

# More Than the Sum of Its Parts: A Transformative Theory of Biculturalism

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Alexandria L. West<sup>1</sup>, Rui Zhang<sup>2</sup>, Maya Yampolsky<sup>3</sup>,  
and Joni Y. Sasaki<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

With the rise of globalization, culture mixing increasingly occurs not only between groups and individuals belonging to different cultures but also within individuals. Biculturals, or people who are part of two cultures, are a growing population that has been studied in recent years; yet, there is still much to learn about exactly how their unique experiences of negotiating their cultures affect the way they think and behave. Past research has at times relied on models of biculturalism that conceptualize biculturals' characteristics and experiences as simply the sum of their cultures' influences. Yet, the way biculturals negotiate their cultures may result in unique psychological and social products that go beyond the additive contributions of each culture, suggesting the need for a new transformative theory of biculturalism. In this theoretical contribution, our aims are threefold: to (a) establish the need for a transformative theory of biculturalism, (b) discuss how our new transformative theory unifies existing research on biculturals' lived experiences, and (c) present novel hypotheses linking specific negotiation processes (i.e., hybridizing, integrating, and frame switching) to unique products within the basic psychological domains of self, motivation, and cognition.

## Keywords

bicultural, multicultural, transformative theory of biculturalism, bicultural negotiation process, frame switching, hybridization, integration, self, motivation, cognition

With the rise of globalization, mixing between cultures is increasingly common, which has relevance both for people moving to a new culture themselves and for members of host cultures (Chen, Benet-Martínez, & Bond, 2008). International tourism and immigration results in millions of people traveling to foreign countries every day (International Air Transport Association, 2013), while media and trade bring the products of different cultures to us. Having exposure to multiple cultures is becoming the norm rather than the exception. In fact, culture mixing often occurs not only between groups and individuals belonging to different cultures but also within

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<sup>1</sup>York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

<sup>2</sup>Dickinson College, Carlisle, PA, USA

<sup>3</sup>Université Laval, Quebec City, Quebec, Canada

## Corresponding Author:

Alexandria L. West, Department of Psychology, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M3J1P3.

Email: [awest21@yorku.ca](mailto:awest21@yorku.ca)

individuals. Biculturals, or people who are part of two cultures, represent a rapidly growing population in much of the world. In North America, for instance, the United States saw a 32% increase in the number of people identifying with multiple races between 2000 and 2010, a growth rate which surpassed that of single-race identification during the same period (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). In Canada, a national survey revealed that approximately 42% of the population identified with multiple ethnic origins (Statistics Canada, 2011). Globally, according to the most recent available estimates, there are more than 231 million immigrants living internationally, more than double what it was in 1990 (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2013). Although biculturals are increasingly recognized as an important segment of many societies, relatively little is known about this group from a psychological perspective. How do biculturals' experiences make them distinct? And do the particular ways biculturals experience their cultures have consequences for how they think and behave?

Some past research on biculturalism has commonly modeled biculturals' characteristics and experiences as simply the sum of their cultures' influences. For example, the finding that Japanese Canadian biculturals' self-esteem is intermediate to typical Japanese and Canadian levels has been explained additively in terms of the averaged amount of exposure and investment these biculturals have in each culture (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999). Although biculturals may be at least partially understood based on the direct influences of both their cultures, in some cases, this understanding may be incomplete. Biculturals may manage their cultures in a variety of ways, including hybridizing, integrating, and frame switching, which are the main bicultural negotiation processes we discuss in this article. Using these negotiation processes may produce psychological and social products that go beyond the additive contributions of each culture, suggesting the need for a new transformative theory of biculturalism. In this theoretical contribution, our aims are to (a) establish the need for a transformative theory of biculturalism, identifying the limitations of the past additive theory; (b) propose a new transformative theory of biculturalism, discussing how it unifies and provides a nuanced structure to existing research on biculturals' lived experiences; and (c) use our transformative theory to present novel hypotheses within basic psychological domains, including the self, cognition, and motivation.

## **Who Is Bicultural?**

Before delving into the past and proposed theories of biculturalism, it is useful to first consider who exactly qualifies as bicultural. Biculturals can be immigrants, sojourners, citizens living in multicultural societies, or the progeny of people from different cultural backgrounds. "Culture" itself may also come in different forms. Aside from the more commonly used categories of ethnicity and nationality,<sup>1</sup> culture may include region, religion, and social class (Cohen, 2009). An inclusive theory of biculturalism would ideally incorporate all of these ways of being bicultural, acknowledging the similarities and differences between their experiences. However, the defining features of biculturals are that they have had personally significant and sufficiently lengthy exposure to two cultures (Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002; Yampolsky, Amiot, & de la Sablonnière, 2013), and thus, this is the definition we use as we discuss biculturalism.<sup>2</sup>

There is also merit in considering the growing number of multiculturals, people who identify with more than two cultures. To illustrate, an Italian Armenian girl who is born and raised in bilingual Montreal will be exposed to her own dual heritage by her parents along with the two mainstream English and French language cultures of her city. Many individuals live in the intersection of national, linguistic, religious, and ethnic affiliations as a result of the growing cultural complexity and mixing occurring at a societal level (Vertovec, 2007; Yampolsky, Amiot, & de la Sablonnière, 2016). Furthermore, these combinations can include cultural groups and experiences outside of a person's own heritage and mainstream cultures as our shared public spaces become more multicultural and opportunities for cross-group relationships increase (Doucercain,

Dere, & Ryder, 2013; Shelton, Douglass, Garcia, Yip, & Trail, 2014; Thompson & Tambyah, 1999). Although the transformative theory delineated here could be extended to studies of multiculturalism, for the sake of simplicity, we focus on the experiences of biculturals as they negotiate their two cultures.

## Additive Theory of Biculturalism

In the past, biculturalism research has mainly adopted an additive theory, which generally assumes that the influences of biculturals' two cultures are the principal causal factors that sum together to determine major aspects of their experiences. Early models of bicultural identification are rooted in acculturation research, which examines the adaptation process that individuals—such as migrants and their progeny—undergo at intraindividual, relational, and group levels as a result of continuous and direct contact with others from diverse cultural groups (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). Specific models of biculturals' identities usually proposed that individuals maintained either (a) a singular cultural identity (either their mainstream or their heritage group) or (b) both mainstream and heritage cultural identities (see Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000).

### *Unidimensional and Bidimensional Models*

Acculturation has typically been conceived as an additive process through two different models: unidimensional and bidimensional. In the unidimensional model of acculturation, one would move from their membership in their heritage culture (separation) to membership in their majority culture (assimilation) or vice versa. In this way, the unidimensional model conceived of cultural identity as a zero-sum experience in which one must lose one cultural identity to identify with another cultural group (e.g., Gordon, 1964; Suinn, Rickard-Figueroa, Lew, & Vigil, 1987). In contrast, the bidimensional model conceived of one's cultural adaptation along two parallel lines of mainstream and heritage cultural involvement, respectively. In addition to the assimilation and separation identity patterns, one can feel marginalized or disidentify with either group; alternatively, one could simultaneously identify with and maintain membership in both heritage and mainstream cultural groups (Berry, 1997; Berry et al., 2006; Ryder et al., 2000). In the bidimensional model, one can have a second identity without losing the first, a framework which has allowed researchers to examine how individuals are able to simultaneously maintain membership with multiple cultural groups. The unidimensional and bidimensional models are both additive in the sense that they focus on adding cultural identities, but a unidimensional model puts zero-sum constraints on the end product, whereas the bidimensional model proposes nonzero-sum possibilities.

One direct implication of the unidimensional model is that people who affiliate with two cultural groups have cognitive, emotional, and motivational experiences that are situated between typical members of their heritage and mainstream cultures. As such, past research has explored how biculturals compare, on average, with their respective monocultural groups. For instance, the aforementioned work of Heine and colleagues (1999) demonstrated that Japanese Canadian biculturals reported self-esteem levels that were moderate relative to Euro Canadian monoculturals, who reported higher self-esteem, and Japanese monoculturals, who reported lower self-esteem. Similar findings were reported in the examination of how context affects emotion judgment (Masuda, Wang, Ishii, & Ito, 2012). Context (i.e., the facial expressions of surrounding others) exerted the greatest influence on Japanese participants' judgment of a target's facial expression but the least influence on Euro Canadian participants' judgment. Bicultural Asian Canadians and international students generally showed context effects at levels that fell between the monocultural groups. Phinney and colleagues' (2000) examination of intergenerational

changes in values highlighted the developmental bicultural experience of dual exposure to both the dominant American culture and traditional family obligation values. For Armenian, Mexican, and Vietnamese families, adolescents endorsed traditional values less than their parents, but more than Euro American participants who endorsed traditional family obligation values the least. These studies demonstrate that biculturals sometimes average the characteristics typically found in their respective groups, resulting in an intermediate experience consistent with a unidimensional model.

Given the long-standing interest in adaptation in acculturation research, the bidimensional model has primarily been applied to shed light on the relationship between acculturation and adjustment (Berry, 2005; Berry et al., 2006). Acculturation research has generally found support for the adaptiveness of affiliating with both cultural groups compared with the singular affiliation strategy: Having both cultural affiliations is related to greater adjustment and well-being compared with having only one cultural affiliation (Berry, 2005; Berry et al., 2006; Chen, Benet-Martínez, & Bond, 2008; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013; Sam & Berry, 2010; Torres & Rollock, 2009). Yet, recent work suggests the importance of examining the processes by which biculturals negotiate their cultural identities, rather than treating them as orthogonal entities. That is, simply acknowledging that a bicultural holds two cultural identities does not sufficiently account for their adjustment outcomes. A strained, compartmentalized relationship between one's identities has been shown to predict lower well-being than identifying with one culture over another (Yampolsky et al., 2013; Yampolsky, Amiot, et al., 2016), demonstrating the potential need for moving beyond an additive understanding of biculturalism to account for the impact of the complex relationship between one's cultures.

There are several limitations to the unidimensional and bidimensional models. Among them is that both frameworks tend to treat cultural identities as independent of one another and that certain complexities of cultural identification are being overlooked (see Rudmin, 2003). While the additive process forms the necessary foundation for the bicultural experience, it has become glaringly apparent that biculturals' identities are multifaceted, interrelated, and dynamic (see Doucerein et al., 2013; van, Oudenhoven, & Benet-Martínez, 2015; Yampolsky et al., 2013; Zhang, Schimel, & Faucher, 2014), underscoring the need for research that clearly and directly studies our societies' enormous "super-diversity" at the identity negotiation level (Vertovec, 2007).

## **Paving the Way for Transformative Theory: Frame Switching**

More recently, biculturalism research has begun filling the gaps left by the unidimensional and bidimensional models by uncovering the dynamic processes biculturals use to manage their cultural identities in everyday life. In particular, frame switching was developed to capture biculturals' experience of adapting to situationally salient cultural contexts by activating cultural systems of knowledge (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martínez, 2000). There is a wealth of evidence demonstrating that biculturals can switch between cultural frames in domains such as personality and self-descriptions (Ramírez-Esparza, Gosling, Benet-Martínez, Potter, & Pennebaker, 2006; Ross, Xun, & Wilson, 2002), cognitive styles (Hong et al., 2000), emotional experience (Perunovic, Heller, & Rafaeli, 2007), and social behaviors (Briley, Morris, & Simonson, 2005; Wong & Hong, 2005). Cultural cues that can trigger frame switching include iconic and mundane cultural images (Mok & Morris, 2009; Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2002), language (Perunovic et al., 2007; Ramírez-Esparza et al., 2006), and ethnicity of the interlocutor (Chen & Bond, 2010). Beyond showing that biculturals *can* frame switch in response to their cultural context, research using naturalistic experience-sampling methods shows that biculturals *do* frame switch in their daily lives (Doucerein et al., 2013; Perunovic et al., 2007). Researchers have also examined the extent to which biculturals are conscious of their switching, and found evidence for both

subconscious and conscious processing. For instance, frame switching has been elicited using subliminal as well as supraliminal cultural priming (Mok & Morris, 2013), indicating that at least part of the process can occur subconsciously.

Frame switching research moved toward a transformative theory by elucidating one way biculturals negotiate the coexisting cultures within themselves. First, frame switching draws on knowledge activation research (Higgins, 1996; Hong, Wan, No, & Chiu, 2007) to explicate how cultural knowledge follows the same basic cognitive principles of activation as any knowledge structure. Unlike bidimensional models that conceptualize biculturalism as a stable configuration of host and heritage cultural engagements, the frame switching model provides a person-by-situation analytic framework in which a subset of one's cultural knowledge is cued by the immediate environment and subsequently serves as a behavioral guide. The implication is that biculturals can acquire multiple knowledge structures, but these take turns to become operative and guide action. Second, in the lived experience of many biculturals, frame switching is likely rooted in the relative separateness of life domains: for example, the dominance of host culture in public domains and the dominance of heritage culture in private domains (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2004). Thus, it is one functional process biculturals may use to balance their dual cultural orientations in everyday life.

Despite these strengths, what seems to be missing in the current frame switching research is a consideration of the psychological changes that emerge from repeatedly switching between cultures. By focusing on the influence of each situationally active cultural frame, the current theoretical approach may be analogous to taking snapshots of the switching process. However, the switching process itself could exert a causal force, leading to psychological changes that go beyond moment-to-moment effects and cannot be reduced to the direct influence of either culture. Understanding the outcomes of the frame switching process is one of the primary goals that motivated our transformative theory of biculturalism. Thus, we view the current frame switching research as providing an important bridge between the additive theory and our transformative theory that extends the explanatory power of frame switching.

## A Transformative Theory of Biculturalism

As reviewed, the traditional additive theory has conceptualized biculturals as the sum total of their cultures, emphasizing the relative influence of each culture. While this research advanced the field in crucial ways, the agentic nature of biculturals' engagement with their cultures may have at times been overlooked. We aim to put forth a transformative theory of biculturalism that focuses on how biculturals' active negotiation of their cultures changes them in ways that transcend the influence of their particular cultures alone.

### *Key Assumptions of a Transformative Theory*

Our transformative theory of biculturalism posits that biculturals' characteristics and experiences result not only from the direct influences of each of their cultures but also from the *processes* they use to negotiate their cultures. We refer to these as bicultural negotiation processes, and they include hybridizing, integrating, and frame switching. In contrast to the additive theory, our transformative theory emphasizes that using these negotiation processes may affect biculturals in ways that go beyond the cumulative influence of their cultures. As an analogy, consider baking a cake. To make a cake, it is not enough to simply add the ingredients together in a container. You must go through the transformative processes of combining the ingredients in a particular way, mixing the dry ingredients together before slowly adding the wet ingredients, and heating the mixture in an oven to end up with a cake. The processes involved are just as important as the ingredients, as the ingredients alone are not all there is to the cake. Likewise, having two cultures

together in one person is not all there is to being bicultural; the processes of negotiating the two cultures are often crucial parts of a bicultural's experience.

To illustrate this phenomenon in biculturals' lives, Yampolsky and colleagues (2013) collected rich accounts of biculturals' negotiation experiences based on interviews. One participant said,

[My cultures] are all interconnected, they each bring something to the pot. It's like you have a fondue, there's a lot of cheese in there, but there's different cheese in there . . . everybody brings their own cheese. At the end you have got something marvelous. It doesn't [taste] like any one cheese. It tastes like a new delicious cheese.

Just as the different processes involved in baking a cake, such as blending the ingredients together or constructing different layers, are responsible for distinct features of the end product, so too might the use of different bicultural negotiation processes produce specific characteristics in biculturals. For example, as discussed in a later section ("Effects on Cognition"), we predict that the process of frame switching between cultures may result in different cognitive abilities (e.g., context sensitivity) than the process of integrating cultures (e.g., cognitive complexity). Our transformative theory of biculturalism highlights an essential feature of what it means to be bicultural—having unique experiences that depend on the particular ways they negotiate their cultures. It also acknowledges the heterogeneity among biculturals and points to the need to examine the causal relationships between processes and unique outcomes rather than relying on cruder comparisons between monoculturals and biculturals. Importantly, our theory makes specific predictions about how and why different bicultural negotiation processes may lead to different psychological outcomes.

### *Distinctions and Relationship Between Transformative Theory and Additive Theory*

The defining feature of the additive theory of biculturalism is its focus on the cumulative influence of each culture on biculturals' characteristics and experiences. Additive theory does not address how the *process* of negotiating two cultures may affect biculturals. Our transformative theory of biculturalism, in contrast, assumes that the way biculturals negotiate their cultures affects their characteristics and experiences beyond the sum of each culture's influence. In additive theory, the influences of Culture 1 and Culture 2 are primary causal factors that, when summed together, result in biculturals' characteristics. Transformative theory expands on additive theory by emphasizing that the processes biculturals use to negotiate their cultures (e.g., frame switching) can be not only additive but also transformative causal factors—ones that may account for unique changes in characteristics for biculturals. For example, in accounting for Chinese Americans' characteristics, additive theory may sufficiently predict how and when these biculturals are influenced by American values regarding personal freedom and Chinese values of social harmony. However, there may be times when transformative theory could yield further insight. For instance, researchers might be interested in how negotiating multiple systems of values makes Chinese American biculturals more open-minded. In this case, open-mindedness is a characteristic biculturals develop from the transformative process of negotiating their cultures and is not attributable to the additive influence of American and Chinese cultures.

Our intention with transformative theory is not to assert that the bicultural negotiation processes are more important or more strongly affect biculturals compared with the additive influences of their cultures, but that additive *and* transformative processes exert causal force. For certain outcomes, the additive components (i.e., cumulative influence of each culture) may need to be at certain levels or create a particular profile for the transformative processes of bicultural negotiation to be relevant. In the Chinese American example above, for instance, such biculturals

may need to view their Chinese and American value systems as sufficiently different from each other to develop ways of negotiating the two systems and subsequently be affected by these negotiation processes. Furthermore, additive and transformative processes are likely to interact, as the way biculturals are influenced by their particular cultures may affect the way biculturals negotiate their cultures and vice versa (see later section on “Situation-Level Moderators”). Our transformative theory adds complexity to the additive theory, thus building on rather than nullifying it, to provide a richer understanding of biculturals’ lived experiences.

### *Unifying Existing Research*

To illustrate the promise of a transformative theory of biculturalism, we show how such a framework might provide a more comprehensive account of certain findings than its additive predecessor. We start by considering past biculturalism research, noting cases in which the additive theory may fall short in explaining the results. Next, we move to the related field of social identities to illustrate how employing a transformative theory can yield more nuanced conclusions. Finally, we highlight evidence of the unique products of bicultural negotiation processes provided by more recent biculturalism research that is consistent with a transformative theory.

Within biculturalism research, certain results may be understood more clearly by using a transformative rather than additive conceptualization of biculturalism. For example, biculturals differ in the way they cognitively and behaviorally react to the same cultural context, with some biculturals assimilating themselves to the salient culture and others contrasting away from that culture by adopting culturally atypical thoughts and behavior (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Friedman, Liu, Chi, Hong, & Sung, 2012; Mok & Morris, 2009, 2013; Zou, Morris, & Benet-Martínez, 2008). This moderation effect is partly driven by individual differences in bicultural identity integration (BII), biculturals’ understanding of how their two cultural identities relate (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Mok & Morris, 2013). Biculturals with high BII view their cultural identities as compatible and overlapping, while those with low BII view their cultural identities as conflicting and separated (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Huynh, Nguyen, & Benet-Martínez, 2011). BII goes beyond additive considerations of cultural identification, as two biculturals whose cultures are equally important to them can differ on BII depending on how they manage the two together. Benet-Martínez and colleagues (2002) found that cultural priming resulted in opposite patterns of frame switching for those high versus low on BII. High BII biculturals assimilated their behavior to the primed culture, while low BII biculturals contrasted their behavior away from the primed culture by adopting behavior more characteristic of their nonprimed culture. Importantly, biculturals can differ in BII despite strongly identifying with both of their cultures. Additive theory does not seem to explain why integrating cultural identities moderates the effects of cultural contexts when the strength of each cultural identity is constant. Transformative theory, in contrast, assumes that differences in integrating can affect how biculturals respond to their cultural environments, beyond simply adding the two cultural identities together.

Even the process of integrating cultural identities is itself malleable and may be related to cognition in ways that suggest a conceptualization of biculturalism in line with transformative theory. Cross-cultural research has typically found an analytic cognitive style (i.e., context independence, formal logic) to be more characteristic of North American cultures, whereas a holistic cognitive style (i.e., context dependence, dialectical) is more characteristic of East Asian cultures (Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001). The additive theory of biculturalism might therefore predict that, for Asian Americans, their Asian identity would be tied to holistic cognition whereas their American identity would be tied to analytic cognition, but would not predict that the integration of these identities would be tied to a particular cognitive style. Counter to an additive prediction, however, when Mok and Morris (2012) primed Asian Americans with global (vs. local)

processing, a visual attention pattern associated with holistic cognition, the global priming increased biculturals' BII. This suggests that holistic cognition may relate to the way two cultural identities are negotiated rather than being linked solely to the influence of the cultures themselves, consistent with a transformative rather than additive theory of biculturalism. Similarly, although American primes were generally tied to more creative problem solving than Asian primes (Mok & Morris, 2010), priming both American and Chinese cultures (vs. priming either single culture) resulted in more creative performance among high-BII Chinese Americans (Saad, Damian, Benet-Martínez, Moons, & Robins, 2013). Thus, enhanced creativity among some biculturals cannot be reduced to affordance in one of their cultural environments.

Although identity integration is arguably the most commonly studied bicultural negotiation process, biculturalism researchers in psychology have recently been exploring others. One such process is hybridity or hybridization, combining cultures into a new form that is distinct from its precursors (Doucerain et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2014). Research on hybridity suggests that biculturals' formation and affiliation with hybrid cultures cannot be explained by their attitudes toward their two cultures separately (Doucerain et al., 2013). Furthermore, differences in hybridity predict biculturals' motivation to seek familiarity versus novelty in response to mortality threat (Zhang et al., 2014), suggesting that the process of hybridizing may be crucial in predicting how biculturals derive meaning in a threatening situation, going beyond additive influences of either precursor culture. As another example, researchers have identified a relationship between the process of frame switching and identity compartmentalization. Qualitative studies of biculturals' experiences show that biculturals are often aware that they adapt themselves to their cultural environments, and many do so intentionally (Yampolsky et al., 2013). For some biculturals, recognizing that they frame switch may lead them to experience their cultural identities as separate and context specific (i.e., identity compartmentalization; Yampolsky, Amiot, et al., 2016; see also Downie, Mageau, Koestner, & Liodden, 2006). This line of research thus focuses more on implications of the conscious switching experience for the coherence of one's global self-concept than the immediate experience of adapting to culturally laden stimuli. An additive theory seems limited in its ability to explain these recent findings. However, such observations fit well with a transformative theory of biculturalism, which emphasizes that the way biculturals negotiate their cultures will affect how they view themselves and relate to others, and moderate the way they interpret and respond to events.

Social identity research more broadly has benefited from adopting models similar to transformative theory, such as the intersectional framework of multiple identities. Intersectionality research demonstrates how identities can interact within an individual to change their experiences of each identity (Howard, 2000; Woollett, Marshall, Nicolson, & Dosanjh, 1994) and provides evidence for unique products that result from combining identities (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Sesko & Biernat, 2010). For example, people who identify with multiple minority groups, such as Black women and lesbians, experience a lack of recognition known as "intersectional invisibility" because they deviate from the perceived prototypes of both of their minority groups (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Sesko & Biernat, 2010). Importantly, these discrimination experiences arise out of how two identities are combined rather than the direct influence of each, as each social identity moderates the experiences of the other social identity in an inextricable way (Settles, 2006). Other research on multiple social identities shows that the way individuals structure their identities (e.g., integrating, compartmentalizing) results in varying degrees of social identity complexity, and this complexity predicts their attitudes toward outgroup members (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). These findings again demonstrate that combining social identities affects people's experiences in ways that cannot be accounted for by the additive contributions of each identity. In as much as cultural identities are social identities—and some would argue that they are especially important social identities (Stryker, 1987)—the study of biculturals' experiences may benefit from a similar intersectional framework.



Some recent biculturalism research seems to be consistent with a transformative approach, even without explicitly adopting a formal theory. Increasingly, studies of biculturals are finding evidence for what we refer to as “unique products of biculturalism”: psychological characteristics that differ in degree or type from monoculturals and that result from the processes biculturals use to negotiate their cultures. For example, certain bicultural negotiation processes (i.e., integrating, switching) are linked to greater cognitive complexity in biculturals’ compared with monoculturals’ cultural representations (Benet-Martínez, Lee, & Leu, 2006). These unique products seem to manifest in biculturals’ behavior and cognition more broadly as well. For instance, biculturals who integrate their cultures show greater integrative complexity, acknowledging conflicting perspectives and using more complex solutions to resolve them in both cultural and work domains (Tadmor, Tetlock, & Peng, 2009), and their enhanced integrative complexity predicts greater creativity (Tadmor, Galinsky, & Maddux, 2012). In addition, the processes associated with becoming competent in a second culture (e.g., lowering need for cognitive closure [NFCC], tolerating uncertainty) predict lower intergroup biases (Tadmor, Hong, Chao, Wiruchnipawan, & Wang, 2012). Although studies such as these already investigate the unique products of biculturalism, they may suggest different interpretations of exactly which negotiation process is responsible for a particular outcome, sometimes conflating them. For instance, Benet-Martínez and colleagues (2006) explained their findings of biculturals’ (vs. monoculturals’) greater cognitive complexity as possibly resulting from a lack of integrating cultural identities (i.e., low BII) and from repeated experiences of cultural frame switching, though the researchers measured only BII and did not manipulate either BII or frame switching. More recent experimental research compared the effects of exposing biculturals to cultural icons from both cultures versus either culture to test whether bicultural experience increases creativity (Saad, Damian, Benet-Martínez, Moons, & Robins, 2013). Yet, the nature of this manipulation does not make clear exactly which aspect of bicultural exposure is responsible for the outcome. To more fully understand the experiences and consequences of biculturalism, we may need a theory that differentiates between distinct bicultural negotiation processes, so that clear causal relationships can be revealed. Taken together, this past research provides support for the assumptions and aims of a transformative theory, which can in turn offer a formalized framework that unifies and structures this work.

### *Bicultural Negotiation Processes: Mechanisms Within Transformative Theory*

Our transformative theory of biculturalism currently includes three specific bicultural negotiation processes: hybridizing, integrating, and frame switching (see Table 1). These processes may rely on distinct mental abilities and may change biculturals’ characteristics in measurable ways. Biculturals are likely to draw on other processes in navigating their cultural worlds as well, and these additional processes should be included as they are identified and tested within a transformative theory. The three processes we cover, however, are already prominent in biculturalism research, especially in the most recent research that seems to be moving toward a transformative model, and thus they may be particularly promising for driving future research.

**Hybridizing.** In our transformative theory of biculturalism, hybridizing occurs when biculturals mix their cultures to create an end product that is distinct from its cultural raw materials. Hybridizing is more than an additive process because it connotes not a simple or even a weighted summation of cultural inputs but an active recombination process with unique outcomes, as in our baking analogy. A likely result is the emergence of a third culture that bridges the source cultures. For instance, Oyserman, Sakamoto, and Lauffer (1998) found among Jewish and Asian Americans that a stance that embraces both individualism and collectivism increased one’s obligation to the larger society. This was interpreted as a culturally hybrid accommodation because it involves retaining the collectivistic emphasis on social obligation but transposing the target of

**Table 1.** Descriptions of Bicultural Negotiation Processes and Predictions by Domain.

Bicultural negotiation processes	Description of process	Domain of prediction		
		Self	Motivation	Cognition
Hybridizing	Synthesizing preexisting cultures into a new and distinct form by actively combining elements of both cultures into a single end product	Increase ability to self-expand	Preference for novelty and greater self-expansion motivation	Increase use of hybrid categories in social information processing
Integrating	Forming connections between cultures by recognizing similarities and reconciling differences, thereby linking the cultures while still retaining their original forms	Increase complexity of self-concept and social identities	More abstract (vs. concrete) goals	Increase wise reasoning
Frame switching	Activating one of the two cultural systems in response to cultural context	Increase self-concept flexibility and separation of social identities	Increase personal need for structure	Increase context sensitivity

obligation from one's ingroup members, which are a typical focus of collectivism, to both heritage and host communities, a presumably more adaptive solution when living in a complex, multicultural society.

Although existing models of biculturalism have described hybridizing using similar terms such as fusion (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997) and synergy (No, Wan, Chao, Rosner, & Hong, 2011), Benet-Martínez and colleagues were the first to empirically assess such experiences by focusing specifically on the identity structure that results from combining different cultural elements (i.e., BII; Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Blendedness is one dimension within BII that captures the degree of perceived overlap between two cultures (for a review, see Cheng, Lee, Benet-Martínez, & Huynh, 2014). The cultural identities of some biculturals are blended, in that their self-concept is a mix of the prototypical characteristics associated with each culture. For instance, among Latino Americans with high (vs. low) identity blendedness, their self-reported traits were more strongly associated with traits typically attributed to Latinos and with traits typically attributed to Americans (Miramontez, Benet-Martínez, & Nguyen, 2008). Blending is related to hybridizing because highly blended biculturals consider themselves part of a combined culture. However, we argue that blending is not synonymous with hybridizing because blending is about perceiving overlap between cultures in the first place, while hybridizing crucially emphasizes the individual's active role in fusing their cultures and creating something new. Therefore, blending may be a necessary but not sufficient condition of hybridizing.

Cultural blending in self-views is not limited to immigrant contexts in which biculturalism has often been studied; it may be extended to nonimmigrant contexts transformed by globalization. In non-Western contexts such as urban China, there is an increasing presence of a global culture that coexists with the local culture in the same physical space (Chiu & Cheng, 2007). Urban Chinese students now commonly combine Western individualistic values with the already hybridized contemporary Chinese values into their own personal values (Zhang, Noels, Kulich, & Guan, 2017). In fact, their personal values profile tends to be more concordant with perceived Western and contemporary Chinese cultural values than traditional Chinese cultural values. While the latter represents the influence of traditional cultural heritage, the former reflects influences of an imported culture and the changing Chinese culture.

Hybridizing may lead biculturals toward not only changes in self-concept but also greater cognitive complexity. As hybridizing involves borrowing from aspects of different cultures and transmuting them into new forms, it may help biculturals bridge knowledge from diverse perspectives and recombine ideas into novel solutions. Evidence in support of this notion comes from the link between identity blendedness and creative performance. Compared with less blended Asian Americans, those who were more blended generated more creative dishes when given both Asian and American ingredients (Cheng, Sanchez-Burks, & Lee, 2008). The enhanced creativity that supposedly arises from hybridizing also generalizes to creativity measures that are not directly tied to culture. More blended Chinese Americans showed increased creativity on a culture-neutral unusual uses test (Guilford, 1967) after being primed with both cultures versus a single culture (Saad et al., 2013). That the effect occurred after a dual-culture prime suggests that perhaps as a precursor to hybridizing, blending enhances creativity only in circumstances supportive of biculturalism or culture mixing.

The key to the positive psychological consequences of hybridizing may not lie in an exclusive emphasis on the intersection of two cultures, which has been theorized to actually impede cognitive complexity (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). Rather, it may lie in active efforts to choose elements from each culture that meet one's individual needs in constructing one's hybrid culture. Once again, the output could be qualitatively different from the source cultures from which it is derived and thus goes beyond what an additive theory predicts. The individualistic approach implied in hybridizing (cf. Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault, & Senécal, 1997) could explain some perplexing findings in previous research. Compared with individuals strongly identified with only one culture, those strongly identified with both cultures *and* those weakly identified with both are relatively cognitively complex, in that they think in less black and white terms and are better at reconciling competing perspectives (Tadmor, Galinsky, et al., 2012; Tadmor et al., 2009). The psychological benefits of strong ties with both cultures are often attributable to integrating cultures, a process to be discussed below. An interesting possibility is that hybridizing may be responsible for the cognitive benefits of weak ties with both cultures, perhaps because individuals with weak ties feel they have more latitude to mix cultures in idiosyncratic ways, unencumbered by strong accountability pressures from both cultures. It might even be that to hybridize is to draw on cultural ingredients beyond those from the source cultures; a multitude of cultures could come into play in forming one's hybrid culture. This expanded conceptualization of hybridizing may underlie cosmopolitanism, the phenomenon in which individuals express openness to and make creative appropriations of multiple cultures regardless of their own origins (e.g., Gillespie, McBride, & Riddle, 2010).

**Integrating.** In addition to fusing identities and creating new hybrid cultural experiences, negotiating one's cultures can involve weaving and meshing one's different identities together to form a cohesive whole. In recent decades, research on the process of integrating has focused on the *relationships* between identities, elucidating how biculturals reconcile and draw complex connections between their cultural identities (Amiot, de la Sablonnière, Terry, & Smith, 2007; Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006). Integration differs from both unidimensional and bidimensional additive models, which regard cultures as independent entities, and from frame switching approaches, which treat one's cultural identities and experiences as inherently context bound and separate. Integration is also distinct from hybridity, which involves the formation of a new, blended cultural identity, because integration focuses on the perception of similarity and connection of one's unique cultural groups. The integrative framework has begun to be examined with several models, including BII (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Benet-Martínez et al., 2002), which emphasizes perceived similarity or harmony between cultural identities. In addition, Tadmor and Tetlock's acculturation complexity model (Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006; Tadmor et al., 2009) examines the process of recognizing how each identity and

each cultural group's perspectives are equally valid, and then forming links between the identities. Finally, the cognitive-developmental model of social identity integration (CDSMII; Amiot et al., 2007; Yampolsky et al., 2013; Yampolsky, Amiot, et al., 2016) underscores the overall cohesion between one's cultural identities achieved through several cognitive strategies that link the identities together.

In integrating, one actively reconciles the differences between one's cultural groups and identities by resolving the conflicts and discrepancies between them, as well as by appreciating the larger scale cohesion that exists between these entities (Amiot et al., 2007; Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006); in this way, one also achieves an overall harmony between these distinct parts of oneself (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). There are several strategies or routes to integrating, such as valuing the differing perspectives of each of one's cultural groups as equally valid and beneficial (Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006; Tadmor et al., 2009) and as complementary rather than contradictory (Amiot et al., 2007; Yampolsky et al., 2013; Yampolsky, Amiot, et al., 2016). To illustrate this complementarity, another participant from Yampolsky and colleagues' (2013) study demonstrated their process of customizing their own Chinese Canadian identity while making sense of each of their cultures through the lens of the other:

So what I like out of the Chinese tradition is a lot of respect and seeking to understand tradition, which I think is very important, but what I get out of my Western upbringing is the questioning at the same time. And so it enriches each other because every time I see an established tradition . . . I'll discuss and be very respectful, but at the same time as I'm discussing and being respectful, I'm not just staring at it blank-faced and just taking it on, which would be totally destructive of tradition in the first place 'cause you lose the sense of what it is.

Moreover, biculturals can connect their distinct cultural identities by perceiving similarities between them (Amiot et al., 2007; Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Yampolsky et al., 2013; Yampolsky, Amiot, et al., 2016). Biculturals also integrate their identities by seeking to understand the origins and meanings of the similarities and differences between their cultures (Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006; Tadmor et al., 2009). Another integrating strategy is the use of large-scale, superordinate identities which can encompass one's different cultural identities, thereby facilitating the ability to link one's cultures together (Amiot et al., 2007; Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Tadmor et al., 2009; Yampolsky et al., 2013; Yampolsky, Amiot, et al., 2016). For instance, an intercultural couple consisting of a Jewish woman and a Muslim man may identify themselves as "people of the book" as a means of encircling and bridging their different religious affiliations. In this article, we refer to integrating as the process of bridging the different aspects of one's cultures together (e.g., values, identities, practices, etc.) using the strategies enumerated in these different models.

The literature on biculturals' integration of cultural identities has thus far demonstrated that greater integration predicts tangible individual outcomes, including greater narrative coherence and self-esteem, as well as subjective, psychological, and interdependent well-being, relative to compartmentalization or unidimensional identification (Yampolsky et al., 2013; Yampolsky, Amiot, et al., 2016). Moreover, integrating cultural identities predicts greater creativity in novel uses tasks and greater reported professional success, such as employee promotions (Tadmor et al., 2009; Tadmor, Galinsky, et al., 2012). These findings suggest that integrating cultural identities produces unique—and thus far adaptive—outcomes for managing biculturalism. Integrating one's cultures is an involved, complex process whereby biculturals endeavor to understand and link the different cultural parts of themselves and their lives together. Doing so enables biculturals to meaningfully and cohesively join their cultural identities, values, practices, and relationships together. Such an intricate process necessitates the more fine-grained approach that transformative theory can offer to better detect the unique products that result from integration.

**Frame switching.** Our final bicultural negotiation process is frame switching, activating culturally related cognitive systems in response to situational cues (Hong et al., 2000). As previously reviewed, past research provides ample evidence of biculturals' frame switching, both in the laboratory and in their daily lives. Although this past research established that frame switching is one process biculturals use to negotiate their cultures, it has typically focused on the effects of each cultural frame, not the process of switching between frames. In contrast, our transformative theory emphasizes that the process of switching between cultural frames, distinct from the effects of each particular frame, may result in unique experiences and characteristics for biculturals.

In searching for potential causal relationships between frame switching and outcomes for biculturals, it may be useful to consider other forms of cognitive switching that are known to produce lasting psychological changes. For example, bilingualism has been associated with advantages in executive functioning (e.g., attentional control, cognitive flexibility, working memory; see Adesope, Lavin, Thompson, & Ungerleider, 2010 for a review) and increased cognitive reserve, which is predictive of delayed onset of dementia symptoms (Bialystok, Craik, & Freedman, 2007; Craik, Bialystok, & Freedman, 2010; Guzmán-Vélez & Tranel, 2015). Paralleling our transformative theory, bilingualism researchers generally favor process-oriented interpretations of such findings, with the most popular being that bilinguals' repeated switching between language systems causes these benefits (Adesope et al., 2010; Alladi et al., 2013; Bialystok, 2001; Bialystok, Craik, & Luk, 2012). This explanation emphasizes that the process of switching between two languages, rather than merely possessing them, augments the skills underlying executive functioning—an explanation that echoes the contrast between transformative and additive theories. Frame switching involves a similar process of shifting activation between cultural frames, and thus it is possible that switching may produce similar lasting changes in biculturals as well. Researchers studying language and culture in tandem have argued that the two are richly connected, as language can serve as a carrier of culture (Chen, 2015; Chiu & Chen, 2004). Supporting this notion, several studies with biculturals have shown that language in the external environment acts as a cultural prime that elicits frame switching (Chen, Benet-Martínez, & Ng, 2014; Lee, Oyserman, & Bond, 2010; Ross et al., 2002). Furthermore, bilingual advantages appear to be most consistently found for bilinguals who likely acquire multiple cultures along with their multiple languages, including those who are equally fluent in both languages, acquire the second language at a young age, know more than two languages, or acquire the second language as a result of migration (Bialystok et al., 2007; Chertkow et al., 2010; Guzmán-Vélez & Tranel, 2015). This research suggests that conclusions about bilingualism may at least sometimes be conflated with the presence of biculturalism. While it may not be that biculturalism rather than bilingualism is responsible for the observed advantages in these cases (Alladi et al., 2013; Bialystok & Viswanathan, 2009), it is possible that biculturalism fosters the same advantages, hence bilingual advantages being more reliably found in bicultural bilingual samples. The parallel between frame switching and language switching, and the connections between language and culture, suggest that the process of switching between cultures may foster similar outcomes for biculturals as those seen in bilinguals. Our transformative approach to studying frame switching highlights the mental abilities and characteristics that frame switching might draw on and develop, thereby suggesting numerous possibilities for future research questions on biculturalism.

## Predicting Unique Products in Multiple Domains

A major strength of our transformative theory of biculturalism is its potential to generate novel predictions about the psychological and social products of being bicultural. Although research in line with this approach is already yielding fruitful results, questions remain about which aspects of biculturals' experiences are responsible for the characteristics that differentiate them from

monoculturals. Therefore, in this section, we offer predictions linking specific bicultural negotiation processes to unique products of biculturalism. For each of the three processes, we propose hypotheses in the domains of the self, cognition, and motivation (see Table 1). Although each prediction links a particular negotiation process to a distinct outcome, it is possible that multiple processes relate to the same outcomes. These predictions also do not exhaust all the possible outcomes in these three domains. We encourage researchers using the transformative theory to explore bicultural negotiation processes and outcomes beyond what we propose here.

### *Predicted Effects on the Self*

Each bicultural negotiation process may have important consequences for the way biculturals configure their cultural identities. On top of that, we argue that the regular use of these negotiation processes may cause characteristic changes to the self-concept more generally.

We predict that hybridizing might increase biculturals' ability to self-expand or change their self-concept in light of new experiences (Aron & Aron, 1997). Encountering information about the self that is inconsistent with one's self-concept can not only be aversive (Elliot & Devine, 1994; Swann & Read, 1981; Thibodeau & Aronson, 1992), but it can also present potentially rewarding opportunities for personal growth via self-expansion (Aron & Aron, 1997). Although motivations to maintain self-concept clarity (Campbell et al., 1996) and to expand the self can at times conflict (Emery, Walsh, & Slotter, 2015), hybridizing may offer biculturals a way to reconcile new and old information about the self without sacrificing its clarity. Biculturals who hybridize their cultures frequently attempt to synthesize information from different sources into something that fits them. Practice with hybridizing may teach biculturals that even conflicting information can be brought together into a novel but nonetheless coherent end product, making them adept at incorporating new information into their self-concept while retaining its clarity. The process of hybridizing may therefore make biculturals better able to self-expand.

Integrating cultures may have lasting effects on the breadth and complexity of biculturals' personal and social selves. People differ in the number and complexity of their self-schemas, self-knowledge structures that pertain to one's skills and characteristics (Markus, 1977; Markus & Wurf, 1987). Given that integrating their two cultures enables biculturals to draw on multiple repertoires of skills and requires them to link together large networks of self-relevant knowledge, one hypothesis is that integrating results in biculturals possessing broader and more complex self-schemas. As biculturals develop the abilities necessary to integrate their cultural identities, they may generalize their integrating skills to social identities as well, resulting in greater social identity complexity. Just as integrating cultural identities may be the most complex way to represent biculturals' identity configurations (Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Yampolsky et al., 2013; Yampolsky, Amiot, et al., 2016), integrating or "merging" social identities constitutes the highest level of social identity complexity, whereby multiple social identities are simultaneously valued and salient across situations (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). Importantly, achieving this complexity involves building connections between identities, cultural, or otherwise. Therefore, biculturals may use the process of integrating to apply greater complexity to the structure of their personal characteristics and to their social identities. One benefit of doing so may be the sense of having a coherent self composed of complementary rather than conflicting characteristics and social identities. This overall cohesion may also facilitate the process of meaning making, or making sense of the intricacies of one's multifaceted experiences across different life domains (Yampolsky et al., 2013). However, a more complex self-concept may inherently pose problems in situations that require clear, decisive actions because biculturals may experience more interference between aspects of themselves and require greater effort to reconcile the broad network of self-knowledge.

Finally, frame switching may foster greater flexibility of the self, and we argue that this flexible nature of the self-concept will generalize to biculturals' social identities beyond the cultural domain. Research shows that biculturals' self-concepts shift in accordance with their cultural context (Chen, Lam, Buchtel, & Bond, 2014; Ramírez-Esparza et al., 2006; Verkuyten & Pouliasi, 2002) while still maintaining high consistency within contexts across time (English & Chen, 2007). In this and other biculturalism research, the use of frame switching has been related to defining the self in if-then terms in which compartmentalized self-concepts are each applied in different contexts (English & Chen, 2007). One hypothesis that follows is that biculturals who negotiate their cultures by frame switching may apply the same strategy to negotiating their other roles and social identities (e.g., being a mother and a doctor), showing more self-concept flexibility across many of the contexts they regularly encounter. A second hypothesis, based on the inhibition of alternatives involved in effective frame switching, is that when operating in a particular context (e.g., at home with family), biculturals may also experience less residue from nonrelevant social identities (e.g., being a police officer). These two predictions suggest that biculturals who frame switch may generally be characterized by a self-concept that is flexible and tied to their social contexts. Such a self-concept may offer a simple, less demanding way of living compared to maintaining an integrated, complex self-concept, but it may cause distress if aspects of the self feel detached and conflicting (e.g., double consciousness, compartmentalization; DuBois, 1903/1969).

We have intentionally presented our predictions for the bicultural negotiation processes in a way that contrasts their potential unique products. However, we do not intend to create the impression that any of the negotiation processes is more beneficial overall than any other. Each process almost certainly presents biculturals with as many challenges as benefits, and whether a product is advantageous or disadvantageous will depend on the situation. In the case of integrating, for instance, a bicultural faced with a choice that pits her identities against each other (e.g., deciding whether to uproot and relocate her children to benefit her career) may be significantly distressed about potentially damaging the integrated aspects of self she has worked so hard to create and maintain. Notably, this situation is not any more readily dealt with by frame switching, as situations that draw a bicultural in competing directions simultaneously can lead one with a flexible, contextually bound self to experience distress over deciding on the appropriate behavior.

### *Predicted Effects on Motivation*

Next, we propose that the different negotiation processes may relate to biculturals' motivations, or the goals and environments they seek. Although many of the motivational tendencies we explore here may function as antecedents that predispose biculturals to using one negotiation process over another, we maintain that these relationships are reciprocal, and that biculturals who use particular negotiation processes may habitually strengthen associated motivations.

In the self domain, we predicted that hybridizing would encourage biculturals' capacity for self-expansion. We further hypothesize that hybridizing increases biculturals' motivation to self-expand via a preference for novelty. Research on self-expansion motivation suggests that one main route to fulfilling this drive is to engage in novel, exciting activities (e.g., adopting new perspectives, learning new information, and gaining new skills; Aron & Aron, 1986; Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013). Such research shows that having recent novel experiences is related to a subjective sense of self-expansion (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013) and to actual expansion of the self-concept (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2014). The process of hybridizing cultures could be considered inherently self-expanding, as it involves the broadening of perspectives, knowledge, and resources that underlie the motivation to self-expand (Aron & Aron, 1986; Aron, Lewandowski, Mashek, & Aron, 2013). Therefore, by hybridizing their cultures, biculturals may

develop the skills they need to successfully self-expand in other domains, and may subsequently be more motivated to seek out novel experiences as potentially rewarding opportunities to self-expand. Recently, Zhang and colleagues (2014) found support for a relationship between biculturals' hybridizing and novelty seeking, as greater hybridity of biculturals' identities predicted a preference for novelty over familiarity under conditions of existential threat. The authors posited that this preference may result from hybridizing biculturals deriving meaning through exploring novelty—a tendency that may reflect their drive to self-expand.

Drawing on construal-level theory and a personal strivings approach, we predict that biculturals' use of abstract thinking from integrating their cultures may result in them being motivated by more abstract goals. Goals can be conceptualized at higher or lower level terms that differ in their abstract versus concrete nature, respectively (Emmons, 1992; Trope & Liberman, 2003). Abstract goals focus on an ultimate purpose as a desired outcome (e.g., "Be a successful cultural psychologist"), whereas concrete goals focus on a specific action as a desired outcome (e.g., "Publish this article"). Individuals differ in the tendency to represent goals abstractly versus concretely, with abstract representations involving more integration and insight (Förster, Friedman, & Liberman, 2004; Liberman, Sagristano, & Trope, 2002; Nussbaum, Trope, & Liberman, 2003). In the process of integrating their cultures, biculturals come to represent their cultures in more abstract terms, as this enables them to appreciate how their cultures' essential features may complement one another despite possible concrete differences (Amiot et al., 2007; Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006). Importantly, biculturals who integrate their cultures remain aware of their two cultures' perspectives even while immersed in a particular cultural context (Yampolsky et al., 2013), suggesting that abstract thinking may be rather habitual for them. Therefore, integrating might foster a trait level of abstract motivation for biculturals that results in them creating and maintaining more abstract goals.

Finally, we posit that frame switching may foster biculturals' personal need for structure (Neuberg & Newsom, 1993). As discussed in predictions on the self, frame switching can be represented by if-then scripts by which biculturals associate particular cultural contexts with culturally tied ways of thinking and behaving (e.g., if with Canadian friends, then behave more extraverted). Frame switching's rigid reliance on if-then scripts may be best suited to structured, unambiguous environments characterized by a single prominent culture. Situations that offer mixed cultural cues, such as a party with family and friends from both cultures, likely undermine biculturals' ability to cleanly and effectively frame switch, possibly causing social anxiety and a lack of self-confidence. Biculturals who favor integrating or hybridizing may thrive in these culturally mixed situations as they present opportunities to bridge or merge their cultures in new ways. However, biculturals who chronically rely on frame switching may come to avoid these more culturally ambiguous or complex environments and develop greater personal need for structure.

### *Predicted Effects on Cognition*

Finally, the bicultural negotiation processes also lead to predictions in the cognitive domain. We argue that these processes represent distinct cognitive skills that biculturals draw on in negotiating their cultures. Here, we posit that the regular use of any particular one of these processes may alter how biculturals engage with and make sense of information more generally.

Hybridizing allows biculturals to bind elements of separate, preexisting categories together to create a new category that suits them better than either of the two original categories. In doing so, biculturals may come to rely less on common social categories in their cognitive representations of themselves and others, thereby increasing their use of hybrid categories in processing social information about other individuals who do not fit neatly into traditional categories either. This prediction might manifest, for example, in categorizing multiracial individuals. Many people



find it difficult to categorize multiracials because of their racially ambiguous appearance. Even though many multiracials are not prototypical of either of their monoracial categories, perceivers still rely on familiar monoracial labels more than multiracial labels when categorizing multiracials. When people do use a multiracial label to categorize multiracials, categorization is slower and requires more effortful processing (Chen & Hamilton, 2012). Yet, multiracial perceivers, compared with monoracial perceivers, are often less reliant on traditional monoracial categories (Pauker & Ambady, 2009). This suggests that biculturals who have more experience with hybridizing in their own lives may more readily categorize multiracials using their hybrid multiracial label rather than categorizing them according to only one of their races. This greater acknowledgment of hybrid categories when faced with nonprototypical group members may also mitigate negative consequences associated with intersectionality. If biculturals are able to recognize a Black woman's hybrid category, for example, they may be less likely to treat her as "invisible" (Sesko & Biernat, 2010). Thus, hybridizing may affect biculturals' cognition by reducing their reliance on rigid social categories and possibly increasing their acceptance of other hybrid category members.

Cognitively, the integrating process involves biculturals forming links between often conflicting perspectives to reconcile differences and unite their two cultures into a greater whole within themselves. These abilities (i.e., adopting alternative perspectives, searching for reconciliation, thinking in terms of the "big picture") dovetail with several of the essential facets of wisdom, or wise reasoning (Grossmann et al., 2012; Kross & Grossmann, 2012). Therefore, integrating cultures may foster biculturals' propensity for wisdom more generally, particularly when reasoning about conflict. Recent research on wise reasoning demonstrates that one route to wisdom hinges on the ability to "transcend egocentric viewpoints," which people can achieve by adopting a self-distanced perspective to boost their abstract thinking (Grossmann & Kross, 2014; Kross & Grossmann, 2012). These findings tie directly to the process of integrating cultures and to our previous prediction regarding integrating and abstract motivation: Integrating cultures is an inherently abstract process that requires biculturals' awareness and active reconciliation of multiple perspectives, and may rely on the same self-distancing or third-person perspective as wise reasoning. Biculturals who are successful at integrating their cultures may therefore apply these underlying skills to resolving conflicts in their everyday lives, thereby demonstrating more wisdom in their reasoning.

Switching between cultural frames likely requires biculturals to consistently monitor their context for cultural cues that signal which cultural frame to operate within. Therefore, we predict that through continual practice with frame switching, biculturals may develop increased context sensitivity. This heightened context sensitivity may manifest in biculturals attending more to contextual information (e.g., background of a visual scene; Masuda & Nisbett, 2006) and considering the relationship between the context and a person or object (e.g., situational attributions) to understand the world around them.

### *Potential Moderators of Bicultural Negotiation Processes*

We previously noted that these three bicultural negotiation processes do not constitute an exhaustive account of the ways biculturals navigate their two cultures. Here, we further acknowledge that these processes are neither mutually exclusive nor universal for biculturals. Individual and situational factors are sure to influence how frequently and in what way biculturals use these processes. Furthermore, whether a certain bicultural derives unique products from these processes will depend on who they are as individuals as well as where and when they are attempting to negotiate their cultures. In this final section, we consider individual and situational moderators of the negotiation processes to highlight the diversity among biculturals, and move toward a more nuanced understanding of their lived experiences.

*Individual-level moderators.* Individual differences in motivational forces influence the viability of hybridizing, integrating, and frame switching. In this section, we explore how perceived cultural distance, NFCC, racial essentialism, and BII may moderate biculturals' negotiation experiences.

Although much of this article has focused on the common experiences and characteristics that can result from trying to maintain any two cultures, the specific pairings of cultures undoubtedly contribute to the variation among biculturals' experiences. One aspect of this diversity is how different biculturals perceive their paired cultures to be. The construct of perceived cultural distance taps into subjective assessments of the amount of overlap versus discrepancy between two cultures (Cheng & Leung, 2013; Galchenko & van de Vijver, 2007; Suanet & Van de Vijver, 2009). Perceived cultural distance is likely to moderate the use and result of any bicultural negotiation process. For instance, frame switching may not make much sense to use when two cultures are perceived as highly overlapping. Instead, a certain minimum level of cultural distance may be a prerequisite for biculturals to engage in frame switching as well as for frame switching to produce the effects we previously proposed. In terms of integrating, perceived cultural distance could foster or constrain how complexly biculturals configure and experience their cultures. If one's cultures are very close, common ground between them is obvious, potentially making integrating easier albeit less complex (Amiot et al., 2007; Roccas & Brewer, 2002). More distant cultures, in contrast, may have fewer obvious links between them, making full integration more cognitively demanding and time-consuming. A bicultural who does not wish to spend a lot of time and energy mentally engaging with their cultures may adopt an intermediate integration strategy (e.g., finding a middle way between their cultures), despite still valuing both cultures. Alternatively, biculturals who are motivated to fully integrate their distant cultures might devote a lot of effort to unraveling the intricacies of both cultures, invoking numerous complex integration strategies to synchronize them. For hybridizing, the degree of distance biculturals perceive between their cultures might affect the novelty of their hybridized culture. Previous research shows that drawing from more distant sources and focusing on differences promote creativity more than drawing from more compatible sources and focusing on similarities (Cheng & Leung, 2013; Leung, Maddox, Galinsky, & Chiu, 2008; Ward, Smith, & Finke, 1999; Ward, Smith, & Vaid, 1997). This suggests that when biculturals hybridize cultures they perceive to be distant rather than overlapping, the resulting new culture may be more novel, particularly if the new culture draws from conflicting elements of the precursor cultures. In sum, perceived cultural distance is one feature that potentially moderates biculturals' experiences with all the negotiation processes.

Although some individual difference factors may differentially moderate the negotiation processes, others may exert similar influences on multiple processes. The motivation to make sense of complex categories to which one might belong (Kang & Bodenhausen, 2015) might facilitate both hybridizing and integrating. For example, BII (Cheng et al., 2014) and integration configuration (Yampolsky, Amiot, et al., 2016) both involve motivations to preserve complexity in one's bicultural identity. In contrast, motivations to preserve clear-cut categories should hamper hybridizing and integrating. Two well-researched candidates are NFCC and racial essentialism. People with higher NFCC tend to strongly adhere to the norms of their respective cultures because doing so satisfies their epistemic need for simple and unambiguous knowledge (Chiu, Morris, Hong, & Menon, 2000). NFCC influences people with bicultural experiences in similar ways, except that because biculturals are knowledgeable about multiple cultures' norms, which norms to follow depends on which culture is made salient (Chao, Zhang, & Chiu, 2010; Kosic, Kruglanski, Pierro, & Mannetti, 2004). Given that keeping cultures separate can reduce complexity, biculturals who dislike complexity (i.e., high NFCC) should inhibit hybridizing or integrating processes (cf. Tadmor, Hong, et al., 2012). Likewise, racial essentialism, the lay theory that

boundaries among cultural or racial groups are fixed and cannot be crossed, may also suppress hybridizing and integrating (Tadmor, Chao, Hong, & Polzer, 2013).

While we expect NFCC and racial essentialism to exert similar influences on hybridizing and integrating, they might have different implications for frame switching. Because context-bound identities or behaviors presumably confer cognitive closure by reducing ambiguity, NFCC likely increases reliance on frame switching over hybridizing or integrating (Chao et al., 2010). In contrast, the relation between racial essentialism and frame switching may not appear straightforward at first blush. On one hand, oscillating between cultural frames seems to help preserve group boundaries and thus reinforce racial essentialism. This reasoning suggests that racial essentialism is compatible with frame switching. On the other hand, frame switching implies fluidity in the construction of a bicultural's racial categorization in the sense that one belongs to multiple groups that are overlapping and context variable. In other words, frame switching violates the essentialist view that racial categories are fundamentally inalterable. Empirical evidence supports the latter reasoning that racial essentialism can undermine frame switching. Biculturals who subscribe to racial essentialism, for instance, are more likely to feel uncomfortable about rapid frame switching (Chao, Chen, Roisman, & Hong, 2007). Racial essentialism has also been found to adversely affect biculturals' ability to frame switch. After Korean Americans were primed with mainstream American culture, they were less likely to show culturally congruent responses if they endorsed racial essentialism (No et al., 2008; Study 4). This finding is likely explained by the perception that, according to an essentialist view, a racial minority group such as Korean Americans cannot pass into the majority group of White Americans.

A final point concerning moderators of frame switching is the observation that not all biculturals show the same pattern of switching in response to cultural primes. In particular, low (vs. high) BII biculturals respond to cultural cues in a contrastive manner, suggesting that different identity motives underlie switching behaviors depending on the level of BII (Mok & Morris, 2013; Zou et al., 2008). BII might also influence the extent of lasting changes that result from repeated frame switching. Probably because identity integration generally confers a coherent sense of self (Amiot et al., 2007), high-BII biculturals may not always adapt their behavior to cultural cues, even if they are capable of doing so (Mok & Morris, 2012). Thus, it might be low BII biculturals who are more likely to show heightened context sensitivity or self-concept flexibility (Zhang, Noels, Lalonde, & Salas, 2017).

**Situational-level moderators.** In addition to individual differences, situational forces are at play in shaping when biculturals hybridize, integrate, and frame switch. At the macro-level, we would expect that the broader cultural context may influence which transformative processes are used. In individualist contexts, which prioritize self-consistency independent of the context (English & Chen, 2007; Suh, 2002), authenticity (Kernis & Goldman, 2006), and unique self-expression (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), strategies such as hybridization may be favored, given that the process of hybridizing emphasizes individual creative expression and self-affirmation. However, in collectivist contexts, which prioritize group cohesion (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and the need to adapt oneself to the context (English & Chen, 2007; Suh, 2002), strategies such as frame switching may be favored, given that frame switching involves activating the social and identity script that would appropriately converge to each context. Furthermore, the relationship between the two specific cultural groups is undoubtedly an important moderating factor. For example, the way that Jewish Muslim biculturals negotiate their cultures in areas of the world where these two groups are in high conflict may differ greatly from places where these groups are in lower conflict. Biculturals may need to perceive their cultures to be at least somewhat at odds or different from each other to create the opportunity to hybridize or integrate in the first place. However, it is likely that successfully hybridizing or integrating favors a low or moderate amount of actual conflict between the two cultural groups. A high amount of conflict may interfere with

biculturals' ability to reconcile their cultures, especially when the issues do not lend themselves to easy synthesis (e.g., choosing a romantic partner: Giguère, Lalonde, & Lou, 2010; deciding when to move out: Lou, Lalonde, & Giguère, 2012), and may also create an environment that discourages any mixing of the cultures (e.g., Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010).

Thus far, the literature has only begun to examine the role of more micro-level social factors, including biculturals' social networks (Mok, Morris, Benet-Martínez, & Karakitapoğlu-Aygün, 2007) and discrimination experiences (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Cheng & Lee, 2009, 2013; Yampolsky & Amiot, 2016). Perceived discrimination experiences were shown to predict lower BII (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Cheng & Lee, 2009, 2013) and greater compartmentalization of one's multiple cultural identities (Yampolsky & Amiot, 2016), demonstrating that discrimination can potentially inhibit the complex processes of culture mixing by eliciting identity-dividing and frame switching responses to manage these negative threats. In contrast, living in an environment where biculturalism is widespread might discourage identity compartmentalization and foster more hybridizing experiences instead. For example, Schwartz and colleagues (2014) found that having Latino Americans in Miami respond in English versus Spanish did not consistently lead to cultural frame switching. They speculated that this might be because both languages are widely used in Miami, and neither language is uniquely associated with a specific set of cultural scripts. A highly bilingual climate where both languages are of similar status might thus produce less frequent frame switching.

In terms of social network predictors, Mok and colleagues (2007) found that Chinese Americans were more likely to report higher BII when their friendship networks included more American friends and were more interconnected than divided. These findings demonstrate that one's social network composition has ramifications for bicultural identity processes. More recently, Yampolsky and colleagues demonstrated that the context of close relationships contributes to how biculturals identify with their different cultural groups (Yampolsky, Sibai, Michel, & Lalonde, 2016). Their findings show that when intercultural couples engage in more adaptive conflict resolution strategies, such as compromise, couples are more likely to report greater BII, and greater integration of their couple and cultural identities; at the same time, less adaptive conflict resolution strategies, such as suppression, predict greater compartmentalization. The authors also found additional social factors that predict different identity processes for biculturals in mixed-culture couples. Greater marginalization of the couple by family, friends, and the broader community in the couple's network predicts greater compartmentalization. Taken together, the existing literature suggests that the dynamics of our relationships can serve as potent influences on how individuals navigate their multiple cultures. There is still a great deal of work that needs to be done to uncover the many possible factors that influence biculturals' use of different negotiation processes. Future research on topics such as relationships, groups, intergroup relations, and social institutions would elucidate the interplay between social contexts and the manifestation of our transformative theory of biculturalism.

## **The Future of Transformative Theory**

The primary purpose of this article was to propose a transformative theory of biculturalism, demonstrating its promise to unify existing knowledge and spur new research in hopes of gaining a richer understanding of biculturals' lived experiences from a psychological perspective. This theory, however, is in its infancy and as such has limitations along with potential to grow. One limitation concerns the global generalizability of our theory. Our model was developed based on biculturalism research that has mostly sampled biculturals with at least one North American culture, most often studied in the context of a broader North American culture, and has predominantly relied on combinations of North American with East Asian cultures, though we have referred to several notable exceptions to these biases throughout this article. Although we

anticipate that the basic assumptions and framework of the transformative theory should hold with diverse samples of biculturals in various cultural contexts, we also predict that the way our model is reflected in different bicultural groups' lives will be as diverse as the biculturals we endeavor to better understand. Nevertheless, we do not know for certain how well the transformative theory will hold until more research is conducted using this model with a variety of biculturals across different contexts. In a previous section, we proposed a number of predictions guided by the transformative theory, but it is just as important that future researchers find other ways of testing the assertions of our theory. This should involve, but is not limited to, developing experimental manipulations of the bicultural negotiation processes addressed here along with others that may yet be identified, using such methods to differentiate the effects of negotiation processes from each other and from the additive influence of each culture, and probing interactions between negotiation processes and cultural influences. We believe that our transformative theory has the potential to move the field of biculturalism research toward a more complex and comprehensive understanding of how negotiating multiple cultures makes biculturals' characteristics and experiences unique, but the full value of our theory, as with any, will be revealed through rigorous empirical research conducted by critical and creative scientists.

## Conclusion

Mixing between cultures is becoming increasingly commonplace across the globe, and in response, researchers have developed more nuanced understandings of what biculturalism is and why it matters for society. Building on this burgeoning literature, we put forth a transformative theory of biculturalism that formalizes what some previous research already strongly suggests, that biculturalism is more than the sum of its parts. But where does "more than the sum" come from?

We argue that biculturals' *active experiences* provide them with social identities, cognitive tendencies, and psychological outcomes that amount to more than the mere aggregate of their separate cultures. Our contribution highlights the unique experiences of being bicultural to more fully understand biculturalism. The bicultural negotiation process of integrating emphasizes drawing connections between cultures in an active way, and hybridizing centers on actively fusing different cultures to make something new. Likewise, frame switching is about actively moving between cultures in everyday life. This consideration of the self as an active agent has its roots in the works of William James. Classic research on the self in psychology empirically tested James' theorized "self as known" through self-schemata (Markus, 1977) and self-complexity (Linville, 1985), and his "self as knower" through self-regulation (Carver & Scheier, 1981; Mischel, Shoda, & Rodriguez, 1989) and self-affirmation (Steele, 1988). Similarly, current research on biculturalism has investigated the bicultural self not only as a vessel for the self-concept, identity, and knowledge but also as an active agent interacting dynamically with the surrounding sociocultural world. Understanding biculturals' active engagement with their world may be central to predicting how they think and behave and why.

People who identify as bicultural may do so for different reasons, from being recent immigrants or ethnic minority members to growing up as children of interfaith families, but what unites them is their experience of living in multiple cultural worlds, and this has important implications for the scope of our theory. We hope that the predictions put forth based on a transformative theory will stimulate new research that can apply broadly in the area of biculturalism, providing insights on how processes of culture mixing within an individual may lead to unique psychological outcomes. Studying the minds of biculturals may also illuminate the dynamic nature of cultural engagement more broadly. In keeping with perspectives that culture and the mind make each other up (Bruner, 1990), culture cannot simply be studied separately from the individual to understand the mind. Actively engaging with culture can change the mind in

qualitative ways, and the case of biculturals may be one of the clearest illustrations of how this process occurs and the potential impact it has on psychology.

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### Notes

1. Ethnic labels used by ethnic minorities living in immigrant-receiving countries make categorization even more complex (Kiang, 2008; Kiang, Perreira, & Fuligni, 2011). For example, Mexican Americans could describe their cultural heritage either in terms of the specific ethnic group they belong to (Mexican) or with a panethnic or racial label that subsumes the subgroups falling under it (Latino; see Okamoto & Mora, 2014, for a recent review on panethnicity). It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the factors that predict which spontaneous labels biculturals prefer to use. However, the general point is that however narrowly (e.g., Mexican) or broadly (e.g., Latino) one's cultural heritage is conceptualized, the bicultural processes proposed herein apply equally well.
2. Implicit in this discussion "Who is bicultural" is the consideration of who is *not* bicultural, or as an anonymous reviewer put it, whether there are still monoculturals in an increasingly multicultural world. Although the number of monoculturals may decrease overall as multiculturalism increases (Alter & Kwan, 2009; Morris, Chiu, & Liu, 2015), it is likely that some individuals in multicultural contexts may remain relatively monocultural due to tensions with or lower personal investment in other cultures among other reasons.

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