Calling for 'The New Cultural Normal': Learning from intra-company biculturalism

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Aim: This research aims to understand the value of individuals having several inherent cultures and explore their specific needs and skills to improve managing cultural challenges in the work environment. The emerging conceptual framework of reaching 'The New Cultural Normal' demonstrates opportunities for dealing with cross-cultural situations not only internationally but especially intra-national.

Design / Research methods: Based on insights and narratives of bicultural employees collected through 18 interviews, several vital categories emerged followed by the attribution of each to a corporate setting and considering which has the most substantial influence on that category. As biculturalism is an extreme form of coping with cultural diversity, the interviewees represent vital experts in coping with culturally diverse challenges.

Conclusion / Findings: The emerging concept of reaching 'The New Cultural Normal' describes the process of attaining the status of full integration of biculturalism among organizations. It will help each corporate setting level, defined as bicultural employees, colleagues, supervisors, and the company, to enhance their awareness of dealing with cross-cultural situations.

Originality / value of the article: This study provides a beneficial starting tool for shaping the future workplace where more inclusion and contentment will lead to qualitative improved team outcomes thus increasing corporate performance and can even result in long-term societal changes.

Keywords: Cultural Diversity, Biculturalism, Intra-national, Cross-cultural Management, Work Place Integration, Organization

JEL: M14, M16

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1. Introduction

Where do we stand, and what is the problem?

In the course of the increasing global collaboration that is forced by either push or pull drivers (Eytan 2004; Van Hear et al. 2018), society is becoming undeniably culturally more diverse and complex as vast numbers of people cross borders (Coleman 2009; van Nimwegen, Van der Erf 2010). Standard definitions of biculturalism include immigrants, refugees, expatriates, and ethnic minorities (Berry 2003). Additionally, Benet-Martinez et al. (2002) define biculturals as people who are exposed to and have internalized two cultures. Albeit institutional statistics show that bicultural individuals will make up a sizeable stake of future employees' cohorts (Coleman 2009; German Federal Statistical Office 2016), this phenomenon of biculturalism in the work environment is still understudied. On one hand, it is because of indistinguishable examined cohorts including expatriates; on the other hand, it is due to majorly focusing on international cross-cultural management. In itself, this phenomenon is worth exploring in-depth because biculturalism depicts an extreme form of coping with cultural diversity with an ever-increasing number of individuals who cannot yield to learning and becoming experts in coping with this challenge.

Bicultural individuals' experiences in the workforce can help to develop knowledge and understanding of how to deal with and adapt to diverse and challenging situations while considering bicultural skills (Nguyen, Benet-Martínez 2007). Thus, managerial implications can be drawn upon the emerging conceptual framework dealing with the full integration of bicultural individuals which will improve cross-cultural management in the future while the importance of handling culturally challenging situations inevitably increases.

Research questions

Biculturals have created unique behavioral traits and skills because they have been exposed to cohort-specific cultural situations since childhood. Thus, they are comprehensively examined in the psychological research field (Hong 2010). Nguyen and Benet-Martinez's meta-analytic research in 2007 reveals that bicultural individuals who implemented the acculturation approach to deal with their several

different cultures developed bicultural-specific skills, such as negotiation and cultural problem-solving skills, and used them across their environment and is also mirrored in their professional surroundings. Even though this circumstance has been detected and empirically proven, bicultural employees are still insufficiently investigated among corporate studies concerning their roles and impacts in the work environment (Brannen, Thomas 2010; Hong 2010). These individuals represent vital experts in coping with culturally diverse challenges whereby the data gained through qualitative interviews will lay the profound foundation of valuable knowledge to create the conceptual framework. Hence, the first objective of this study is to answer the question:

Research question 1) Which competencies do bicultural employees possess, and are they able to make use of them?

Additionally, academic research majorly supports the beneficial impact of working in culturally diverse teams; thus, synergies by sharing values and experiences can originate (Cox, Blake 1991; Stahl et al. 2010; Noe et al. 2017). Otherwise, cross-cultural management encompasses potentially arising challenges in communication, interpreting the behavior of colleagues, and also occurring frictions (Søderberg, Holden 2002; Martin 2014). Most bicultural individuals work in a company containing their primary culture while the impact of their minor culture on their work ethic and approach has not yet been examined. Thus, the question arises if their ethnic culture influences the work performance at all:

Research question 2) How do bicultural employees influence and contribute to their team's outcome and ultimately to the company's performance?

Furthermore, either forced by difficult political or environmental circumstances in their home country (push driver) or voluntary, for instance, due to labor opportunities (pull driver), an unprecedented number of immigrants will continue to settle in foreign countries (Eytan 2004; Van Hear et al. 2018). As a nation's population composition is becoming ever more fractured and diverse, especially in developed

countries, the relevance of biculturalism gains increasing importance as it will cross paths with the work environment daily (van Nimwegen, Van der Erf 2010). This development shifts the focus of cross-cultural management across national borders towards an urge for systemic research on coping with cultural diversity on an intra-national level, even more of how and what bicultural individuals contribute to the workforce (Hong 2010). To be able to learn from bicultural competencies to increase the effective coping of cultural challenges occurring in the work environment, there is a need for a more profound understanding of bicultural employees' specific contribution, which concludes in the following question:

Research question 3) What are the critical managerial factors that enable the utilization of bicultural competencies?

Why is this problem relevant?

While the collocation of society changes, the academic definition of culture also changes. Deviating from a culture defined as bounded to national borders (Hofstede 1984), its meaning needs to be redefined to include the perception of the culture of immigrants and people with a migrant background (Søderberg, Holden 2002). The majority of research about cross-cultural management analyses this topic on an international level between monocultural individuals with a different cultural background (Adler 1991; Søderberg, Holden 2002) and even more "seeks to understand and improve the interaction of co-workers, clients, suppliers, and alliance partners *from different countries and cultures*" (Adler 1991: 10). This study will expand the recent cross-cultural management research field by considering individuals with several cultures inherent from childhood on an intra-national level.

Why is this research question relevant?

The motivation for this research rests on the phenomenon's significance as well as the absence of viable theory and empirical evidence. Although a few researchers have examined biculturals and expatriates on an international level (Brannen, Thomas 2010; Hong 2010; Fitzsimmons 2013; Barker 2017), the corporate integration of biculturals on an intra-national level is still rarely explored, leading to a research gap

in the field of cross-cultural management intra-nationally. To secure a company's success in the future, the current perception and value of individuals' cultures, both inter- and intra-national, needs to be redefined (Søderberg, Holden 2002). By doing so, the comprehension of individual cultural backgrounds and their specificities increases, resulting in a respectful and error-minimizing atmosphere not only in the work environment but perhaps even in society in the long term.

How is the research question being addressed?

After specifying the research gap and presenting a literature review, there will be an elucidation on people growing up within two cultures and solely interviewing bicultural employees while consciously excluding expatriates. Only the narratives of bicultural employees facilitate mitigating the risk of concluding indistinguishable implications and outcomes (Søderberg, Holden 2002). Those shared experiences can therefore bring forth new implications for cross-cultural management in companies that enhance the effectiveness and productivity of all parties in the workplace. The insights will benefit corporations and also society even more on a socially sustainable level in the long term.

This study begins with developing a sensitizing concept, stating the suggested direction for the emerging theory (Bowen, 2006). Furthermore, the emerged theoretical concept will diminish the sizeable theoretical gap by using a qualitative research method (Bowen 2006; Yin 2015). We relate to biculturalism research by Nguyen and Benet-Martínez (2013), Fitzsimmons (2017), and Barker (2017) while considering LaFromboise et al.'s 'Bicultural Identity Integration Model' (1993). These sources enable building upon current research outcomes and further developing and updating those results if necessary.

While the importance of intra-national cross-cultural management and its impact increases, this research further explores four corporate setting levels concerning the process of integrating biculturals which are defined as follows: i) bicultural employees, ii) colleagues, iii) supervisor, and iv) company; see the sensitizing concept presented in Figure 1. Those levels originated from the widely used hierarchical structure in companies and the number of keyword repetitions regarding corporate settings of the participants during the interviews.

The emerging framework may help to better comprehend the needs and skills of bicultural employees and further support decision-making and approaching methods of colleagues. Figure 1 illustrates the starting point of developing the theoretical framework where the corporate levels and subresearch questions, as mentioned above, are organized and connected.

The findings paragraph will present the answers to the research questions based on the sensitizing concept regarding biculturalism and its impact and integration in the work environment.

Figure 1. Conceptual model of the influence of biculturalism on corporate settings and its potential effect on the work environment
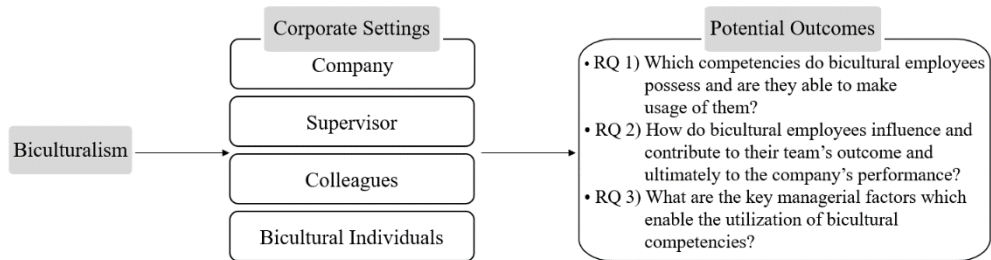
Source: authors' own elaboration

2. Literature review

In the corporate world, situations across national borders occur quickly due to modern communication possibilities such as emails or telephone calls. Nevertheless, it reduces the need for employees to visit other foreign countries and hence restrains them detecting contextual cues that are essential for decoding communication accordingly (Meyer 2014).

Coping with cultural diversity involves delving deeper into others' cultural traits that encompass the integration of a cultural group consisting of individuals who collectively share specific norms, values, or traditions into a social system defined by another hegemonic culture (Cox 1994). Otherwise, being unaware of cultural diversity

and not creating suitable management strategies will decrease the team's motivation and outcome, resulting in a business not achieving its goals (Meyer 2014). Regarding the undeniable urge for coping with cultural diversity to secure the long-term success of international acting companies, bicultural individuals can help monocultural colleagues to bridge the gap of being open to cultural diversity and coping with this topic intra-nationally without leaving their home country (Meyer 2014; Mello, Delise 2015). Diverse cognitive styles in a team that impact the perception of problem and decision-making can lead to complementary knowledge pools, skills, and capabilities and – even more – leading to sustainable long-term improvement of a team's outcomes (Mello, Delise 2015). Having mention one of bicultural individuals' competencies in the form of cross-cultural communication, empathy is another proven skill which helped bicultural individuals to put themselves in someones's position and therefore where able to solve challenging situations more successfully (Costa 2020). Further drawing upon the findings of Hoever et al. (2012) that cultural diversity fosters teams' creativity, this work focusing on biculturalism and its integration into the daily workforce can further contribute to expanding their approach. Moreover, this research will help to comprehend how to cope with and learn about biculturalism and will finally conclude in practical managerial implications of how to cope with cultural diversity intra-nationally.

Bicultural employees in organizational studies

Biculturalism has been elaborately discussed in the socio-economic and psychology research fields (LaFromboise et al. 1993; Benet-Martínez et al. 2006; Nguyen, Benet-Martínez 2013). However, the relationship between bicultural individuals and their monocultural colleagues in a professional setting is still significantly understudied (Hong 2010). A brief overview of current publications concerning biculturalism in organizational studies will help to gain a holistic perspective by viewing several aspects accordingly.

Hereby, the 'Acculturation Model' depicts an essential element of the biculturalism research field (Brannen, Thomas 2010). It compromises the acquisition of the primary culture while individuals can preserve the connection to their ethnic culture. It emphasizes the possibility of individuals altering their cultural attitudes

until they become fully competent participants of their hegemonic culture. Nevertheless, they are still identified as a member of their minor culture. Over time, studies about acculturation changed the perception of considering a uni-dimensional approach to a bidimensional dependency involving the possibility for the individual to feel as if they belong to both cultures, however, on a different level (Berry 1990; Brannen, Thomas 2010). This bicultural identity approach often applies to individuals who need to ultimately acquire the primary culture to be economically successful due to external cultural pressure and is part of LaFromboise et al.'s 'Bicultural Identity Integration Model' (1993).

Additionally, the 'Model of Multicultural Identity Dimensions' by Fitzsimmons (2013) can help affected parties at work better comprehend their bicultural colleagues. She reveals three substantial categories that influence an individual's social identity: personal history, current context, and cultural content. Those variables partly overlap with LaFromboise et al.'s (1993) contribution concluding that similar cultural identity procedures can be found among bi- and multicultural individuals. Both models increase the comprehension of bicultural individuals' decision-making, behavior, and skills. With this, bicultural skills are defined as cohort-specific capabilities resulting from being exposed to complex cultural environments and are only possessed by bicultural individuals (Hong 2010; Brannen, Thomas 2010). However, organizations still confuse those skills that mistake the ethnicity of biculturals with country-specific knowledge (Brannen, Thomas 2010).

Hong (2010) has explored biculturals embedded in a multinational organization. By examining existing literature, she created the concept of bicultural competencies that deals with the level of bicultural employees' influence on the effectiveness of multicultural teams. Although Hong's model helps to identify how multicultural teams can benefit from bicultural employees, she does not consider the potential advantages for companies in an intra-national work environment and market. The relevance of exploring cross-cultural management on an intra-national level increases with the rising number of employees having a bicultural background (Earley, Mosakowski 2000; Larsson, Lubatkin 2001). Further, even though Barker (2017) also focuses on biculturalism in the work environment and uses in-depth interviews to gain new insights and narratives, she includes monocultural employees and expatriates in

her research. The inclusion of multicultural interview partners and expatriates in her sample represents the severe difference in this case, distorting biculturals' cohort, skills, and cultural background in handling diversity. It is important to note that biculturalism that is inherent in an individual is not equitable with a person's multiculturalism. There is a profound difference between growing up with two different cultures 'from the cradle on' and learning in a later stage of life how to behave appropriately in another culture, for example, as an expatriate. Meaning, in that case, there must be a distinction between cultural identification and cultural knowledge whereas an individual's cultural identity is formed subconsciously and chosen unconsciously (Brannen, Thomas 2010). Still, Barker's study contributed extensively to the research field of understanding bi- and multicultural individuals in the work environment by examining the acculturation process. Her findings revealed the requirement of "equality, mutual respect, autonomy, and openness among interaction parties" (Barker 2017: 299) to be able to integrate biculturalism in the workplace. Therefore, it significantly contributes to future research of biculturalism in the work environment and how to cope with cultural diversity on a bilateral level.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research approach and data collection

To gain in-depth insight into the value of the management of cultural background diversity in a corporate setting to further conclude managerial learnings drawn upon bicultural experiences, we adopted a qualitative, inductive research design. This approach facilitated gathering participants' accounts from their perspective for which biculturals expressed their experiences and feelings in their own words. To achieve the research goals, we chose in-depth, semi-structured interviews with biculturals as the primary method for data aggregation. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions enabled better understanding informants' experiences. Further, interviews create possibilities to follow new leads as they arise and to help identify new ways to understand the topic (Bernard 1988). The interview has been conducted in five different parts: Starting with collecting general background information from the

interviewee to confirm their expert status, followed by questions concerning their cultural background to assess their degree of integration. As soon as the relevant personal information have been collected, the next part comprises questions about the company's recent status handling biculturalism, then diving deeper into the teams.

The interview guideline including the utilized questions can be found in the Appendix A. In addition to the interviews, we applied diaries as a further data collection method. After the completion of the interview, the participants received a brief diary template. During the following six weeks, the interviewee was required paying attention to two to three arising work-related situations for which biculturalism as a topic occurred. Those recent experiences helped and depicted pivotal support to develop cutting-edge propositions.

We applied the grounded theory methodology principles that emphasize representing informants' voices (Glaser, Strauss 1967; Charmaz 1996; Locke 2001). This approach gains its utility and generality from open coding using the data gathered during the interviews which enables the detection of relationships and causality between variables (Burnard et al. 2008; Glaser, Strauss 2017). During the continuous process of comparing the interviews and diaries, findings and relationships were refitted and refined until straining core categories, classified in subcategories, emerged for creating the conceptual framework (Glaser, Strauss 2017). Consequently, the concept based on the collected data and its steady comparison allowed exploring the relationship between the independent variable of being bicultural and its impact and outcome concerning the work environment with this defined as the dependent variable in this research (Goulding 2002). However, this database can lead to a different outcome if any other researcher uses them and interprets them differently (Glaser, Strauss 2017).

3.2. Sample design

The study participants were strategically selected based on their expert status, considering their cultural background, and completed years of work to achieve vital and profound findings. This purposefully created sample obtains the potential for shifting the perspective of cross-cultural management to rethink cultural diversity within organizations through the analyses of information-rich and insightful cases

(Patton 2007; Brannen, Thomas 2010). Further, a multi-case qualitative study enables detailed comparisons and evaluations of current settings and situations in the workplace and constitutes the base for creating a conceptual framework expanding the research area of bicultural employees (Bickman, Rog 2008).

The dimensions for selecting the interviews were initially based on a homogenous sampling approach, meaning reducing variation in order to focus on one sample group (Patton 2007). For this purpose, all of the participants needed to fulfill the following characteristics: i) inherently having two cultures 'from the cradle on', ii) growing up bilingual, and iii) working full-time for at least one year. Moreover, the sample aims to contain various minor cultures to receive diverse perspectives on the focal phenomena while limiting a biased outcome (Eisenhardt, Graebner 2007). By choosing a broad range of diverse cultural backgrounds, this study achieves a wide variety of experiences and perspectives and, therefore, considerably helps to identify common central patterns across participants' cultures (Patton 2007). It might be argued that the selected choice of interviewees can lead to a biased outcome compared to statistical sampling, however, as the selection is well deliberated and executed carefully, it becomes a strength of this study (Patton 2007). The average age of the participants is 30, and the average years of work experience cover approximately five years of which 55 percent of the interviewees are females, and 45 percent are males. Last, but not least, to create generalizable outcomes, a wide range of industries was covered instead of solely focusing on one company. An overview of the participants is shown in Table 1.

We used different initials in place of the participant's names, and firm names mentioned in citations are changed to secure the interviewee's privacy and protect the traceability to a particular company. Age, gender, and the company's industry remained the same for the evaluation (see Table 1). Eighteen interviews enabled sufficient comparisons which create a high level of generality, and explanatory powers of the core categories as various participants shared similar incidences and experiences, for example (Goulding 2002; Glaser, Strauss 2017).

Table 1. Sample characteristics

#	Initials	Age	Sex	Born in Germany	Minor Culture	Major Culture	Work Experience	Current Industry	Position	BII Model
1	YC	27	f	Yes	Chinese	German	2,5	Trade & Risk	Analyst	Acculturation
2	PS	29	m	No, since age 11	Ukraine	German	2,5	Construction industry	Engineer	Acculturation
3	TJ	34	f	Yes	Vietnamese	German	6	Education	Teacher	Assimilation
4	HH	26	f	No, since age 1,5	Afghan	German	3	Fashion Retailer	Local Direct Marketing Intern	Acculturation
5	ND	26	m	Yes	Vietnamese	German	1,5	Sports Agency	Junior Production Manager	Acculturation
6	AD	29	m	Yes	Turkish	German	3,5	Finance	Investment Specialist	Assimilation
7	TC	31	f	Yes	Vietnamese	German	7	Education	Research Associate & Lecturer	Assimilation
8	IC	30	f	Yes	Italian	German	2	Electrification & automation	Corporate Security	Assimilation
9	DP	28	m	No, since age 22	Indian	Canadian	3	Automotive	Engineer	Acculturation
10	TI	30	f	Yes	Vietnamese	German	6	Automotive Consultancy	Manager	Acculturation
11	LD	25	m	Yes	Polish	German	1	Construction industry	Technical Manager	Acculturation
12	KL	30	f	Yes	Congolese/ Omani	German	8	Insurance for Art and Luxury Goods	Regional Marketing Manager	Fusion
13	KA	29	f	Yes	German	Turkish	8	Media	Senior Consultant Product Placement	Alternation
14	ME	36	m	Yes	Bosnian	German	6,5	Training & further education	Team Lead	Acculturation
15	LM	32	f	Yes	Angolan/ Portugese	German	9	Luxury Fashion	Team Lead	Acculturation
16	LL	25	f	Yes	French	German	2	Aviation	Flight Attendant	Assimilation
17	EH	28	m	Yes	Turkish	German	4	Training & further education	Online Marketing Manager	Acculturation
18	EE	41	m	Yes	Turkish	German	15	Insurance	Department Head	Alternation

Source: authors' own elaboration.

3.3. Data analysis & coding

The interviews were conducted from September until mid-October 2020 while using the online video call platform 'Zoom™' as the communication tool. In-person meetings would have been preferable; however, they were impossible due to the current global pandemic this year. Compared to in-person interviews, the Zoom application provides video recordings and further enables construing what the participants have relayed as well as their mimicry and gestures. Paying attention to things that might not have been captured on the audio track and "read between the lines" is crucial to interpret the data correctly (Goulding 2002). The interviews lasted between 27 and 75 minutes with an average conversation length of 49 minutes.

During the transcription of the interviews, we continuously used the comparative method of qualitative analysis. Through substantive coding, encompassing the direct

fracturing, and analyzing the data, memos were taken during the transcription process in the form of keywords or brief sentences such as "unconscious evaluation", "ownership", or "minor culture traits depict as beneficial" (Holton 2007; Glaser, Strauss 2017). Those used keywords help in the further coding process to determine causality and detect the main categories based on a theoretical saturation as soon as the data generates interchangeable indicators (Glaser 1992; Burnard et al. 2008). This inductive approach is used to extensively elaborate the data and explore a research question when little is known about the study phenomenon (Glaser 1992; Burnard et al. 2008). Additionally, the diary template helped to minimize distortion and ensure that all of the study participants had more time to rethink and reflect on experiences from the past. Therefore, insights gained through the diaries were included along with the transcripts during the coding process.

Consequently, a new theoretical concept emerged that was distinguished by its parsimony, scope, and generality (Holton 2007, Burnard et al. 2008; Glaser, Strauss 2017). With this method, the analysis of the transcripts and diaries concluded into ten main categories that were assigned to four corporate setting levels (see Table 2 in the following chapter).

4. Findings and discussion

All 18 interviewees shared relevant experiences which contributed substantially towards creating the theoretical concept based upon an insightful and elaborate database. The beginning of the analysis revealed ten main categories (see second column Table 2) that encompass several subcategories such as, for instance, 'trustworthiness', 'holistic approach', or 'valuing biculturalism'. While the main categories have evolved, a further dimension was recognizable based on the mentioning and repetition of keywords like 'my colleagues', 'manager', or 'the company' which are, as a result of this, defined as the corporate setting levels (see first column Table 2). Each level encompasses different subcategories concerning biculturalism and is assigned with those influenced the most by the individuals on that level.

Based on the vast amount of newly collected data, these findings revealed markedly important issues attributed to the corporate setting levels where different aspects possess another weighted priority. Furthermore, with the help of the assigned categories presented above, the research question from the beginning can now be answered. Table 2 presents an overview of the answers to each research question.

Research Question 1 "Which competencies do bicultural employees possess, and are they able to make use of them?" is answered by the outcome categorized towards the bicultural employees' main categories such as bicultural skills, intercultural competency, and advanced work ethic and their subcategories (see Table 2). Additionally, to make use of their unique skills effectively, the work setting encompassing the team collocation and team atmosphere is considered the primary driver. Without supporting team structures that allow the integration of biculturalism, it considerably hinders those individuals from fully incorporating their bicultural competencies at work as an out-group feeling remains.

Moreover, to solve *Research Question 2, "How do bicultural employees influence and contribute to their team's outcome and ultimately to the company's performance?",* the main categories assigned to bicultural employees and colleagues must be considered. On the one hand, bicultural employees' assigned skills and competencies directly impact the work approach among the team, for example, in the form of their pragmatism or intermediate function. On the other hand, bicultural employees can broaden their colleagues' perception of biculturalism by sharing knowledge about their ethnic culture, leading to colleagues who then become familiar with approaching challenging situations encompassing culturally diverse backgrounds or become aware of their biases and can therefore challenge those. The incremental establishment of cultural diversity on an intra-national level enhances team performance and consequently increases the firm's performance, which emphasizes and supports the results of the academic work by Tadmor et al. (2009) and Dietz et al. (2010).

Table 2. Corporate settings with assigned categories and research questions

Corporate Setting Level	Main Categories	Sub Categories	Answer to Research Question
Bicultural employees	Bicultural skills	Empathy Trustworthiness Cultural sensitivity People approaching skills Cultural frame switching	RQ1 & RQ2
	Intercultural competency	Intermediate function Efficient problem-solving Cultural knowledge & skills	RQ1 & RQ2
	Advanced work ethic	Stress-resistance & pragmatism Emotions Challenging processes Holistic approach	RQ1 & RQ2
Colleagues	Approaching biculturals	Personal context Job position context Artificial distance	RQ2
	Challenging bias	Outer appearance Political correctness Fear of unpredictability	RQ2
	Team atmosphere	Sharing knowledge Facing cultural inappropriateness	RQ1 & RQ2
Supervisor	Team collocation	Cultural-diverse team Level of openness	RQ1 & RQ3
	Managerial support	Role model Equality & equity Equal treatment	RQ3
Company	Corporate efforts	Internal contact point Valuing biculturalism Cultural diversity washing	RQ3
	Corporate benefits	Internationalization efforts Competitive advantage	RQ3

Source: authors' own elaboration.

Last but not least, *Research Question 3, "What are the key managerial factors to enable the utilization of bicultural competencies?"* is answered by the concluded findings considering the main categories of team collocation and managerial support (see corporate level 'Supervisor') and corporate efforts and corporate benefits (see corporate level 'Company'). Due to the fact that a company forms the playing field and sets the rules in the shape of corporate values and beliefs, it is pivotal for the integration of biculturalism to create a platform for experiencing intra-national cross-cultural management. Thereby, supervisors and managers represent significant role models who must follow and act aligned with these rules. Hence, they significantly impact the integration process of bicultural employees via their chosen team

collocation and level of managerial support. By providing a supportive work environment where biculturalism is valued and bicultural employees feel at ease and are well integrated, each corporate setting can profit from using bicultural competencies while improving coping with cultural background diversity.

The concept of reaching 'The New Cultural Normal'

As the literature review and the conducted research disclosed, bicultural employees play a crucial role in current work environment changes. In the long-term, this work cohort influences their colleagues culturally and enhances their perspective on intra-national cross-cultural management. This is then followed by actions of the supervisor based on the pressure of their staff which can induce changes on a corporate level as soon as a certain threshold of facing needs of individuals with a cultural-diverse history is inevitable. Figure 2 illustrates the interrelation of these corporate settings.

Based on the analysis of the collected narratives of bicultural employees, a theoretical concept of intra-national cross-cultural management emerged, encompassing four different corporate levels. While bicultural employees depict the starting resource to initiate changing perceptions of biculturalism at the workplace, the following corporate levels transmit further changes bilaterally. However, this group of individuals constitutes the substantial cohort that can influence each other directly at the corporate level. When shifting the perspective towards biculturalism being associated with better psychological adaptation, greater productivity and achievement, and fewer interpersonal conflicts, individuals will incorporate their bicultural skills in the work setting (Schwartz et al. 2006). This effect can be reinforced with the more levels that become involved. This process of shifting perspectives towards cross-cultural management on an intra-national level results in achieving a stage of cultural equality and is referred to as the concept of reaching 'The New Cultural Normal' (see Figure 2).

The interviews and diaries contain striking insights into the current cognition of biculturalism in the work environment and share a glimpse of how bicultural individuals strive for a society where having a migrant background is perceived as something familiar whether someone is monocultural or bicultural. Firstly, this is

supported by the following statement which describes how bicultural employees can affect society's perception of people with a cultural-diverse background:

Figure 2. The process of reaching 'The New Cultural Normal'
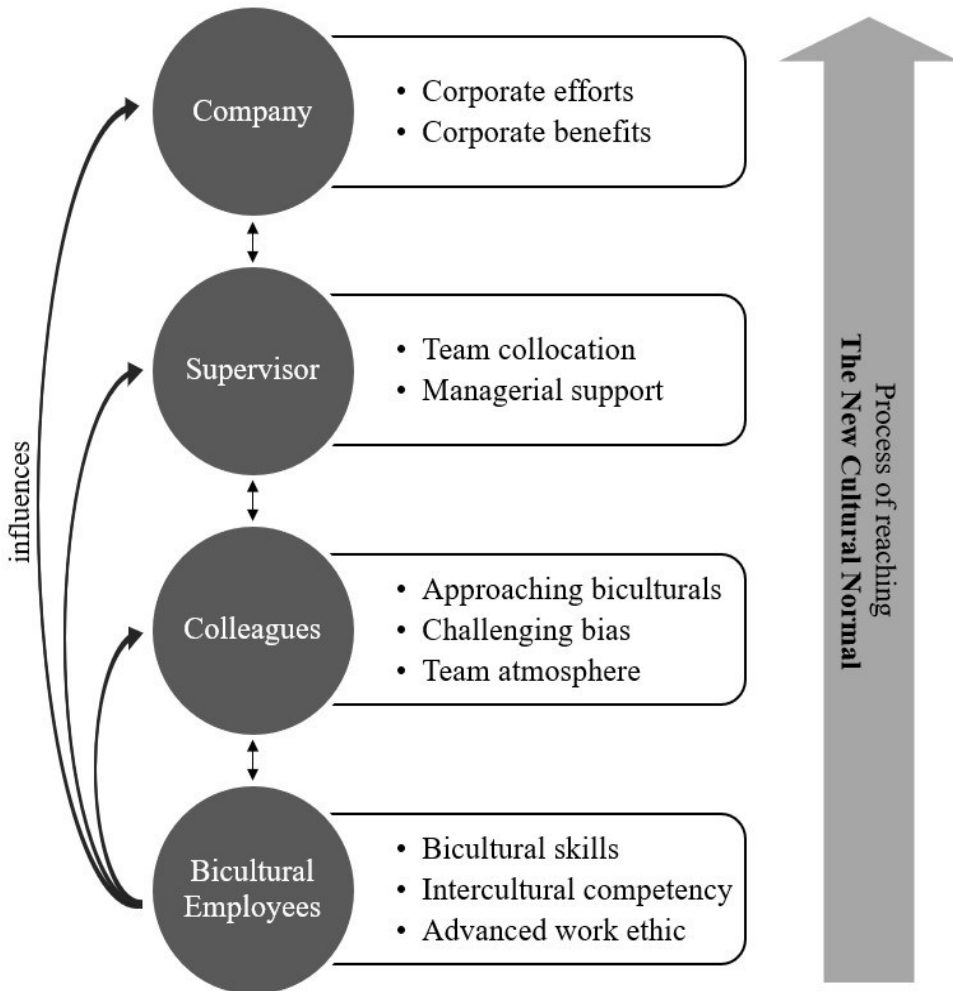
Source: authors' own elaboration.

Through my presence, perhaps prejudices are being removed or at least being recognized. In my case, when you see my name, you associate it with a cleaner or with a construction worker. I can show my colleagues that people with the same ethnicity

as mine can possess jobs like theirs, which conclusively affects them, who then pass it on and change the general perspective of biculturalism among society. (ME)

Additionally, bicultural employees ultimately strive for fair and equal treatment; however, decision-makers should simultaneously consider their strengths instead of overlooking bicultural competencies:

Interviewer: Do you wish things were different there [at the workplace]? Interviewee: Yes, I do. I would like to be treated like others. Particularly regarding my boss. (TC)

As I said, my bicultural skills are not really appreciated. They [colleagues and managers] overlook that I also possess other intercultural competencies too. I am not only able to speak [other] languages. Rather I also have an understanding of other cultures or values or people. My bicultural skills are very rarely connected or linked to work. (DP)

Even though cultural diversity has gained increasing importance, it is still challenging for biculturals to find the right balance between their two cultures as many Western countries encourage those citizens to pursue the assimilation strategy. Instead, they would feel more comfortable if they are afforded the opportunity to acculturate their inherent cultures (Van Oudenhoven et al. 2006).

Most colleagues appreciate my biculturalism. Because that's what makes me who I am, and that's what makes the performance what it is consequently. However, I made other experiences in the same company as well. In other words, I have been accused of my cultural background, [...] wherefore a project didn't take the desired course, which is why I tried to suppress my other side after that incident. (KA)

The integration process will take time but might lead to significant changes among society in the long-term as the levels interact dynamically with each other, which depicts a similar development like the establishment of gender equality and the diminution of sexism. At the last stage of the process, biculturalism is entirely accepted by society, and bicultural employees are thoroughly integrated into the workforce while also using their bicultural competencies instead of completely adapting to the hegemonic culture work approach. The support of bi- or multiculturalism in the form of public policies mirroring its increased value for society conclusively leads to greater national success and well-being (Schwartz et al. 2006).

5. Theoretical contribution

Through the transcription, coding, and analysis of 18 interviews with bicultural employees, a theoretical model emerged regarding how to achieve the stage of 'The New Cultural Normal' that contributes to the research field of cross-cultural management theory. This new normal is hereby defined as the societal stage in which biculturals are fully integrated into society, and people categorize individuals based on their skills instead of solely considering ethnic culture. These empirical findings augment past research in the field of biculturalism in several ways, embedded in the work environment context: (1) Shifting the perspective of cross-cultural management happening only across borders and between people with different cultural backgrounds towards intra-national cross-cultural management considering bicultural employees; and (2) conceptualizing a theoretical framework regarding how to reach 'The New Cultural Normal' in which biculturalism and its benefits are entirely accepted and integrated – in the work environment and among society in the long-term – while the cohort of bicultural employees is steadily increasing.

Bicultural individuals represent experts in coping with cultural diversity in this study. Their shared knowledge contributed to this research field by deepening the meaning and valuation of cultural diversity in corporate settings, coping with vital cultural and personally challenging situations, and further emphasizing intra-national cross-cultural management.

The data reveals the inability of many companies to make use of bicultural competencies as they overlook extensive potential. When assuming that bicultural individuals are fully integrated into their main culture, the starting point of valuing biculturalism cannot only be the responsibility of the bicultural individuals themselves. The analysis of the data bears contradictive findings compared to Gross' results (2004). She concluded that a company is more likely to recognize and value those skills, "the better the employee knows the language and culture" (Grosse 2004: 367). A company or team can only reap the benefits of bicultural competencies if colleagues fulfil the requirements of cross-cultural knowledge adsorption that comprises valuing different cultures, coping with ambiguity, and listening and observing (Fink et al. 2005).

The emerged theoretical concept of 'The New Cultural Normal' depicts the basis for examining the bicultural employee cohort and their integration into the workplace in the future. Furthermore, as four different levels of corporate settings have been detected, eligible and empirical-based implications can be drawn that are suitable for each specific setting thereby avoiding misunderstandings or misconceptions. This theoretical framework bridges the recent multicultural, cross-cultural management theory (Søderberg, Holden 2002; Martin 2014) with current societal developments of increasing numbers of bicultural individuals (Coleman 2009; van Nimwegen, Van der Erf 2010) and elucidates their unique competencies and roles in the workplace (Hong 2010; Mok, Morris 2010; Barker 2017).

Again, it is pivotal to bear in mind the crucial origin: There is a severe difference between growing up with two cultures 'from the cradle on' (being bicultural) or learning how to behave among another culture as an expatriate or late immigrant (being multicultural). Instead of connecting culture to state borders, it is based "on shared or partly shared patterns of meaning and interpretation" which continually changes and is modified "by the people identifying with them and negotiating them in the course of social interaction" (Søderberg, Holden 2002: 112). As bicultural individuals strongly identify themselves as being part of the primary culture and their minor culture simultaneously, they can have a pivotal impact on redefining and reinterpreting current cultural values and behaviors wherefore strict cultural borders are becoming indistinguishable. Practical implications can be drawn upon the answers to the research questions mentioned in Table 2.

6. Practical implications

This academic work provides several valuable practical implications. First of all, companies need to induce cross-cultural management skills on a team management level that includes monocultural and bicultural colleagues to secure an efficient bilateral way of communication by participating in several sessions of training. With the support and lessons provided by a coach, employees can learn to shift from an ethnocentric perspective towards valuing culture itself and then subsequently perceive

it as a powerful source of knowledge and potential synergies (Søderberg, Holden 2002). Although it will be a gradual development until those skills are established in employees' minds, initiating the enlightenment of intra-national cross-cultural management is pivotal for creating working relationships with colleagues. Thereby, knowledge transfer, organizational learning, and networking constitute key tools for developing cross-cultural management skills (Søderberg, Holden 2002). However, those workshops and training sessions should be offered by external coaches to avoid any sense of guilt or defensive behavior among colleagues.

Secondly, on a human resource management level, team collocation plays a crucial role in the cultural development of the company. Based on our empirical findings, managers and supervisors should increase their awareness regarding the benefits and challenges of working with bicultural employees. As the advantageous impact overrules potentially occurring burdens among a team, challenging internal biases regarding ethnic culture constitutes a crucial step toward achieving 'The New Cultural Normal'. After reaching a threshold of incorporated bicultural individuals, it can be supportive for the enhancement of managing the (cultural) diversity at work and increases the level of effectively dealing with culturally challenging situations.

Last, but not less important, are corporate implications. To be economically successful in the globalized market, companies need to become a 'learning company', defined as organizations that are "skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights" (Garwin 1993: 51). Those companies can develop a competitive advantage by integrating diversity by supporting biculturalism and reap its benefits in the form of shared knowledge and the right use of bicultural skills, for instance. In the event that companies already employing bicultural individuals, they should use those existing networks to create opportunities for cultural knowledge exchange. It is decisive to draw the connection between cultural knowledge, the integration of bicultural employees, and practical business outcomes to ensure that the employees of an organization accept such offers by providing profound comprehension. In the long-term, it might be even advisable to integrate knowledge sharing efforts into the work routine (McDermott, O'Dell 2001).

We propose that companies need to foster an organizational culture in which organizational members such as bicultural individuals can utilize both cultures and feel confident in knowledge-sharing and decision-making to be economically successful. In conclusion, companies should treat biculturalism within an individual as a valuable asset just like the positive perception of cultural diversity between individuals (Brannen, Thomas 2010).

7. Limitations and future research

Even though the purposeful sampling enabled this research to achieve generally valid implications, a number of limitations arose simultaneously. First, the hegemonic culture throughout the sample was German. The question subsequently arises of whether other scholars would achieve different findings if choosing another primary culture. On the one hand, overlapping statements of the participants demonstrate that there are overall general implications regardless of cultural combination. On the other hand, the findings also support Earley and Mosakowski's (2000) concept that acculturation approaches vary across ethnic cultures. Secondly, the perception of biculturalism and the level of political correctness appear to be connected to industry specificities. Several participants shared the information that the perception of biculturalism might have been company-specific, meaning industries such as banking or insurance are still strongly conservative work settings. Hence, by focusing the sample on considering only a specific industry, different implications concerning the management of biculturalism may arise. In addition to that, a company's internationalization efforts also determine the level of biculturalism at the workplace. The more that a company is searching for creating international ties, the more crucial the role of bicultural employees seems to be. As this academic research included any company and industry in the sample, a greater amount of specific consideration of focusing on one of those categories can create further knowledge in that area. In-depth investigation to detect the relationship between those two variables represents a further possibility for future academic research.

8. Conclusion

This study encompasses the current research status concerning biculturalism in an organizational setting. The emerged theoretical concept, based on knowledge and insights shared by individuals who are defined as biculturals, is referred to as the concept of reaching 'The New Cultural Normal'. By that, it meaningfully expands the research field of cross-cultural management. The relationship between monocultural and bicultural colleagues can therefore be better comprehended by all of the participants in question, leading to more cultural understanding that not only has a beneficial impact in the workplace but further also has the unique potential to enhance societal structures in the long-term. Thus making this study truly worthwhile (Bowen 2006). This process should occur on a bilateral level to enable the evolvement of the entire work environment to a level where 'The New Cultural Normal' will be called 'Normal', meaning, in conclusion, achieving a stage where *culturally diverse backgrounds* are entirely accepted by society. This should be integrated into the workforce while also using bicultural competencies instead of completely adapting to the primary culture work approach and ignoring the diversity that comes along with their ethnic one.

While the cultural composition at the workplace is becoming more heterogeneous and fragmented, the ability of companies to cope with their employees' diverse cultural backgrounds gain an even more substantial meaning for long-term success. This framework can help an organization in the future to develop its own holistic and meaningful strategy of corporate cross-cultural management. Moreover, the overall objective needs to be the achievement of mutual consideration among society in general by respecting other cultures and providing opportunities to evolve and cherish cultural diversity intra-nationally.

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Appendix A: Interview guideline

Note: Italic sentences function as references for the interviewer.

1. **Collection of general background information from the interviewee to confirm their expert status.**

    1.1. Feel free to introduce yourself briefly!

    - Personal information: Name, age, gender, highest graduation level, what two cultures do you hold

    1.2. And where were you born?

    1.3. In which country do you currently live?

    - Have you lived in any other countries? *Def. "lived": renting an apartment, at least 6 months, exclusion Work & Travel*

    - In which country do you mainly work?

    1.4. How many years of work experience do you have?

    - What is your current position and how long have you held it?

2. **Gathering cultural background information from the interviewee to assess the degree of integration of the interviewee's bicultural identity.**

    2.1. What languages do you speak?

    2.2. Now we come to a few questions to find out how you define your own major/ minor culture *Def. "main and secondary culture": main culture (MC) is the culture you deal with most in your everyday life*

    - In what language do you dream?

    - On a scale of 1-5 (5 is defined as native speaker), how would you rate your language proficiency of your main/ secondary culture?

    - Which of your two cultures do you feel you belong to most of the time?

    2.3. In which country were your parents born?

    - Have you lived in your parents' home country for any period of time?

    - In which language do you converse with your parents?

    2.4. I will now ask you questions about the compatibility of your cultures. In which areas of life are your cultures more easily compatible (e.g., family, education, religion, work, etc.)?

- If something is not a given, would you like it to be different?
- Does it lead to challenges in other areas of life?

2.5. And in what areas of life are they more difficult to be compatible (e.g., family, education, religion, work, etc.)?

- If something is not a given, would you like it to be different?
- Does it cause challenges in other areas of your life?

2.6. Do you find it easy or difficult to switch between your cultures?

- In which situations does switching occur?

3. Questions on how to deal with biculturalism in your company.

3.1. Please give us a brief overview of your current company (Industry, size, location)

3.2. During the application process for a new position: Did your interviewer ask or address anything about your cultural background?

- If so:
  - Did you like/did you not like to talk about your cultural background? Why?
  - What were your first thoughts when your counterpart brought up this (personal) topic? Did you feel stressed, relieved, more cautious in your response, etc.?
- If no:
  - Would you have liked the recruiter to ask you something about your cultural background? If yes/no, why?
- How do you perceive biculturalism in the company? Is it valued or is it an issue?
- To what extent do your two cultures play a role in the workplace (behavior, language, international colleagues, connections abroad)? Give examples.

4. Questions about dealing with biculturalism in your team

4.1. Please tell a little about your team *Def. "team": For this research project, a team is defined as a collaboration with colleagues with whom you have regular interactions.*

- How many people does the team include and how is the team structured?
- What is the mission of the team?
- Are you surrounded by other bicultural colleagues & co-workers?
  - If yes: How do you think these bicultural individuals in the team influence the team structure/work climate?
  - If no: Do you think it would make a difference to the team structure/work climate and why?
- Do you have the impression that mono- and bicultural colleagues are treated differently?
  - If yes: In which situations and how did they feel about it? How do you evaluate this situation?
  - If no: Do you wish it were different and why?

4.2. Is your MC also perceived/defined the same way as you by your team/colleagues?

4.3. In your opinion, how are your skills rated by colleagues? (e.g., do your colleagues' expectations match your own; do you feel under- or overchallenged)?

- Have there ever been misunderstandings regarding certain tasks between you and your colleagues? Give examples.

4.4. Do you feel treated differently by colleagues because of your cultural background? Give examples. *(Note: Interviewee is bicultural, so main culture may still be visible)*

4.5. Is your secondary culture addressed in the work environment by you starting out or colleagues (e.g., in meetings, emails, during lunch, etc.)?

- How do you feel about this?
- To what extent can you talk openly about it with your colleagues?

4.6. In your opinion, what is your greatest strength/weakness compared to other monocultural colleagues?

4.7. In what ways can your biculturalism be an asset to the team?

4.8. On the whole, do you feel comfortable in your team?

- If no: Would you like to see changes in the way you interact with your BK?
- If yes, what makes you feel this way?

5. Conclusion of the interview:

5.1. Now we come to the end of the interview: Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not yet mentioned in context?

- Do you still have any questions that you would like to ask?

5.2. As mentioned in the info mail, you will receive a follow-up mail with a small "diary template" afterwards

- Now that we have approached the topic of your biculturalism in the workplace, you may think of two three more examples/experiences in the next 6 weeks that are either already in the past or are yet to occur
- Just writing a few short sentences in the template.
- This is all voluntary, but would still be a great addition to the study!

5.3. Thank you for your time and participation in this study!