cultural researchers under the rubric of low BII (e.g., feelings of incompatibility or division between one’s two cultures), in fact, may be capturing the phenomenology resulting from the experience of cultural conflict and/or cultural compartmentalization (see also Figure 1 in Huynh, Nguyen et al., 2011).4

The development of BII within bicultural individuals likely varies depending on a number of factors, ranging from personality to the immediate social environment to the larger historical, political, and economic context of the cultural groups with which people identify (Huynh, Nguyen et al., 2011). For instance, the history and current status of one’s cultural group within the dominant culture may affect BII. Specifically, African Americans, as compared to Latinos and Asian Americans, come from a long and stable history in the United States, a common African American culture and identity, and the widespread recognition of their collective history, such that they are subjected less often to the perpetual foreigner stereotype by both in-group and out-group members (e.g., Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Devos & Banaji, 2005; Huynh, Devos, & Smalarz, 2011). These sociohistorical differences may predispose African Americans to be higher on BII, and Asian Americans or Latinos to be lower on BII (see Huynh, Nguyen, et al., 2011 for an extensive discussion of the development of BII).

Research on BII reports a positive association between BII and psychological well-being, even after controlling for trait neuroticism (Chen, Benet-Martínez, & Bond, 2008; Downie, Koestner, ElGeldi, & Cree, 2004). Cultural harmony and blendedness also are associated with different sets of personality, performance-related, and contextual antecedents (Benet-Martínez, 2012; Huynh, Nguyen et al., 2011), which we discuss later. Next, we review studies showing how BII influences psychological processes such as cultural frame switching, perceptions of the self and one’s cultural in-groups, knowledge bridging and creativity, cognitive complexity, and motivation.

Cultural Frame Switching

BII has been found to moderate the cultural frame switching process. High BIIs tend to assimilate to cultural cues and behave in the direction of the cues, whereas low BIIs tend to contrast against cultural cues and behave in the opposite direction of the cues. In a study of first-generation Asian Americans, Benet-Martínez et al. (2002) found that high BIIs assimilated to cultural cues by making more prototypical Asian attributions (external) when primed with Asian cues, and making more prototypical American attributions (internal) when primed with American cues. Surprisingly, low BIIs made more prototypically American attributions when primed with Asian cues, and more prototypically Asian attributions when primed with American cues. In other words, low BIIs exhibited what the socio-cognitive literature describes as “behavioral reactance” or a contrast or reverse priming effect (Dijksterhuis et al., 1998).
With a sample of first- and second-generation Asian American biculturals, Mok, Cheng, and Morris (2010) replicated this effect in a study examining how biculturals make decisions when conducting performance appraisals. High BII assimilated to cultural cues—when asked to evaluate employees with an Asian last name, they were more likely to attribute the employee’s performance to situational factors; when asked to evaluate employees with an American last name, they were more likely to attribute the employee’s performance to internal factors. However, low BII contrasted against the cultural cues and behaved in the opposite way. These findings were further replicated with a different sample of East-West biculturals: Taiwanese managers who had over 3 years of working experience in Western countries (Friedman, Liu, Chi, Hong, & Sung, 2011).

BII moderates cultural frame switching in representations of the self as well. After being primed with American (versus Asian) cues, Mok and Morris (2009) found that Asian American biculturals with high BII reported higher need for uniqueness and higher levels of extroversion (prototypical Western values and traits). Low BII exhibited the opposite trend, displaying a contrast effect. In other studies of Asian American biculturals, high BII reported higher perceived self-status and exhibited higher action tendencies (more prototypically Western responses) when exposed to American primes than when exposed to Asian primes, whereas low BII exhibited the opposite trend (Hsu & Galinsky, 2012; Hsu & Phillips, 2013). These findings indicate that both high and low BII biculturals engage in cultural frame switching; they both possess two cultural frames of reference and can switch their attributional styles, decisions, and self-perceptions in response to cultural cues. However, high and low BII tend to respond to cultural cues in different ways, with high BII often engaging in assimilative cultural frame switching and low BII often engaging in contrastive cultural frame switching.

Recent evidence sheds light on the underlying process by showing that high and low BII assimilate and contrast to different types of cultural cues. Cheng et al. (2006) exposed Asian American biculturals to positive and negative culturally stereotypical words (for example, “polite” and “reserved” are positive and negative stereotypes of Asians, respectively; “independent” and “arrogant” are positive and negative stereotypes of Americans, respectively), and found that high BII assimilated and low BII contrasted to the cultural cues only when the words were positive. Interestingly, the opposite occurred when the words were negatively valenced—that is, unlike previous studies, low BII assimilated to the cultural cues and high BII contrasted against the cultural cues. This suggests that biculturals may overprocess and correct for cultural cues that are inconsistent with their own subjective representations of their cultural identity. Low BII may only contrast to positive cultural cues because, relative to high BII, they have more conflicting, negative, and tension-laden associations with their cultural identities. Indeed, low BII Chinese American biculturals are more likely to endorse items such as “It is hard for me to feel proud to be Chinese;” “There are downsides of growing up as Chinese;” “I sometimes feel uncomfortable being perceived as a Chinese;” “I do not want to be limited by being American;” or “There are some aspects of American culture that I do not want to exemplify” (Zou, Morris, & Benet-Martínez, 2008). As such, words that prime positive aspects of culture, Asian or American, might appear more consonant, resulting in overprocessing, overcorrection, and reactance, which, in turn, leads to a contrast effect (Glaser & Banaji, 1999). However, negatively valenced cultural words are more consistent with low BII’s own experiences, and thus may not trigger these processes. The opposite may be true with high BII—their more positive associations with their cultural identities may lead them to overprocess negatively valenced cultural cues, leading them to engage in contrasting rather than assimilating cultural frame switching. This suggests that the motives of biculturals, for example, to affirm their own subjective experiences and beliefs about biculturalism, may be at play. Following the motive argument but taking a different perspective, Mok and Morris (2013) proposed that the assimilation and contrast effects exhibited by high and low BII respectively, are mediated by the motive of self-protection, that is, to protect their primed identity from being undermined and excluded in a given context. In the section on motivation, we discuss this issue in more detail.

One important caveat should be kept in mind when considering this literature on the moderating effects of BII on cultural frame switching. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, BII has been shown to encompass two dimensions of cultural harmony and blendedness, but much of this work used an earlier measure of BII in which these two dimensions were not clearly differentiated. In subsequent work, some studies have found moderating effects using the cultural harmony subscale of BII; some studies have found moderating effects using the blendedness subscale, and others have found moderating effects using both subscales. In short, the operationalization of BII have varied in this line of work, and the different processes cultural harmony and blendedness may play in cultural frame switching are not well understood.
The Social Self

BII has been found to relate to biculturals’ perception of their “social” selves, or how they fit in with others in their social worlds. In two separate studies, Miramontez et al. (2008) asked Latino biculturals to describe themselves, and a typical person from each of their related cultural groups (i.e., a typical Latino and a typical Anglo American). They found that the degree of overlap between the personality traits ascribed to the self, a typical Latino individual, and a typical Anglo American individual was consistently and positively associated to BII, and more specifically, to the component of cultural blendedness (please see more detail for the components of BII in “IV. Measurement of BII” later in this chapter). To the extent that the ascribed traits reflect cultural self- and group-based stereotypes, this finding supports Benet-Martínez and Haritatos’s (2005) view that the blendedness component of BII captures the more perceptual (versus affective) elements of the acculturation experience. Perhaps biculturals’ feelings of having a blended or hyphenated cultural identity is at least in part driven by their perceptions that the members of their two cultures share meaningful characteristics (e.g., see Table 3 in Miramontez et al., 2008). The links found between BII blendedness and the overlaps between the three types of personality also support notions from social identity theory highlighting the moderating role of identity structure on social projection and self-stereotyping processes (Cho & Knowles, 2013; Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994).

Miramontez et al.’s (2008) study has implications that go beyond the understanding of bicultural identity and social identity processes. The psychological distance between the attributes individuals ascribe to themselves and members of their cultural in-groups affects the nature of their intergroup attitudes and behaviors. Biculturals with blended cultural identities, by virtue of having perceptions of their ethnic and mainstream cultural groups that are more overlapping, are more likely to have more positive, inclusive, diverse, and equitable attitudes towards individuals representative of these groups, and thus reduced in-group/out-group biases and stereotypes (Urban & Miller, 1998). Further, overlapping cultural identities and stereotypes may reduce the importance of any one cultural or social identity for satisfying an individual’s need for belonging and self-definition (Brewer, 1991), further reducing the motivational base for in-group biases.

BII also relates to actual patterns of social relationships among biculturals. A social network study with first-generation Chinese Americans (Mok, Morris, Benet-Martínez, & Karakitapoglu-Aygun, 2007) showed that biculturals with high levels of BII not only have more non-co-ethnic friends than those with low BII, but they also have higher interconnectedness between these friends (these results held after controlling for strength of cultural identifications). A similar pattern also was found in samples of Pakistani, Ecuadorian, Romanian, and Moroccan first-generation immigrants in Spain (Benet-Martínez, Repke, & Maciocco, 2013). In this study, immigrants with a higher degree of BII had social networks that were more diverse (both in terms of ethnicity and language usage) and included fewer co-ethnic members.

In summary, it appears that the way biculturals organize and perceive their cultural identities—blended versus disassociated, harmonious versus tension-laden—is related to (a) their perceptions of how they would fit with different cultural groups, (b) their perceptions of what their different cultural groups are like and (c) how they fit with each other, as well as their actual social relations with members of these groups.

Knowledge Bridging and Creative Performance

BII also has been found to moderate how biculturals perform on complex tasks that require creativity. For example, Cheng, Sanchez-Burks, and Lee (2008) asked a sample of first-generation Asian Americans to generate new and original dishes for a hypothetical restaurant with either Asian or American ingredients only, or with both Asian and American ingredients. The results showed that high BII (specifically on the component of cultural blendedness) generated more numerous and more creative dishes than low BII, but only in the condition when both Asian and American ingredients were available. When only ingredients from a single culture were available, there were no differences between high and low BII, suggesting that high BII biculturals are not inherently more open minded, creative, or knowledgeable.

Replicating Cheng et al.’s (2008) findings, Saad and colleagues (Saad, Damien, Benet-Martínez, Moons, & Robins, 2013) found that Chinese-American biculturals with higher BII (again, this is especially true for cultural blendedness) exhibited higher creativity in bicultural than monocultural contexts, and this effect was mediated by ideational fluency or number of creative ideas produced (see Figure 1 in Saad et al., 2013). This supports the idea...
that, when cues from both cultures are present, biculturals with high BII blendedness are more adept at activating their cultural schemas simultaneously and drawing ideas from the knowledge sets associated with each of these schemas, leading to more ideas and, in turn, higher creative performance (Simonton, 2004; Weisberg, 1999). Biculturals with low BII blendedness, on the other hand, keep their cultural schemas separated, and as such have a more difficult time bridging between and drawing from the two schema-related knowledge sets. These findings have clear societal implications. Biculturals with blended cultural identities will experience enhanced creativity in settings and organizations that foster or allow for culturally mixed (i.e., multicultural) contexts.

Cognitive Complexity

As mentioned earlier, biculturals with high BII blendedness are better able to simultaneously activate and integrate their two cultural knowledge sets in creativity tasks. Recent research suggests that this may be mediated by cognitive complexity—that is, those with a blended bicultural identity have higher levels of cognitive complexity, which in turn promotes higher levels of creativity (Tadmor, Galinsky, Maddux, 2012). However, there is also research suggesting the opposite—that is, high BII might be related to lower levels of cognitive complexity. For example, Benet-Martínez et al. (2006) analyzed the content of written text generated by a sample of first-generation Asian American biculturals who were asked to describe their cultures (after being exposed to Chinese or American cultural images), or in the neutral condition, to describe different types of landscapes. These descriptions were rated on multiple dimensions of cognitive complexity, such as the number of ideas, whether they contained multiple perspectives, whether the perspectives were compared, and whether differences were reconciled (see Table 1 and Appendix A in Benet-Martínez et al., 2006). The results showed that, compared to high BIIs, low BIIs exhibited higher levels of cognitive complexity when describing their cultures, but this difference was not apparent in contexts that were not culturally laden. (Again, it should be noted that this study used an earlier measure of BII that did not clearly differentiate between blendedness and harmony.) Consistent with these findings, Tadmor, Tetlock, and Peng (2009) showed that biculturals who experienced higher levels of cultural conflict (or lower BII) exhibited greater cognitive complexity.

The higher complexity of low BIIs’ cultural representations could be explained by several mechanisms. First, it is possible that the cultural description task might have reminded low BIIs of their conflicting cultural orientation and the emotional unease associated with their bicultural experiences (e.g., feelings of being torn between two different cultural orientations). These negative feelings, in turn, may make low BIIs more analytical and critical in their cultural descriptions, resulting in higher complexity (Tripodi & Bieri, 1966). Furthermore, low BIIs’ uneasiness about possible competing cultural norms might make them more vigilant in cultural domains (Miller & Bieri, 1965), which also could lead to higher cognitive complexity.

How can we reconcile the finding that, on cultural tasks, low BIIs exhibit higher levels of cognitive complexity but lower levels of knowledge bridging or creativity? One possibility is that thinking about cultures in a complex manner does not necessarily facilitate bridging and integration of culturally discrepant knowledge sets. On one hand, high BIIs' fluid integration of disparate cultural knowledge sets or cultural identities might facilitate creativity, but on the other hand, this process might require a certain level of simplification of cultural schemas. In contrast, overly complex representations of culture exhibited by low BIIs may actually inhibit integration of cultural schemas and associated knowledge sets.

Motivation

Perhaps the crux of understanding the psychology of BII, or biculturalism more broadly, lies in the psychological motives of biculturals. There is good reason to think that high and low BIIs have different needs when interacting with their social worlds, and are motivated to achieve different goals. These motivational differences in turn drive how they react to cultural cues, tap into culturally related knowledge sets, and perceive themselves and others in their cultural groups.

For example, motivation is crucial for understanding and predicting when and why people assimilate or contrast to social cues. Aarts and Dijksterhuis (2003) found that priming the “library” situation led participants to assimilate and behave more quietly, yet this was the case only for participants who were motivated to visit the library. Similarly, people with positive attitudes toward the elderly assimilated or walked more slowly when primed for the elderly, but people with negative attitudes toward the elderly showed the opposite effect (Cesario, Plaks, & Higgins, 2003).
Recently, in a series of scale development and validation studies, Huynh (2009) refined the measurement of BII by developing the Bicultural Identity Integration Scale–Version 2 (BIIS-2). After generating new items using qualitative data (open-ended essays written by self-identified bicultural college students) and having these items evaluated by
subject-matter experts and pilot testers, Huynh (2009) administered 45 new items of the BIIS-2 to an ethnically diverse group of more than 1,000 self-identified bicultural college students. Approximately half the participants (55.5%) were women, and the mean age of the sample was 19.3 years. The majority of participants were either Asian Americans (48.6%) or Latinos (32.1%), and most participants were either first- (34.6%, $M = 10.6$ years in the United States) or second- (55.9%) generation Americans.

The final BIIS-2 consists of 19 items rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree; see Huynh, Nguyen et al., 2011; for sample items). These items yield reliable (blendedness versus compartmentalization $\alpha = .86$ for 9 items; harmony versus conflict $\alpha = .81$ for 10 items) and stable ($n = 240$; $M = 6.93$ days, $SD = 0.90$ days; Time 1 and Time 2 correlations: $r = .74 < r < .78$) scores across ethnic groups. Confirmatory factor analyses establish the two-factor structure of BIIS-2, as well as its measurement invariance across ethnic groups (Asian American and Latino subgroups) and generational groups (first and second generation). Across groups, the blendedness and harmony components were moderately correlated ($r = .36$), but distinguishable in exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. In addition, using path analyses, Huynh (2009) found that various personality and acculturation variables predict individuals’ perceptions about their dual identities (i.e., BII), which, in turn, influences adjustment. Specifically, biculturals with the highest levels of BII harmony are those who are more emotionally stable (or less neurotic), more likely to have harmonious intercultural relations, less likely to have culture-related work challenges, less likely to have linguistic problems in English, and more likely to live in culturally diverse areas. Those with the highest levels of BII blendedness are less likely to have linguistic problems in English, more strongly identified with their ethnic culture and American culture, and more likely to prefer the integration (versus separation, marginalization, or assimilation) acculturation strategy. Moreover, biculturals who are emotionally stable and perceive high BII harmony (but not BII blendedness) report the lowest frequency of depressive symptoms.

V. Going beyond Ethnic Cultures in Understanding Biculturalism

Although the majority of studies examining the socio-cognitive processes underlying the management of multicultural identities were done with Asian American samples, there are a growing number of studies examining BII with other ethnic samples such as Latino or African American samples (Guan, Lee, & Cole, 2012; Miramontez et al., 2008). Moreover, BII has been extended to examine multiple (more than two) identities, as in the case of multiracial identity integration (Cheng & Lee, 2009) or multicultural identity integration for triculturals such as Chinese-Canadians in English-French Quebec (Downie et al., 2004). There also is evidence that the concept of BII can be fruitfully applied to understand the management of identities unrelated to cultural or ethnic groups, such as the integration of professional, sexual, gender, or religious identities to better understand how people perceive and manage their multiple and sometimes conflicting social identities (Benet-Martínez, 2012; Cheng, Darling, et al., 2008; Huynh et al., 2011; Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007). Specifically, the same assimilation and contrast effects found with BII have been observed in studies examining other types of identities. For example, like biculturals, female workers in male-dominant professions can be confronted with incompatible and sometimes conflicting norms and expectations arising from their gender and professional identities. A study with such female professionals found that identity integration between their gender and professional identities (Gender-Professional Identity Integration or G-PII rather than BII) moderated their attention and behavioral tendencies (Sacharin, Lee, & Gonzalez, 2009). When exposed to female identity cues; female businesspersons with high G-PII exhibited identity assimilation effects and acted in ways consistent with stereotypes of women, such as paying more attention to and utilizing more relational than task-related information (Sacharin et al., 2009), and negotiating for a lower salary (Cheng & Tan, 2012). The opposite was true when they were exposed to professional cues. However, female professionals with low G-PII exhibited contrast effects in response to identity cues. They behaved in ways that were inconsistent with stereotypical expectations of women when primed with female identity cues, paying more attention to and using more task-related information than relational information (Sacharin et al., 2009), as well as negotiating for higher salaries (Cheng & Tan, 2012).

Similarly, Mok and Morris (2012a) found that female law students exhibited different attentional styles that correspond to their G-PII levels and identity cues. Congruent with prior G-PII research, high G-PII female law students assimilated to identity cues; They paid more attention to the target (which is congruent with their professional training) when primed with professional identity cues, and paid more attention to the context (which is congruent with their female identity) when primed with gender identity cues. However, low G-PII female law students
exhibited a contrast effect: They paid more attention to the context when primed with professional identity cues and paid more attention to the target when primed with female identity cues.

VI. Possible Antecedents of Variations in Bicultural Identity

It is clear that BII significantly moderates the mechanisms underlying this process. As such, it is important to examine the antecedents of these individual differences. Specifically, how can we better predict who will develop high BII versus low BII? The small but growing line of inquiry that addresses this question has identified several important individual—and contextual-level factors that influence the development of bicultural types. We turn to these factors in detail next.

Individual Factors

Three types of individual-level factors have been linked to differences in biculturalism. First, researchers have examined the demographic differences between different types of biculturals. One of the more extensively examined factors in this group is generational status. For example, Tsai, Ying, and Lee (2000) compared three groups of Chinese-American biculturals including immigrants who migrated to the United States after age 12, early immigrants who migrated to the United States before or at age 12, and American-born Chinese. The three groups showed different patterns of relationships between their cultural engagement (that is, participation in culture-related activities) and cultural identification. For American-born Chinese, there was no correlation between engagement with Chinese culture and American culture, but these were negatively correlated among both early and late immigrants. For early immigrants, engagement in American cultural activities, such as speaking English, was negatively related to Chinese identification, but this was not the case for late immigrants. For late immigrants, engagement in Chinese cultural activities was negatively related to American identification, but not for early immigrants. For American-born Chinese, engagement in Asian cultural activities positively predicted Chinese identification, and engagement in American cultural activities similarly predicted American identification, though engagement in either Chinese or American cultural activities did not predict identification with the “other” culture.

Tsai, Ying, and Lee (2000) also found an interesting parallel between language competence and cultural engagement. Not surprisingly, American-born Chinese’s English language competence is highest, followed by early immigrants, and then late immigrants. The opposite trend is true for Chinese language competence. The same pattern is revealed in the three groups’ engagement in social activities in respective cultural domains—with American-born Chinese being most engaged with American cultural activities, followed by early immigrants and then late immigrants, with the opposite trend for engagement with Chinese cultural activities. This coupling between language competence and cultural engagement has been documented in other studies as well. For example, research shows that bilingual programs that facilitate language competence among immigrants positively predict bicultural competence (see LaFromboise et al., 1993, for a review).

Second-generation biculturals are higher in BII, on both of its components (Cheng, 2005; Huynh, 2009). Among first-generation Asian Americans, BII’s blendedness component (but not harmony) is positively related to the length of time they have lived in the United States, as well as their proficiency in English (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Huynh, 2009). Interestingly, high and low BII have consistently emerged as similar in their endorsement of Berry’s integrative acculturation strategy (Benet-Martínez, Lee, Lee, 2006; Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Huynh, 2009). These studies suggest that bicultural experiences indeed differ across generational status. That said, it is also important to note that the effects of BII on cultural frame switching have been observed across different generational groups—ranging from sojourners working and studying in a second culture for a substantial amount of time (e.g., Friedman et al., 2011), first-generation immigrants who were born and grew up in one culture and now live in another culture (e.g., Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Cheng et al., 2006), and second-generation immigrants who were born to first-generation immigrant parents from a minority culture but were raised in the mainstream culture (Cheng & Lee, 2011).

Second, individual differences in bicultural identity are related to personality traits. Among the Big Five personality traits, high BII are more open to new experiences and less neurotic than low BII (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Chen et al., 2008; Huynh, 2009). Specifically, biculturals who are more open to new experiences perceive less distance and disparity between their two cultural identities, whereas biculturals who are more neurotic
perceive more tension and conflict between their two cultural identities.

Third, whether individuals become biculturals out of their own will and personal choice (e.g., voluntary migrants or ascribed biculturals) or not (e.g., involuntary migrants or prescribed biculturals) may also influence bicultural identity. Ascribed biculturals, such as immigrants who chose to live in another country, may experience more autonomy in their contact with and participation in different cultures than prescribed biculturals, and thus they may be less likely to reject or react against bicultural identities or influences (Brehm, 1966, 1989; Chartrand, Dalton, & Fitzsimons, 2007). Supporting this idea, Berry and his colleagues (Berry, Kim, Power, Young & Bujaki, 1989; Berry & Sam, 1997) found that immigrants with ascribed bicultural status (who have higher mobility and higher levels of choice in engaging in contact with other cultural groups) are more likely to adopt biculturalism as their acculturation strategy. Along the same vein, Hanek, Lee, and Brannen (in press) showed that multicultural individuals who started living overseas as young children—and, thus, it is unlikely that they have moved out of their own autonomous choice—were less open to integrating other cultural perspectives and activities into their own identity.

It is important to note that most of the evidence regarding the relationship between individual-level factors and bicultural type is correlational and cannot be used to infer causal relationships. For example, factors such as bilingualism often precede the development of biculturalism, and it may be reasonable to infer that the former might influence the latter. However, these factors certainly reinforce each other, and it is difficult to determine the causal direction. That said, there has been interesting research from which causal inferences can be cautiously drawn. For example, research on bilingual programs for children and adolescents provides evidence that bicultural competence and bicultural identity can be increased by enhancing bilingualism (Edwards, 1981; Fishman, 1989; Thomas, 1983). Similarly, using path analyses of correlational data, Benet-Martínez and Haritatos (2005) demonstrate that personality traits may be antecedents of BII. As we describe in more detail in the next section, recent research using experimental manipulations provides preliminary evidence that prior positive versus negative bicultural experience influences biculturals’ level of BII such that more positive bicultural experience leads to higher BII and more negative bicultural experience leads to lower BII (Cheng & Lee, 2009; 2013).

Contextual Factors

In addition to individual factors, there is also evidence showing that the culture context—cultural diversity, tolerance, and cultural relations in one’s community—can contribute to individual differences in bicultural type. Acculturation stress (e.g., communication fluency, intercultural relations, discrimination, and cultural isolation) has been found to predict BII (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Huynh, 2009). Specifically, higher levels of BII are predicted by having better intercultural relations (such as having fewer disagreements with others because one is “too American” or “too ethnic”), having fewer experiences of discrimination (such as being mistreated due to one’s ethnicity), and not feeling culturally isolated (such as living in an environment that is more culturally diverse; Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005).

Indeed, acculturation stresses can arise when biculturals are categorized by others as out-group members on the basis of their skin color, accent, or choice of clothing (Killian & Johnson, 2006). First-generation immigrants not only face the challenges of learning a second culture, they often have to deal with discrimination that arises from their new racial or ethnic minority status. Even second-generation immigrants with no linguistic or cultural issues are not immune from these stresses of racial and ethnic discrimination. For example, a Japanese American may feel rejected by an Anglo American who questions where he is really from, or he may feel rejected by another Japanese American who criticizes his Japanese language abilities (see Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Giguère, Lalonde, & Lou, 2010; Huynh et al., 2011; Sue et al., 2007 for related work on the perpetual foreigner stereotype and other racial microaggressions).

Additionally, issues related to family and relationships are common sources of conflict for many first- and second-generation biculturals (Phinney, Kim-Jo, Osorio, & Vilhjalmsson, 2005). For example, choosing a romantic partner who is either from one’s ethnic culture or from mainstream culture often entails fulfilling the normative expectations associated with one identity at the expense of the other. Children of immigrants encounter additional types of interpersonal conflict in their relationships with their parents. If the child and his or her parents do not share the same cultural expectation—say, if the child has adapted to mainstream culture whereas the parents have not, or if the child identifies closely with the ethnic culture whereas the parents have adopted the mainstream culture—
interpersonal conflicts may occur in the parent-child relationship (Giguère et al., 2010; Wu & Chao, 2005).

These experiences of intercultural conflict can influence biculturals’ identification with and engagement in the cultural groups with which they are associated, as well as their perceptions of compatibility between the two different cultural groups (e.g., Berry et al., 1989; Birman, 1994; Downie et al., 2004; LaFromboise et al., 1993; Padilla, 1980). Specifically, positive intercultural experiences can engender perceptions of compatibility, leading to higher levels of BII or cultural harmony, but negative intercultural conflict can engender perceptions of tension, leading to lower levels of BII (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). To examine this, Cheng and Lee (2013) asked a sample of Asian Americans to recall either positive or negative bicultural experiences, and found that biculturals who recalled positive bicultural experiences reported higher levels of bicultural pride (e.g., feeling good and proud of being bicultural) as well as higher levels of BII, in both blendedness and harmony. To the extent that all bicultural individuals have both positive and negative bicultural experiences, making some of these experiences more accessible can impact biculturals’ perceived compatibility between their two cultural identities.

Interaction of Individual and Contextual Antecedents of BII

In many situations, individual and contextual factors influence each other or interact to influence biculturalism. For example, demographic factors such as age of immigration can influence biculturals’ linguistic competence, which, in turn, can influence contextual characteristics such as the quality of their interpersonal relationships with people in the mainstream culture. Alternatively, contextual factors such as contentious intergroup relations can reduce people’s voluntary bicultural status. Further, individuals’ personality tendencies influence not only their level of BII but also the way they cope with interpersonal conflicts that arise from their biculturalism—such as conflicts that arise from discrimination, from family, and from friends (see Figure 1 in Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). The various individual- and contextual-level factors discussed in this section are likely to relate to each other in complex ways to influence the development and changes in bicultural experiences and identities. Understanding the complex interplay of these factors will ultimately help us to explain the very different phenomenological experiences of multiculturalism reported in the popular and academic literatures.

VII. An Integrative Model

Drawing from the research findings we have discussed so far, we propose the Integrative Psychological Model of Biculturalism (IPMB) to illustrate how key psychological, social, and contextual factors interact to influence biculturals’ perceptual, cognitive, and behavioral processes. The model, presented in Figure 1, shows that individual factors (including demographic variables such as age of immigration, time spent in the second culture, personality traits, language ability, and perceived bicultural status) interact with contextual factors (including perceived acculturation stress, interpersonal and intergroup conflicts related to biculturalism, immediate social environment, and objective cultural distance such as mean national differences on universal values dimensions), leading to variations in bicultural identity (including differences in BII).

Individual differences in bicultural identity in turn interact with cultural cues in the context to influence biculturals’ psychological processes (e.g., Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Cheng et al., 2008). These effects have been described in earlier parts of this chapter, and we will not repeat them here. To summarize, there are five possible outcomes resulting from the interaction effect of BII and cultural cues. First, BII and cultural cues interact to activate cultural frame switching, leading to assimilation or contrast effects depending on the congruence between the contextual stimuli and personal bicultural experiences (e.g., Benet-Martínez et al., 2002). Second, BII and cultural cues interact to make salient specific cultural identities, leading biculturals to change their self-concepts (e.g., Mok & Morris, 2009). Third, BII and cultural cues interact to make bicultural knowledge more or less accessible in task performance (e.g., Cheng et al., 2008). Fourth, BII and cultural cues interact to affect biculturals’ level of cognitive complexity in processing culture-related information (e.g., Benet-Martínez et al., 2006). Fifth, BII and cultural cues interact to activate different identity motivations to influence identification with and attachment to different cultural groups (e.g., Zou et al., 2008).

Bicultural identity also influences important individual outcomes, vis-à-vis the various psychological processes outlined earlier. For example, involvement with two cultures leads to social and cognitive flexibility, having multiple behavioral repertoires, and higher levels of cultural competency (Tadmor, Tetlock & Peng, 2009). This provides a
resource that buffers biculturals against common acculturation stresses such as anxiety or interpersonal conflicts (Padilla, 2006). Alternatively, to the extent that bicultural identity influences knowledge bridging, this, in turn, can influence academic performance, cultural competence, creativity, and self-esteem (e.g., Cheng et al., 2008; Fisher, 1974; LaFromboise et al., 1993; Leung, Maddux, Galinsky, & Chiu, 2008; Maddux & Galinsky, 2009; Saad et al., 2013). Indeed, in a study of employees in a large multinational organization, Fitzsimmons (2013) found that multicultural individuals exhibited higher levels of cultural metacognition (or awareness and recognition of how cultural differences are at play), which, in turn, facilitated their performance at work. A recent meta-analysis by Nguyen and Benet-Martínez (2013) provides firm evidence for this association between biculturalism and positive psychological and behavioral outcomes. Across the 83 studies and 23,197 participants, biculturalism was found to have a significant and positive relationship with both psychological adjustment (e.g., life satisfaction, positive affect, self-esteem) and sociocultural adjustment (e.g., academic achievement, career success, social skills, lack of behavioral problems). Further, this biculturalism-adjustment link was significantly stronger than the association between each cultural orientation (dominant or ethnic) and adjustment.

VIII. Conclusion: Future Directions

Multiculturalism is not a new psychological phenomenon. In the 1500s, Habsburg Emperor Charles V is reputed to have said, “I speak Spanish to God, Italian to women, French to men, and German to my horse” (Brimm, 2010). Today, it is even more common for people to be able to speak different languages, adopt different cultural perspectives, and even assume different cultural identities depending on situational demands. As Nguyen and Benet-Martínez (2013) demonstrated in their meta-analysis, multicultural or bicultural competency is increasingly considered a key to success. For example, Carlos Ghosn, CEO of Nissan-Renault, not only has a multicultural demographic background (he was born in Brazil to French-Lebanese parents, grew up in Beirut, was educated in France, and currently lives in Japan and France), but his ability to identify with, participate in, and perform well in multiple cultural settings has made him a household name in the business world. As the first non-Japanese to lead a Japanese automotive manufacturer, Ghosn not only turned the company around, but also personally gained wide acceptance in Japan, a culture that is typically skeptical of foreign influences. There is a popular Japanese superhero comic book about Ghosn’s life, and a bento box (Japanese lunch box) named after Ghosn is popular in Tokyo restaurants. Multicultural competency is not only necessary for emperors or CEOs of multinational companies—people of all nationalities, occupations, social classes, and ages must live in and work well within multiple cultures. As such, understanding how people can thrive within this environment is critical.

In this chapter, we drew upon existing theoretical and empirical work on biculturalism to develop an Integrative Psychological Model of Biculturalism (IPMB). This model proposes that biculturals vary greatly in how they psychologically manage their bicultural identities and orientations, and these individual differences have important implications for how they function in their social worlds. This model has significance for research. We have identified several important questions for future research throughout the chapter, and we underscore the most critical avenues of future research below. First, research on biculturalism has been primarily conducted in North American contexts (United States and Canada) and with individuals of Asian descent. There is good reason for this. The bulk of cross-cultural psychological research has been done comparing East Asians with European Americans, so psychologists have ample knowledge about the values and behavioral norms associated with each culture. Although some of the findings from this literature has been replicated with other bicultural samples such as Latino and African Americans, whether the findings from Asian American biculturals can be generalized to other bicultural samples remains unclear.

One might assume that bicultural types and their effects might be similar across all types of biculturals, but there also is reason to believe otherwise. For example, even though East Asian and Western European cultures might present opposing or differing cultural values, other cultures have more similar values, and identifying with these cultures may not necessarily lead to perceptions of conflict or distance. Israel and the United States, for instance, are geographically distant, but people in these countries embrace similar values (Schwartz, 2004). As such, the experience of acculturation and cultural integration among Israeli American biculturals might be very different from that of Asian American biculturals (see also Huynh, Nguyen et al., 2011 for a discussion of the role of objective cultural distance in biculturalism). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, African Americans have had a long and stable history of residing in America, and their experience of biculturalism may also differ compared to Asian Americans.
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Values aside, cultures are embedded in a larger political-historical context that affects whether and how multicultural individuals integrate their identities. Some cultures have had an extended history of warfare and animosity between them or long-held stigmas and negative stereotypes of each other, which can also undermine integration. For example, Arabs living in Israel often have great difficulty integrating their Arabic and Israeli cultural identities, despite embracing similar cultural values (Roccas, Klar, Liviatan, 2006). Other cultures, such as Japan, have a culturally insular climate that is generally not welcoming of external cultural influences. Like the nonsettler cultures described earlier in this chapter, biculturals in this context may have a very difficult time integrating their multiple cultural identities even if cultural values are similar.

Relatedly, future research should examine biculturalism in multicultural contexts where migration is more recent, such as in Europe. Compared to the often-studied North American and East Asian cultures, majority and minority cultural groups in Europe (e.g., Middle Eastern, North African, East European) have different historical, political, economic, and psychological characteristics (Kitayama, Park, Sevincer, Karasawa, & Uskul, 2009). Importantly, the traditionally immigrant-receiving social context of the United States and Canada differs in very meaningful ways from the European context, where immigration is historically more recent, and where the notions of cultural diversity and multiculturalism are not obvious components of past and present collective identities (Benet-Martínez, 2012). In short, the psychological dynamics underlying multiculturalism are necessarily culture-specific to some extent, and future bicultural research needs to include different types of bicultural samples, and also take into account the broader context of intercultural relations.

Second, although there is a growing literature showing that individual differences in biculturalism matter, much less is known about the factors contributing to these differences. It might be the case that biculturals with high and low BII have different developmental trajectories. For example, low BII biculturals might have encountered more acculturation stresses early on. Alternatively, low BII biculturals might have been socialized by their parents to perceive more conflict and distance between their cultural identities. In that sense, BII might be passed on from generation to generation. These socialization experiences might have led low BII biculturals to have stable and chronic beliefs about the lack of harmony and blendedness between their cultural identities.

It might also be the case that proximal contextual factors affect BII. For example, biculturals living in neighborhoods or communities that are rife with intergroup conflicts are more likely to believe that their cultural identities are disparate and in conflict. The presence or absence of multiple cultural cues in the environment can further affect how bicultural identities are managed. For instance, there is an increasing number of Asian Americans who are international adoptees (e.g., Chinese or Korean children adopted by Americans). They often grow up in environments where there are few cultural cues related to their ethnic/birth culture, and as such may not engage in the type of fluid cultural frame switching observed in many Asian American biculturals (Lee, 2003).

Indeed, we know very little about differences in the development of bicultural identities between prescribed biculturals (such as second-generation immigrants who were born to parents from one culture and were raised in another culture), and ascribed biculturals (such as the sojourners who work and study abroad for a certain amount of time, or first-generation immigrants who were born and grew up in one culture and decided to move to a second culture). There may be a critical developmental period for identifying with a new culture, such that exposure to another culture in different life stages may lead to the formation of different bicultural types. Supporting this idea, a recent study of multicultural individuals with varied experiences (including first- and second-generation immigrants, sojourners, expatriates) found that multiculturals who have lived in more than three different cultures before they were 19 were not only more likely to have a marginal bicultural identity (where they identity or engage with none of the cultures with which they are associated), but were also less motivated to learn about and work with people from different cultures (Hanek, Lee, & Brannen, in press). It may be the case that early and sustained exposure to other cultures can disrupt the development of strong cultural identities and their associated behaviors and motivations, especially if the multicultural experiences are prescribed rather than ascribed. Understanding how different forms of bicultural identity develop is clearly an important question future research needs to address.

Third, it appears that the Integrative Psychological Model of Biculturalism (IPMB) can be applied to understand how people generally manage multiple, conflicting identities. Any social group with which individuals identify—gender, professional, or religious groups—has a distinct culture with prescriptive values, norms, and expectations. To that end, many people may belong to multiple groups with potentially conflicting identities. Besides multiculturals, this might include women in male-dominated professions or men in female-dominant professions (e.g., female physicists...
or male nurses), people in ethnic-atypical professions (e.g., Asian NBA players or Latino engineers), working professionals who are parents, or homosexuals who are in the military (Cheng et al., 2008; Hodges & Park, 2013). Many more examples exist. To the extent that all people have multiple social identities with conflicting values and demands, our integrative model may be useful for describing how people, in general, engage in identity management. Again, future research is needed to examine the boundary conditions of the IPBM and the extent to which the model can be used to examine how different types of identities—culture, gender, professional, religion, political, and so forth—are psychologically managed.

Fourth, it is likely that the relationships between bicultural identity structure and outcomes are moderated by the fit between biculturals’ personal experiences and cultural cues in the context. For example, biculturals with high and low BII exhibit assimilation and contrast effects, respectively, but it is not clear whether assimilation or contrast is more adaptive. One can argue that, through assimilation, high BII can better accommodate to the expectations of the cultural context, and, therefore, may be more adaptive. However, one also can argue that low BII biculturals’ low conformity to contextual cues make them less susceptible to the demands of external cultural influence, and as such facilitate performance in tasks that require one to stand out (Mok & Morris, 2010). Delineating more clearly how BII predicts important outcomes, and how this relationship is moderated by particular socio-cognitive processes, cultural cues, and situational requirements, should be an urgent agenda for future research on multicultural identity.

The main contention of the Integrative Psychological Model of Biculturalism (IPMB)—the idea that variations in bicultural identity matter—also has important practical implications. Understanding how we can change the way individuals manage their bicultural identities may be an important step to developing interventions and programs that will help biculturals thrive in today’s global world. For example, we discussed the findings that biculturals with low BII tend to contrast away from cultural cues. It is not difficult to imagine the negative effects of this behavioral tendency. For example, an Asian American bicultural individual may have trouble fitting in if he/she thinks, feels, and behaves more like an Asian with a group of Americans, and does the opposite when interacting with a group of Asians. Alternatively, we also discussed findings showing that low BII biculturals are more cognitively complex when processing culturally laden information. This suggests that they may be more effective in tasks in which in-depth and multifaceted analysis of multicultural perspectives is important for success.

Being able to increase and decrease BII in different situations may be a helpful intervention for these biculturals (e.g., Cheng & Lee, 2013; Mok & Morris, 2012b). As mentioned earlier, simply asking biculturals to recall positive bicultural experiences led to higher BII (Cheng & Lee, 2013). This suggests that making salient the positive aspects of one’s bicultural experiences, rather than dwelling on the problems and obstacles, may go a long way toward developing perceptions of compatibility and integration in bicultural identities, thereby increasing BII. When the situation calls for people to blend in and behave in ways that are consistent with cultural expectations, being able to increase biculturals’ level of BII, even if only temporarily, may be beneficial. Meanwhile, making salient the inherent conflicts and differences between cultural groups can lead to short-term decreases in BII, which might be helpful for tasks that require one to stand out and act differently from normative expectations, or tasks that require highly complex cultural analyses. Future research in this area will facilitate the design and implementation of social practices and cultural enhancement programs that both individuals and institutions can use to help biculturals leverage their cultural identities in ways that facilitate their well-being and social adaptiveness. With these goals in mind, multiculturally competent individuals like Carlos Ghosn may not represent extraordinary talents, but may well be what we would generally expect of today’s global citizens.

References


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Cultural Psychology, 44, 122–159.


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Notes:

(1) Catalan Institution for Research and Advanced Studies

(2) Hong et al. (2007) define culture as “a loosely organized network of knowledge that is produced, distributed, and reproduced among a collection of interconnected people” (p. 326).

(3) Behaviors differing across cultural groups can also be understood from this framework. According to the “culture-as-situated-cognition” framework (Oyserman, Sorensen, Reber, Chen, & Sannum, 2009), cross-cultural group differences in behavior are due to the cross-national difference in the likelihood that particular mindsets will be cued at a particular moment in time. Institutions, media, folklore, and practices within each culture drive the types of cues and their ubiquity, and thus the mindsets that will be more frequently cued.

(4) Note that although BII is typically conceptualized as a relatively stable individual difference tapping a bicultural’s overall feelings and perceptions regarding the compatibility and integration of his/her dual cultural orientations, like most other individual difference constructs, BII can also be a state emerging from the interaction of the person and his/her audience and context. In this vein, BII is also malleable (Mok & Morris, 2012b) and reactive (Wiley & Deaux, 2011).

(5) The low reliabilities sometimes obtained with BII-1 may be explained by the ratio of content diversity (high) / short scale length (4 items) that characterizes each subscale. When item content within a scale is heterogeneous and the scale is short, the mean inter-item correlation is significantly lowered, leading to a lower alpha (for a discussion of this psychometric issue, see John & Benet-Martínez, 2000).

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