Towards and understanding of biculturalism: The dynamic tension of being biculural

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Outline

- Preamble
- Context – diversity and Luxembourg
- Review – current theories on biculturalism
- Introduce - theoretical building blocks
- Present – my model building on dynamic tension
- Engage - Discussion
• Florian Illies – 1913

• End of an era – new era?
  • Stefan Zweig – End of the era of stability
    • Questioning of values
    • Disorientation and Stress
    • Outbreak of “Neurasthenie”
  • Robert Musil – Begin of the era of haste
    • Being ruled by the watch
    • Technology/ electricity dictate pace of life

• Old wine in new bottles?
Era of Super-diversity (Vertovec, 2007)
- Globalisation, interconnectedness and transnationalism
- Diverse composition of the migrant community
- Complexification, acceleration of changes and increased fluidity of societies
- Need to rethink integration (Grzymala-Kazlowska, A. & Phillimore J., 2018)
- «Having exposure to multiple cultures is becoming the norm rather than the exception» (p. 963, West et al. 2017)

Fields of Tension in a boundary crossing world (Hermans, Konopka, Oosterwegel, & Zomber, 2017)
- Globalization: increasingly fluid and boundary crossing world
- People are «on the move» in boundary-crossing societies
- «on the move» within themselves.
Learning from Luxembourg (Murdock, 2017)
- Foreign population percentage 47.5% (Statec, 2019)
- Diverse population (length of stay, generation status, socio-occupational roles…)
- Mixed national families – children growing up with more than one cultural point of reference
Review of existing theories on biculturalism

- **First attempts** (Rebane, 2018)
  - Park & Stonequist
  - Goldberg

- **Early Models** (Murdock, 2016)
  - LaFromboise, Coleman & Gerton (1993)
  - Phinney & Devich-Navarro (1997)

- **Newer Models** (Murdock, 2016)
  - Cultural Frame-switching (CFS) – Hong et al. (2000)
  - Bicultural Integration Model (BII) – Benet-Martínez et al. (2012)

- **Recent Model**
  - Transformative Theory of Biculturalism - West et al. (2017)
First attempts

- Biculturalism as *precarious balancing act* between two systems.
- Focus on *adaptation* processes
- Assume a *linear* model of culture acquisition
  - Dominated until the 60s
  - Still reflected in some acculturation theories (see Rebane, 2018)
Conducted a literature review on the psychological impact of biculturalism with the intention to show *alternatives to the assumption of a linear model of culture acquisition.*

Five different models of second culture acquisition:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assimilation</td>
<td>Hierarchical, unidirectional relationship ongoing process of absorption into the culture that is perceived as dominant or more desirable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculturation</td>
<td>Non-hierarchical, bidirectional additive model of cultural acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternation</td>
<td>Hypothetical model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Multiculturalism)</td>
<td>Cultures merge and fuse together until they are indistinguishable and form a new culture.</td>
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Focus on effective *functioning* of individuals in dual cultures.

Development of the construct of *bicultural competence* which grows mainly out of the alternation model.
Dimensions of bicultural competence:

- Knowledge of cultural beliefs and values
- Positive attitudes to both minority and majority groups
- Bicultural efficacy
- Communication ability
- Role repertoire (range of culturally or situationally appropriate behaviors or roles)
- Sense of being grounded (stable social networks)

It is important to distinguish between cultural *identification* and cultural *knowledge*. A person can have knowledge of another culture without identifying with it.
There is more than one way to being bicultural:

- Assimilated
- Fused
- Blended bicultural
- Alternating bicultural
- Separated
- Marginal

The circles in the diagram represent ethnic and American cultures respectively, and the “X” represents the individual’s position with respect to the two cultures.
Criticism of earlier Models:

- Confounding of identity and behavioral markers
  - Labels such as “fused” or “blended” refer to *identity related aspects*
  - “alternating” refers to the *behavioral* domain that is the ability to engage in cultural frame switching (CFS).
Building Blocks:

- Hong et al. (2000) have adopted a dynamic, constructivist approach to understanding culture: Culture is internalized in the form of loose networks of domain-specific knowledge structures, such as categories and/or implicit theories.

- Biculturals navigate through their cultural worlds by switching between different cultural interpretive frames or meaning systems (e.g. culture-reinforced cognitive, affective and emotional schemas) in response to cultural cues.
Components of BII

- **Bicultural Identity Integration (BII)**
  - Degree of compatibility and overlap vs. conflict and dissociation perceived between two cultures

- **2 Components:**
  - **Cultural Conflict**
    - Harmony vs. Conflict
      - Affective
        - Neuroticism
        - Contextual pressures (social prejudice, rejection)
      - Outcome: SWB
  - **Cultural Distance**: Blendedness vs. Compartmentalization
    - Cognitive/perceptual
      - Low openness/cognitive rigidity
      - Contextual factors (e.g., low linguistic fluency, cultural composition of the environment)
Focus on *integrative complexity*, “…the capacity and willingness to acknowledge the legitimacy of competing perspectives on the same issue and to forge conceptual links among these perspectives” (p. 174).

Introduce *accountability pressure* - the need to justify one’s thoughts and actions to significant others.

- A single audience refers to a matrix of interpersonal accountability relationships composed of perspectives with a unified cultural orientation.
- A mixed audience refers to a matrix composed of at least two distinct cultural perspectives.
Acculturation Complexity Model (ACM) overview
Tadmor & Tetlock (2006, p. 176)

- Explicit integration of the **other**
- Acknowledging of **competing** perspectives
- Recognition of dissonance/ **tension**
Negotiation processes:

- Go beyond the additive model – acknowledge that the process of negotiation transforms the experience of culture.
Bicultural negotiation processes: New labels

- Cake analogy: Certain ingredients
- Combined in the right order
- Transformative process of combining the ingredients
Theoretical Building Blocks / theoretical foundations:

- Theoretical perspective: Cultural Psychology of semiotic dynamics (Valsiner, 2014, 2017 ….)
**Axiom 1:** All psychological life exists through **irreversibility of time.**

- All psychological functions operate on the border between past & future
- The present is a transient moment.
- Meaning making is always future-orientated.

**Axiom 2:** All human life is **mediated by signs.**

- Focus on meaningful life experiences

**Axiom 3:** Signs are **constructed, maintained, and demolished** as they form dynamic hierarchies.

**Axiom 4:** Signs are constructed by **active** sign makers who operate towards goals (**intentionality**) that are constantly being modified (**teleogenesis**).
Axiom 5: Sign functions constrain the range of possible experiences of the immediate future.

Axiom 6: Signs are catalysts (enabling or blocking conditions for phenomena).

Axiom 7: Constructed signs include their contexts (co-genetic logic).
The Power of the Triad – cogenetic logic (Tateo, 2016)

Developmental processes must follow a triadic, rather than binary logic.

Biculturalism – overcome binary logic C1 <-> C2 – they are not opposites.
Co-genetic relationship:

- The closed set – the boundary and the open set are codefined. They cannot exist without any of the components in the triadic system.

- A is closed – but non-A is open – in infinite set of possibilities
- National identity vs. quasi-national, not yet national, anti-national, foreigner, enemy etc. p. 439
A and non-A dynamically co-define each other and include a more or less large temporal and symbolic buffer zone that establishes at the same time the rules for separation and the rules for permeable borders between A and non-A.

- A = closed set = inside
- Non-A = open set = non-inside

A can dynamically expand or constrict over time.
Boundaries exist as structures that connect separated parts by providing the arena for their relationship.

„A boundary is not the point at which something stops … A boundary is the point from where something begins to be present.“


„Psychological membranes“: Look at process mechanisms which enable and suppress the relations between adjacent parts of the dynamic system.
Culture A

- A has a distinctive cultural value system, promoted by societal institutions and historical traditions.
- Within A: Positioning and counter-positioning.
- B has a distinctive cultural value system, promoted by societal institutions and historical traditions.
- Within B: Positioning and counter-positioning.
A meets B

Buffer Zone

Movement

Context – meaningful daily practices
Movement: Navigation and bicultural competence

Buffer Zone

Capacity and willingness to acknowledge the legitimacy of competing perspectives on the same issue and to forge conceptual links among these perspectives

Knowledge of cultural beliefs and values
Positive attitudes to both minority and majority groups
Bicultural efficacy
Communication ability
Role repertoire (range of culturally or situationally appropriate behaviors or roles)
Sense of being grounded (stable social networks)
Organizing principle: Dynamic Tension.
- NOT equilibrium or homeostasis.
- Tension as a positive force

- This dynamic tension ensures both flexibility and stability over time.

- Tensioinal integrity – Tensegrity.
… Such fields of tension emerge as a result of positioning and counter-positioning processes in the arena of the power-laden society where a distinctive cultural value system, promoted by societal institutions and historical traditions, provide the Self with opportunities and constraints for development. (Marsico & Tateo, 2017, p. 537).

Self – *dynamic semiotic system in constant evolutive tension*
Conclusion

Biculturalism:

Self-stabilizing tensegrity network.
- Tension as a positive force

Movement:
- Constant positioning and counter-positioning within different meaning systems

Conditions that facilitate this movement
- Within the society
- Within individuals

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