

Seeing Life through Bicultural Frames: Real-life Primes for Bicultural Frame Switching

With the support of the Simons Foundation, SFU students were invited by the Institute for the Humanities to submit written research proposals that focused on issues related to citizenship. Stacey Fitzsimmons presented the following selected paper on November 15, 2007, at SFU Harbour Centre.

Stacey Fitzsimmons is in the third year of her PhD in International Business. Her research focuses on cross-cultural management, and her thesis will look at the implications for global businesses of having bicultural employees. In particular, she will consider the different types of biculturalism and what each type brings to the global workplace.

ABSTRACT

Due in part to the rapid increase in numbers of bicultural individuals in the workplace, a recent stream of experimental research has focused on when and why bicultural individuals switch from one cultural frame to another. This interview-based study takes the knowledge gained from that research stream, and applies it to real-life scenarios, in order to determine the types of everyday conditions that might prime bicultural individuals to switch frames. Three external situations and two internal states are found to be likely conditions influencing bicultural frame switching in everyday life. The nature of bicultural frame switching has possible implications for citizenship in a country where the population comes from multiple cultural backgrounds.

SEEING LIFE THROUGH BICULTURAL FRAMES: REAL-LIFE PRIMES FOR BICULTURAL FRAME SWITCHING

Most management research assumes that individuals have only one cultural background, yet in today's global workforce, employees are

more and more likely to be bicultural. That is, they are more likely to be enmeshed in more than one cultural system and to operate within each culture as a native (Fu, Chiu, Morris & Young, 2007). One important exception is a stream of experimental research on bicultural frame switching that began with Hong et al.'s (2000) demonstration that bicultural individuals can actually switch from one cultural frame to another, depending on situations that prime each cultural perspective.

Since Hong et al.'s (2000) demonstration of the existence of the frame-switching process, a group of researchers have probed the nature of the process with a systematic series of experimental studies. They have found that it is a largely subconscious, non-volitional process (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000), that it is influenced by bicultural identity integration (Cheng, Lee, Benet-Martinez, 2006), that bicultural individuals have higher levels of cognitive complexity when thinking about culture (Benet-Martinez, Lee & Leu, 2006), and that frame switching can influence the kind of attributions made about others (Fu et al., 2007). As expected for any nascent phenomenon, many questions are yet to be answered, including the following from one of the most recent

articles in this series; “How do external factors (such as cultural cues) and individual factors (such as past bicultural experiences) influence the social behaviour of biculturals” (Cheng et al., 2006, p. 742). That is, *how and when does the phenomenon of bicultural frame-switching occur in everyday life?* This study attempts to answer this question by taking bicultural frame-switching out of the lab and into everyday life.

The most recent article within the frame-switching literature concludes that future research is needed to uncover the contextual factors that trigger frame-switching (Fu et al., 2007). It explains that frame switching, as an adaptive process, could be useful in an international, multicultural business environment. But in order for organizations to make use of bicultural employees’ frame-switching abilities, they need to understand the conditions that bring it about.

Researchers outside of this narrowly-focused stream of research also encourage exploration of cultural primes in real-life circumstances. Most notably, a recent overview of future directions in international business research by Leung, Bhagat, Buchan, Erez and Gibson (2005) argues that primes are valuable research tools, but that research based on priming must be translated into real-world experience before it can become useful in business environments. From a broader perspective, many calls have been made for more complex understandings of culture’s influence on individuals. One of the most prominent calls proposed the metaphor of the cultural mosaic, where each tile represents a unique level or aspect of cultural influence (Chao & Moon, 2005). Traditionally, cross-cultural research has been just that; research done across more than one cultural environment, where the only variable of interest was country culture. Now that phenomena like bicultural frame-switching are starting to come into their own in the literature, we are developing more “tiles” in the cultural mosaic that will help us understand culture’s pattern of influence.

When bicultural frame switching is taken out of the lab environment, complexity increases, due to the myriad contexts, individuals, social groupings, and circumstances that may all be acting on the individual, confounding the clean frame switching results found in controlled experiments. A theoretical frame becomes necessary to make sense of the phenomena in this complex environment, and this paper takes a social identity theory perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) to understanding bicultural frame switching. As explained in the next section, this perspective is especially useful for understanding how individuals navigate membership in multiple identity groups (Roccas & Brewer, 2002).

**HOW OUR SOCIAL GROUPS
HELP DEFINE WHO WE ARE:
A SOCIAL IDENTITY THEO-
RY PERSPECTIVE ON BICUL-
TURAL FRAME SHIFTING**

Since Ashforth and Mael’s (1989) introduction of social identity theory to organizational research, it has become increasingly used to explain some of the fundamental areas of study in the field, including power (see Taylor, Moghaddam, Gamble, & Zellerer, 1987; Turner, 1991), leadership (see Haslam, Oakes, McGarty, Turner, & Onorato, 1995; Hollander, 1964) and decision-making (see Turner & Oakes, 1989; Turner, 1991). Its increasing popularity as an explanatory theory is due in part to its power to explain a wide range of organizational phenomena. However, it has not often been applied to the area of cross-cultural research, and the current stream of bicultural frame switching studies do not take a social identity theory perspective. Instead, they argue that culture is embedded in knowledge, and their primes prompt culture-specific constructs (Verkeyten & Pouliasi, 2006). However, two recent papers are starting to build evidence for social identity theory’s utility in understanding frame switching. The first, a study on Dutch-Greek biculturals in the Netherlands (Verkeyten

& Pouliasi, 2006) emphasized the importance of individual attitudes towards each group, and the second (Briley & Wyer, 2002) found that the experimental primes used in Hong's original research also increased group identification. Thus, a secondary goal of this paper is to demonstrate how social identity theory and its close cousin, self-categorization theory (Turner Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1987), can be used to better understand how individuals navigate multiple cultural identities in a complex environment.

According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), people identify with a social group and try to positively differentiate their own in-group from out-groups in order to enhance self-esteem. Self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987) describes one aspect of social identity theory, namely how people categorize themselves in groups in order to reduce uncertainty. When the context makes a certain category salient, individuals adopt the prototypical group characteristics of that category. A prototypical group member is simply the fictitious exemplar who we think would best represent the group.

Two features of social identity theory and self-categorization theory may be useful in understanding bicultural frame switching in a social environment. First, people define and differentiate their multiple identity groups (in-groups) with respect to referent out-groups (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Terry, 2000). That is, when out-groups are noticeably present, people within an in-group will identify more strongly with that in-group and will become more like one another, in an attempt to enhance self-esteem through positive identification with the in-group (e.g., Rosenthal & Crisp, 2006). Thus, when other cultural groups are made salient as referent out-groups, individuals will identify more strongly with their own cultural group and will adopt their own culture's typical behaviours, attitudes, and values. This process becomes understandably more complex when two cultural groups have comparable claims to in-group status.

The second important feature of these two theories refers to categorizing others. Not only do people adopt the typical characteristics of their own identity groups (Turner et al., 1987), but they also assign typical characteristics of relevant identity groups to other individuals (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). For example, if a stranger is categorized as a Chinese woman, she will initially be assigned characteristics representative of the typical Chinese woman. This assigning of characteristics can, in turn, make out-groups seem more cohesive by assigning the same characteristics to all members of an out-group. Cohesive out-groups may then become more salient, perpetuating the cycle of cultural identity salience and continued categorization along cultural lines.

Although there are many more aspects of both social identity and self-categorization theories, the aspects explained in this section are sufficient to begin understanding bicultural frame switching and related literatures. But first, a quick examination of similar constructs that are *not* frame switching.

Related constructs

Frame switching can seem like a type of impression management, but differs because in the case of frame switching, each frame is an accurate representation of self, whereas managing an impression includes "putting on" behaviours that may not be true to the self-concept or identity (Tedeschi, 1981). A second related, newly developed concept, is cross-cultural code switching, which describes consciously "putting on" culturally-appropriate behaviour within single interactions (Molinsky, 2007). Again, the difference between code switching and bicultural frame switching is that code switching refers to consciously performing actions that are unfamiliar or uncomfortable, but appropriate in the particular cultural context (Molinsky, 2007). Bicultural frame switching, in contrast, refers to subconsciously switching between cultural frames that both reside within the individual.

Neither frame is foreign or forced; they are both part of the “self.”

Although the literature on bicultural frame switching is young and emerging, it is based on the related literatures of acculturation—the process of adjusting to a new culture—and biculturalism. The acculturation literature has several well-recognized and largely agreed-upon models of acculturation (Tsai, Chentsova-Dutton & Wong, 2002), including Berry’s (1980) bidimensional acculturation strategies model. Development of a bicultural identity is outside the scope of this study, although the types of acculturation strategies might be related to the experience of frame-switching. For example, in Berry’s (1980) bi-dimensional acculturation model, an integrated strategy means that individuals identify with both the original and the new cultures. As described in Roccas & Brewer’s (2002) paper on identity complexity, there are several meaningfully different ways these multiple identities can be cognitively related to each other, and each of these different ways may have implications on the priming consequences of environmental stimuli.

Although the experimental research on which this study is based focused on the act of switching from one cultural frame to another, this study’s focus is on situations where only one cultural frame is accessible or salient. There are two reasons for this focus. The first is frame switching’s subconscious nature (Devos, 2006; Hong et al, 2000), rendering it difficult for participants to recollect instances of actually switching frames. Previous studies have found that *accessibility* of a cultural frame is the key determinant of its use. That is, when contextual cues make a particular cultural frame accessible or salient, it is more likely to be used within that context. Thus, instead of asking participants to delve into their subconscious minds to unearth instances of frame switching, this study asks interviewees to report instances when they have felt like one of their cultural frames was particularly salient or accessible. The second reason for this focus is that the act of switching

frames itself is not necessarily the most useful or interesting aspect of frame switching. In the international business context, it is bicultural individuals’ ability to see through more than one cultural frame that makes them valuable. For example, a bicultural Indo-Canadian’s ability to take on an East Indian frame when working in India, then a Canadian frame when working in Canada, would be particularly useful, while it is harder to see the utility of the act of switching itself. Thus, this study focuses on discovering instances where only one cultural frame is accessible, rather than instances when bicultural individuals recognized a switch taking place.

Finally, a cultural frame is a culturally-specific meaning system, including values, beliefs, norms, and knowledge, that is shared by individuals within the same culture (D’Andrade, 1984). When a particular cultural identity becomes salient, social identity theory proposes that the associated cultural frame is activated. Based on this accumulated literature, I conducted an interview study with bicultural individuals.

METHOD

This paper’s departure from the cognitive focus of previous frame switching studies also merits a departure from the experimental method. Discovering real-life situations where frame switching may occur is best done through qualitative methods. Ethnography is the best method to watch frame-switching occur, but in order to catch instances of frame-switching, it is first necessary to know what types of situations are appropriate for study. That is, before we can place ourselves in situations where we are likely to see frame-switching occur, we need to identify relevant situations to study. Identification of relevant situations is best done through interviews, since interviewees can explain multiple situations when they have experienced a feeling of being in one cultural frame or another.

Twelve one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted by the author, a Canadian, at

Table 1: Participant breakdown by demographics

Total	Background	Born in Canada	Born outside Canada
2	Chinese-Cdn	1	1
3	HK-Cdn	1	2
2	German-Cdn	0	2
2	Serbian-Cdn	1	1
1	Iraqi-Cdn	0	1
1	Indo-Cdn	1	0
1	Taiwanese-Cdn	0	1

an office on campus at Simon Fraser University. Interviews lasted between 35 minutes and an hour, and each one started with a request for the interviewee to describe their own personal history and background, in order to ground the rest of the interview in the participant’s own personal circumstances. Every interviewee was asked to describe instances when he or she felt particularly “X” and particularly “Y,” where X and Y represent the individual’s cultures. Feeling particularly identified with one culture indicates activation of its associated frame. To gain understanding about which situational elements triggered cultural identity salience, participants were encouraged to tell detailed stories about these incidents. Probes such as “how did that feel?,” “who was there?,” and “why did you feel that way?” encouraged participants to talk about these situations in detail. In addition, individuals were specifically asked who their closest friends were, how they felt when with those friends, and how they felt when with their families, drawing on research that suggests people may be as important as situation in triggering cultural identification (e.g., Yang & Bond, 1980). See Appendix A for the full interview protocol.

Participants

Because the bicultural experience is so tightly tied to the political and economic relationships between a bicultural individual’s respective countries, Phinney & Devich-Navarro (1997)

recommended studying each bicultural group separately, in light of their unique historical and political context. However, there may be commonalities in the types of contextual cues that trigger a particular frame to become salient, and the only way to discover these commonalities is to study a variety of bicultural individuals. My sample combined both purposive and convenience sampling techniques, where I first invited anyone who self-identified as a bicultural individual to participate, and I followed by asking particular individuals to participate, based on what I knew of their backgrounds. I strove to interview matched pairs of individuals, based on their demographic and cultural backgrounds. This was an attempt to tease out the culture-specific experiences from the universal ones. I achieved my goal to some extent. See Table 1 for a breakdown of interview participants’ demographics. All participants were university students, evenly distributed between the ages of 20 and 35, and all included “Canadian” as one of their cultural identities.

Analysis

Except for the first three exploratory interviews, I audio recorded all of the interviews and took notes while interviewing participants. I transcribed all of the interviews, including tone of voice, laughing, significant pauses, or hand gestures that might aid interpretation of written transcripts. I wrote memos during the transcription process about relevant or interesting points. Once the transcriptions were complete, I located all the responses to the question, “Describe a situation when you felt particularly ‘X.’” Descriptions shorter than a few sentences were discarded, since further analysis requires details about the situations. I only included descriptions of situations where the interviewee explicitly pointed out that one cultural frame was salient. The interviews also included many descriptions of multicultural situations and activities, but unless the participant mentioned feeling identified with one culture during the situation, these descriptions were excluded

Table 2: SEQ Table * ARABIC 2: Situation primes and exemplary quotations

Priming Situation	Role of affect	Exemplary quotations	Pull / Push
Singled out as different by cultural insiders	neutral (she made no comments positive or negative evaluations about either of her cultures)	One Hong-Kong-Canadian female said that when she is with her more Chinese friends, they point out that she's "so not Hong Kong anymore", and that this makes her feel very Canadian in comparison.	push away
	positive affect for Chinese (Taiwanese) culture	A Taiwanese-Canadian female described calling her brother for tax advice. He told her she was "acting like a Canadian, because I was thinking the more you make, the more you pay." This made her sad, because she wanted to keep her Chinese way of thinking.	pull towards
	positive affect for Chinese culture	Chinese-Canadian female: When I'm with my family? I try to be as Chinese as I can, because number one – I don't want to get made fun of, and number two – I'm kind of aware of the fact that I'm drifting away from that traditional type of, just basic traditions.	pull towards
Big, fun cultural events	positive affect	Interviewer: Do you have a time ... when you've felt particularly Chinese? Chinese-Canadian male: Well whenever we have big family gatherings, like for Chinese New Year.	pull towards
	positive affect	Indo-Canadian male: Me and my brother were in Prague two years ago. There was the hockey championship going on, so we went – and we knew it was on, but we weren't sure if we'd be able to get tickets and stuff, so we went in and eventually we were able to get tickets. But we had to sprint to the ticket – because there was a big group and it was a big thing (laughs), but eventually we got tickets to go see Canada-Switzerland, and it was cool that like, Morrison was playing, and Cook, and all these Canucks, so it was really cool, and we were alone. Like, there was a big section of Swiss fans, and they were all cheering, and every time they cheered, we'd stand up and cheer for Canada (smiling). So it was kind of cool, it was really fun (laughs). Interviewer: That sounds good. That sounds good. So how did that make you feel, when you were there? "Great. I mean, we won. Obviously. So it was really great. I totally identify with Canadian culture and stuff."	pull towards
Detect differences in norms / values	positive affect	When I went [to visit family in Montenegro], I just found it so shocking, for example, we sat down to dinner, and I'm expected to put food on my husband's plate. Right. And so I'm like, holy shit this is so weird. So I had to go, like, you know, while I was there I wasn't gonna instigate or whatever, so I just kinda, you know, did everything for him. It's really – it's acceptable over there. And so my husband was like, 'oh yeah, this is the best', and I said, 'don't get too used to this'. Because my grandparents would be like, [puts on accented voice] 'Oh my God, what's wrong with you? You don't want to do this for him? blahblahblah?' ... I was really surprised about the food thing. [makes an unhappy, 'what's this?' noise] And then you feel stupid asking, because then they'll assume you're so Canadian, you don't even know your own culture, so you just kind of go with it.	push away
	negative affect	Indo-Canadian male: Indians from India – I mean, even I think this about them – it's just that they're really forward, they're really rude. And they're really, like, uncouth, I guess – for lack of a better word. And I've been on a flight from Frankfurt to Vancouver, and I think there was a wedding or something, and there were a lot of Indians from India, and they were, like, I couldn't stand them. And I couldn't stand them. Like, the terminal was packed, and there were guys just sitting on – you know how they have those chairs together? – sitting on one chair with his legs across three or four chairs, and I was so mad. I couldn't stand it. But that's how it is over there. It's so packed. If you don't take it, someone else will just take it from you. So I think that's – and even when we were going through the customs, I showed them my passport and they were like, 'oh, are you from this wedding?', and we were like, 'hell no. (laughs) We're not from this wedding', right? So that's when I guess it's clearly Canadian.	push away
	ambivalent (spoke highly of both German and Canadian cultures)	German-Canadian: when my brother came here, I saw a lot of things the German way again, and things which I saw – which I thought was the German way – was more Canadianized. Like I said, it was more laid-back, and when I went [to Germany], he was more strict about things, like, I went to places and just . . . He was more strict with me, but I don't know why.	push away

from analysis. This was done so that analysis could focus on situations where one cultural frame was triggered and not those situations where culture in general became noticeable.

This process exposed 22 descriptions that I used in further analysis. Each description was then coded for the reported reasons why one cultural frame was accessible. If more than one reason was given, each reason was coded separately. These codes remained close to the actual text. Examples include, “feels Chinese during Chinese New Year,” “feels Canadian because doesn’t like Hong Kong,” “feels non-Iraqi when he sees differences between himself and family,” and “felt Canadian when she realized how seriously she objected to the gender roles in Montenegro.” Next, similar reasons were clustered together, resulting in 12 categories. I divided these categories into external stimuli, versus internal states, since sometimes interviewees’ frames were primed by external events, and other times frames were primed by the interaction of their own perspective with external events. Next, I dropped any categories with instances drawn from only one or two interviews, so the final list includes only categories salient to a wide range of bicultural individuals. Some of the dropped stimuli may also be salient to a wide range of biculturals, but I decided to err on the side of dropping too many, rather than keeping ones that should have been dropped. The dropped categories include the following external stimuli: “Notice similar values,” “time around family,” and “unfamiliar surroundings”; and the following internal states: “problematic language skills,” and “can’t understand traditions.” The result from this process is three categories of situations that prime one cultural frame—being singled out as different by cultural insiders; big, fun, cultural events; and detecting differences between self and others within cultural group—and two internal states that interact with the situation— affect towards the cultural group, and bicultural identity integration.

RESULTS

Overall, the interviewees consistently reported that context has a significant effect on each cultural frame’s accessibility. As one German-Canadian put it, “although I feel more German, I feel a real connection there, and now that I’ve moved to Canada, when I go back to Germany, I feel more Canadianized, so it depends where I am right now.”

The three categories of situations that prime one cultural frame over the other are laid out in Table 2, along with the affect range associated with that category, exemplary quotations, and the resultant push or pull effect on cultural frame priming. That is, each category, when combined with a positive or negative affect, will result in either a push away from the cultural frame, or a pull towards it. When a condition produces a push away from a particular cultural frame, this does not necessarily mean a pull towards the individual’s other cultural frame, and the interviews included in this study gave no indication whether or not that is the case.

Affect was chosen as an important driver of cultural primes because it was revealed frequently in the interviews. In this study, it refers to a relatively stable liking or disliking for a culture. That is, some bicultural individuals prefer one culture over the other, and may actively try to become more or less integrated into their respective cultures, based on this preference. However, affect’s effect is complex. It interacts with the situation such that an overall positive affect towards a culture does not consistently pull people towards that culture. As demonstrated in Table 2, there are situations where even someone with a positive affect towards a culture can be pushed away from it by similar circumstances that pull others.

One priming condition that sometimes pulled and sometimes pushed was the experience of being singled out as different by cultural insiders. The other two conditions did not depend on affect for the resultant push or pull. Big, fun cultural events were uniformly associ-

ated with a pull towards that cultural frame, and situations where interviewees detected differences between themselves and others within one of their cultural groups were uniformly associated with a push away from that cultural frame. Each category is described in turn.

Big, fun cultural events

For many of the interviewees, when I asked for a moment when they felt like one cultural frame was particularly salient, the first situations they reported were big, fun cultural events. Examples include Chinese New Year (mentioned by many interviewees), the Aga Khan's visit to Vancouver, and a Canadian hockey game in Prague. In each instance, the bicultural individuals mentioned how much they enjoyed being part of the festivities. It is possible to view any of these events as a cultural "outsider," but they often lose their meaning and significance as bonding moments for cultural group members. For cultural group insiders, these events are a chance to bond and celebrate being part of a group that instills pride. A Hong Kong-Canadian female described feeling particularly joyful in the weeks leading up to Chinese New Year. She later recognized that during that time of year, she relied more heavily on a red and gold colour scheme in her decorating job than during any other time of year. An Indo-Canadian interviewee animatedly described the way he felt during the Aga Khan's visit to Vancouver:

He visited Vancouver in June of last year, so pretty much—it's a really big deal, and a lot of people go and just rent a hotel room downtown and just stay there. And when he gives speeches or whatever, there must've been—oh, around 15,000 people, Ismailis from all around Vancouver came. I guess at that time you feel particularly attached to the culture.

Interviewees uniformly described a pull towards the cultural frame of these events, regardless of affect. However, I found no instances where an interviewee with negative affect towards a culture also described one of these cultural events.

Based on this non-evidence, I cannot say if this combination would result in a push away from the event's cultural frame, or if it was not mentioned because cultural frames are not primed when an individual's less-favoured culture hosts an event. However, the pattern seems to consistently imply that big cultural events draw bicultural individuals towards the associated cultural frame.

Singled out as different by cultural insiders

Many bicultural individuals described situations where others from one of their cultural groups pointed out that they were different from the "group average." For example, A Hong Kong-Canadian female described a situation¹ when she was in Hong Kong, waiting in line at a café and feeling confident that she fit in. The Chinese man in line in front of her was wearing a western suit, and the clerk duly addressed him in Cantonese, then turned to this interviewee and immediately addressed her in English. Occurrences such as these were often a surprise to the interviewees, as it was for this woman in Hong Kong.

This prime is unique from the other two because interviewees reported two contradictory priming effects resulting from similar situations. For example, the interviewee from the story in the Hong Kong café reported that she felt very different from Hong Kong people after this incident; it resulted in a push away from her Chinese frame. In contrast, another Hong Kong-Canadian female described the following situation:

All my cousins, they came to Canada after they were graduated from high school, with my aunts. But we [her and her sister] were born here. So every time we have big traditional Chinese dinners, me and my sister are kind of like the centre of attention, because they make fun of us, because we're banana [refers to being Chinese on the outside, and Canadian on the inside].

¹ Interview was recorded in notes from an exploratory interview, not audio-recorded.

When her cousins set her apart from them, her response was to pull herself towards her Chinese frame, in part because of her strong positive affect towards Chinese culture. When I'm with them I try to be more Chinese. Like, I try and speak as much Chinese as I can. And when my little cousins are there, I try to be like, "oh, talk more Chinese. Don't speak so much English." Because I don't want them to lose touch with that same aura—Chinese aura.

Thus, the common experience of being recognized as different by cultural insiders resulted in opposite frames being primed in these two women. A similar pattern played out among others I interviewed. The recurring pattern included the role of affect in determining which cultural frame became primed during this type of situation. Specifically, the interviewee from the first story, whose experience being differentiated as a non-Hong-Kong native pushed her away from her Chinese frame, gave no indication that she preferred one culture to the other. The interviewee from the second story, who reacted to her family's differentiation of her and her sister by purposefully taking on her Chinese frame, specified quite strongly that she highly valued her Chinese culture. There were no instances where interviewees with negative affect towards one of their cultures described being recognized as different by cultural insiders. Overall, events like this were consistently reported as priming cultural identity, but the particular identity primed depended on the affect towards the culture doing the differentiating.

Detect differences in norms and values

The most common narrative during these interviews described situations where the bicultural individuals recognized differences between themselves and one of their cultural groups. Each of these scenarios served to further push the bicultural individual away from the cultural frame being described. Some of the

most colourful descriptions of this type came from a Serbian-Canadian female. In this narrative, she specifically describes switching frames when going out clubbing with different groups of friends.

Even on the weekend, we went clubbing with some of our Serbian friends. We buy rounds for each other, we don't penny-pinch. You don't do: I pay for myself and you pay for yourself. You pick up the tab, that's just how it is. But when you go with your Canadian friends, even if it's three bucks, they pay for themselves. You pay for yourselves. So. Yeah. There's definitely that kind of difference . . . it's really weird in my head. It's just weird in my mind. Just when it comes to the paying thing. Everything else is fine. Because we're . . . I guess it is kind of hard to explain. It's like, you don't realize that you do the switchover, I guess, you're just so used to it happening. But yeah, the paying thing is just so weird in my head. I'm like, "why would you make yourself look so cheap?" (Laughs)

This interviewee generally described a positive affect for her Serbian culture, meaning she enjoyed being Serbian and actively pursued her Serbian identity. This does not mean that all situations draw her towards her Serbian frame. Later in the interview, she reported the following situation, where she noticed differences in expected role behaviour between herself and her family in Montenegro, as one where she felt particularly Canadian.

When I just went [to Montenegro], and I saw how, like the gender roles are in Europe. That's when I realized that I'm not totally, like, old school typical Serbian, type thing. My girlfriend is 22, she just got married. She's pregnant. She's out to here. And her mother-in-law was sitting there. Her husband's grandma, and everyone in the house was sitting while she was out to here, scrubbing, cooking, cleaning, all sorts of stuff. And I'm just like, "oh my god, this is nuts!" So the men are just responsible for

bringing the money in, and the woman has to do everything else.

As described in Table 2, regardless of whether the bicultural individual held positive, negative, or neutral affect towards the culture of interest, noticing differences between personal beliefs, norms and values, and those of a cultural group, consistently resulted in a push away from that cultural frame.

Bicultural identity integration

Based on previous findings about the role of bicultural identity integration on frame switching (Cheng et al., 2006), I searched for an effect of this internal state. There was indeed variation in the way individuals describe their cultures' relation to one another, ranging from cultures that were perceived to be highly compatible and integrated (high BII), to cultures that were perceived to be in conflict or competition with one another (low BII). However, this variation was not related in any systematic way to the three priming conditions. It was related to whether or not individuals reported experiencing bicultural frame switching. Specifically, individuals who described an integrated relationship among their cultures did not think they experienced frame-switching when first asked. For example, a Chinese-Canadian male reported, "I wouldn't say there's any moment that I feel particularly Chinese. I tend to have the same values all the time." In contrast, individuals who described their cultures as conflicting with each other had an easier time describing times when each of their cultural frames was activated.

DISCUSSION

The situational and internal primes, as described above, are best understood through a social identity theory perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This interpretation suggests the study findings may be relevant to non-bicultural individuals, since any individual with more than one distinct identity of the same level may switch between frames. For example, Asian women

did worse on a math test when they were given a gender prime than when they were given a cultural prime (Shih, Pittinsky, & Ambady, 1999). These results reflect a frame switch from the common stereotype that women are less proficient at math, to the equally common stereotype that Asians are more so.

Drawing on social identity theory, it is relatively simple to understand how big cultural events could prime an associated cultural identity. When individuals are drawn to associate with the cultural group involved in an event, they also take on the prototypical group member characteristics, thereby adopting the frame of that culture. This is consistent with the process described by all of the interviewees who mentioned this type of event.

The other two primes can also be understood from the social identity perspective, especially when affect is taken into account. As Tajfel originally described it (1981), affect played a significant role in defining social groups; this role has tended to be diminished over time as social identity research became associated with experimental research on minimal groups (Chao & Moon, 2005). This current study indicates that perhaps it is time for affect to be reinstated as a powerful explanatory variable. When faced with a situation where one of their own cultural identities is made salient—either by being pointed out by cultural insiders, or through self-recognition of differences—individuals seem to have some influence over which cultural frame they then take on. In some cases, they cast that salient group as an out-group and differentiate themselves from it (what I described as a "push" mechanism), or in other cases they embrace the cultural identity and take on the associated cultural frame (a "pull" mechanism).

Due to the small number of interviews conducted, and the exploratory nature of this study, several limitations need to be considered. First, the interviews were all conducted in Canada, with a Canadian interviewer, so the responses reported here are flavoured by this context. Whether the Canadian context pulled inter-

viewees toward their Canadian cultural frames or pushed them away, may have depended on each interviewee's affect for Canadian culture. The second limitation was also discussed in the methods section of this paper. That is, studying a subconscious process using a retrospective interview technique is impractical. To get around this challenge, I focused this study on situations where one cultural frame was salient. All but one interviewee² had no problem identifying situations where each of their cultural identities was primed. Finally, there is too much variance in the external primes and internal states that may influence bicultural frame switching, to make solid predictions based on a study of this size. Future research might focus on any of the following factors: individual perception of how multiple identities relate to each other (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997), participation in culturally relevant activities (Phinney, 1990), linguistic preferences (Olmedo & Padilla, 1978), and political and ideological views and activity (Constantinou & Harvey, 1985).

CONCLUSION

This paper makes three unique contributions to the literature on bicultural frame switching. The main contribution is a list of three situations that are likely to prime particular cultural frames. Future frame-switching researchers hoping to catch instances of switching from one cultural frame to another should study moments when one of these situations is introduced. The three natural-setting primes include big cultural events, situations where cultural insiders single out bicultural individuals as different from themselves, and situations where individuals perceive differences between themselves and others within their cultural group.

The second contribution is a recognition that internal factors, especially affect, may

2 This one interviewee insisted she was not, in fact, bicultural. Her cultural identities were so merged that she saw no difference between them and saw herself as "cosmopolitan" instead. Thus, she had no stories to contribute to this study's analysis.

play a bigger role in determining which frame becomes accessible than previously admitted in the experimental frame-switching literature. Indeed, situations where cultural insiders singled out bicultural individuals as different, produced either a push away from that cultural frame, or a pull towards that frame, depending on the bicultural individual's affect towards that culture. This indicates that even if frame switching itself is a subconscious process, it may be motivated nonetheless.

Finally, bicultural identity integration's effect on bicultural frame switching contradicts some of the experimental findings of previous research by Benet-Martínez et al. (2002). The current study found that perceived conflict between one's cultures made it difficult to see frame switching occur, if it occurred at all. Previous experimental research (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002; Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005) found that individuals who saw their cultures as congruent with each other shifted to whatever frame was being primed, while individuals who saw their cultures as conflicting with each other responded to cultural primes by taking on the *opposite* cultural frame from the one being primed. That is, Chinese-Americans with conflicting cultural identities responded to Chinese primes by taking on an American frame, and responded to American primes by taking on a Chinese frame. In both situations, the experimental research found that frame-shifting occurred, but participants' awareness of the process was never measured.

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Appendix—SEQ Appendix *

ALPHABETIC A: Interview Protocol			
Name	Age	Sex	Cultures
Personal background, including the number of years lived in each country, birth country and family history.			
How do you identify yourself, culturally?			
Language proficiency & when/where each is used.			
Which cultures do you identify with most strongly? What does that mean to you – to identify with “being bicultural”?			
Is that always the case – i.e., in all situations?			
Tell about a time when you felt particularly X? How did that feel? where were you? Who else was there? What did you do in response? Why?			
Tell about a time when you felt particularly Y? How did that feel? Where were you? Who else was there? What did you do in response? Why?			
Who are your closest friends? What are their cultural backgrounds? How do you relate to them?			
Tell about a time when you felt being bicultural was an asset? or helpful? useful?			
Tell about a time when you felt being bicultural was hard? unhelpful?			
When have you felt most comfortable being X? What was it about that situation? What about being Y?			
When have you felt least comfortable being X? What was it about that situation? What about being Y?			
Anything else you’d like to tell me about your experience of being bicultural?			

Notes:

- Interview was recorded in notes from an exploratory interview, not audio-recorded.
- This one interviewee insisted she was not, in fact, bicultural. Her cultural identities were so merged that she saw no difference between them and saw herself as “cosmopolitan” instead. Thus, she had no stories to contribute to this study’s analysis.